Titia Jacomina Van Riel



21st May 1922 – 9th August 1991

Revised and updated, Sept 2023

Some of Ted's memories about our Mum, Titia Jacomina

These are my recollections and observations of Titia, and of people, places and events over an enormous period of time. They are written from the standpoint of her only son, and will I'm sure include some inaccuracies, some errors, and some things possibly seen in a different light from others. Any mistakes and oversights are of course entirely mine.

What shaped Titia's views, her tastes, her desires? How did she feel about her own parents? How did she relate to people? What were her ambitions, and did she feel she achieved them? Were there disappointments? How did she influence her husband, and how did he influence her? What about her children? Did she feel she left the world a better place?

Like everyone, she would have been influenced by her own parents, and her experiences as an only child, and what she saw and learned from family and friends, so that's a good place to start. That's not to say she wasn't influenced by her experiences as a student, by WW2 and the German occupation, by her marriage to Johan at 23, only three months after the war had ended, and her whirlwind emigration to Indonesia and Australia, and dealing with five rambunctious children.

She was 17 when the Germans occupied Holland, and 23 when they were liberated. The war years for Holland, particularly 1944 and 45, were the harshest that any country was forced to endure. Titia lived through the horrors, but rarely spoke much about them, and neither did our father Johan. I have included an additional chapter now, describing her life amid the carnage, destruction and starvation of the Dutch people.

Parents

I don't know much about Titia's mother Akke Jans van der Meij. She must have been well-read. She read "*Goethes Ideas*' in verse, which she received a First Edition for Xmas in 1900, when she was 16, and "*Gosta Berling'* a famous Swedish novel, both in High German. There is not much memorabilia, except some photographs, and some silverware monogrammed with 'van der Meij', indicating at least some high standards were maintained.



Titia's Mum

Titia's father, Kornelis Pieter Vijverberg was 30 when he married Akke van der Meij, nine years his junior, in her hometown Leeuwarden in Friesland, in the summer of 1905. The church was only 3km from Huizum, where Akke was born. He was from Oosterberg, far in the South. Kornelis had completed his studies in civil engineering, and had learned a great deal about the techniques of canal-building in Amsterdam. King Chulalongkorn of Siam (famous from "*The King and I*") had visited Holland to inspect the canals, and Kornelis visited Bangkok in 1903-4, where his career would soon take him.

They were not poor. His income from his engineering work overseas provided the family with a good standard of living. He made investments with his savings. I know that on 16th February 1912, Kornelis purchased Imperial Russian Bonds for 239 Dutch Guilders each, at the Banque Nationale de Paris et les Pays-bas, in the Prinsengracht, Amsterdam. The Bonds paid 5% per annum interest and were backed by the fortunes of Tsarist Russia including gold, jewels, precious artworks, Faberge eggs, and bullion. It must have been a terrible disappointment to see the entire Romanov family executed only five years later, Tsarist Russia collapsing, and the Bonds becoming worthless.

Little is known of the period of 17 years in their married life from 1905 until their only child Titia Jacomina was born in 1922, when Akke was already 38, and Kornelis 47. The First World War had intervened. Belgium was trashed by Germany on her way to Northern France. Neutral Holland was not unaffected, and Kornelis may have been at risk, being already in the service of Chulalongkorn, who had contributed troops from Siam to the Allied WW1 effort in France. Kornelis was often away for long periods, working in Bangkok. Akke may have pined for children.

Childhood and Education

Against this backdrop, Titia Jacomina was born in s'Gravenhage (den Haag, or The Hague) on 21 May 1922, to be their only child, named for Jakomina Rentier (spelled with a K on the marriage certificate, although a C on her gravestone), Kornelis' mother.



They lived in a large house at 11 Louise de Colignystraat, Stephensonlaan 61, The Hague. Judging by the large number of surviving photographs, and always attired in fine fashions, Titia was a much-loved and likely much-indulged only child. She went to good schools, befitting the family's standards. Her mother had been a Montessori teacher. Titia sometimes went sightseeing around Holland, with her Mum, and mostly with adult friends, but not often with children her own age. She learned piano, which she never forgot. She made some wonderful background piano music for our Xmas recording done for her mother, at Mitchelton in 1957.



With her Dad

On 30 August 1933, aged 11 and on school holidays, she embarked on the trip of a lifetime. She flew on the storied 'Vliegende Hollander' from Schiphol to Bangkok, via Paris, Rome, Cairo, Bagdad, Karachi, Calcutta and Rangoon. It's not known whether either of her parents travelled with her.

Germany invaded Norway in 1940, and had then swept down to Holland through Denmark. Holland soon capitulated and was occupied by Germany for the duration of WWII. The Dutch Royal Family was evacuated to Britain, and life in Holland for Titia, her family, and the whole nation changed dramatically. The Occupation was to last nearly six years, from when she was 17, until she was 23. Initially, a 'velvet glove' approach was adopted by the Germans. But later, as the war in Europe dragged on, life in Holland became almost intolerable. Resources, fuel, food and people were taken, to support the German war effort, particularly on the Eastern Front, where Germany had laid siege to Leningrad for nearly three years, culminating in the disastrous 'hunger winter' of 1944. Thousands of Dutch Jews were sent to extermination camps. When it became apparent the Germans were losing the war, reprisals were sometimes taken out on the Dutch people. There was widespread destruction.



In mid-September 1944 the Americans tried to enter Holland from France by bridging the Rhine at Nijmegen, Eindhoven and Arnhem, shortly after the D-Day landings at Normandy, but with disastrous results. The failure of 'Operation Market Garden' only strengthened Germany's resolve, and likely extended the war in Holland by many months. Titia and her parents witnessed the bombing, tanks in the streets, artillery fire, unknown aircraft overhead, and not knowing what their future held. What a place for a young lady to grow up!

Nevertheless, she did well at high school. Her good grades gained her access to the Gymnasium, a school which prepares students for University. She entered Utrecht University in 1941, at 19, enrolled in the Faculty of Rechten (The Law). Soon she would meet Johan Hendrik Kees Van Riel, who commenced studying Indisch Recht, but not in her faculty, at Utrecht University the previous year. He was clearly setting his sights on the life of a Jurist in the Dutch Colonies.

Her last entry in her University Diary was on 13th July 1942, a Canoe Trip. All the Jewish teaching staff had gone, and I think it is fair to assume the University fell into 'care and maintenance' under the Occupation at that time. As a result of the inadequate facilities, reduced teaching staff and resources, she was unable to complete her degree there. It is known that the German authorities required all students to swear an oath of allegiance to the Nazi regime, and those who declined were refused entry to University. Neither Titia nor Johan ever mentioned the matter to us.

On 21 September 1940, as she was finishing at the Gymnasium, her parents presented her with a huge reference book *Wonderen der Oudheid* - Wonders of the Ancient World - in three volumes, with

nearly a thousand photographs and illustrations. The sections on Greece, Egypt, and Indonesia (with the Borobudur) are all well-thumbed.

As a result of the Occupation food, transport, books, medicines, heating, warm clothing, were all in short supply. There was the 'Dutch Underground' resistance movement, which Titia and Johan both knew about but didn't much discuss with us. In one photograph, she is shown in the doorway of a train, carrying a satchel, and from John's interviews we learned that she was carrying papers for the Resistance. She recounted a story to us that one day she managed to obtain a live rabbit, a luxury which would make a wonderful and much-needed stew for her family. She had wrapped the rabbit in brown paper and strapped onto the back carrier of her bicycle to avoid prying German eyes. But the rabbit had chewed through the paper and escaped. I don't remember whether she got it back, but I can't forget the story.



In the middle of the War, her father Kornelis died, in the Hague, on 2nd January 1943, aged only 67. It was a bitterly cold winter, cold enough to again stage the world famous Elfstedentocht 200km ice skating race on the canals through 11 towns in Friesland, around Leeuwarden. The previous Elfstedentocht, in 1942 was a sensation. The German authorities prohibited such events, but local identities went ahead in 1942 anyway, with a secret start for the nearly 4,000 skaters, on January 22nd, 1942.

Only three weeks after her Dad Kornelis had died in 1943, Titia was back again in Leeuwarden, with her Mum Akke, and hoping to witness a repeat of the record-breaking Elfstedentocht. It was won in 1942 by a Leeuwarden local Sietze de Groot, in perfect freezing conditions, in 8 hours 44 min. Unfortunately, the ravages of the Occupation, and the prohibition by the Germans themselves, prevented the event proceeding in 1943 at all. It would not restart until the winter of 1947. She loved ice-skating each winter, herself. She said it strengthened her ankles. She had talked to me a great deal about the famous Elfstedentocht in Friesland, which had captured her imagination.

After Titia's father Kornelis had passed away, Akke had moved back to be with her family and friends in Leeuwarden. Holland was under severe German occupation, and it was safer to be away from big cities, and not to live alone in large houses which were often sought out for use by the German occupiers. In Leeuwarden Akke would contemplate life alone, with husband gone and their only child often living away in Utrecht. Akke spent the rest of her life there, ending with many years at St Joseph Pension where she passed away on 29th May 1970, aged 86. Titia had visited her several times, including trips from Indonesia and Australia, and also on one visit in 1966 together with her youngest daughter Wendy, who Akke had never seen.

In her short time at University, by all accounts Titia was 'a catch'. Tall, slim, articulate, intelligent, good looking, outgoing and social, lots of golden tresses, enjoyed languages and music – especially male vocalists, well-read, and from a good family. University must have been life-changing for her. Freed from her mother who she described as 'stern' or 'stiff', she enjoyed the company of students from all over, acted in the student theatre, and met others who were alike. Among them were students from Indonesia, with whom she formed close bonds, and who entered her life again, later, in Indonesia and Australia. The *University Women's Union Almanac* of 1942 advertised a Bridge Club, Music Club, Shakespeare Association, Indonesian Club, and various sports clubs.

At University she learned the trick of wiggling both eyebrows separately, in unison, or one-up-one-down, which takes practice, practice, practice. She is the only person I have ever known who could do it, and she never lost it. She told me her student days were the most memorable and enjoyable of her early years.

I'm not aware of any other family, although Titia had a second cousin Adrie, who was at the Gymnasium with her, and who married an Indonesian chap Masdulhak Nasution. Jan and I visited Adrie at her house in Bandung in 1982. She was a widow and quite frail then. There was Netty Morren, a longtime friend from the Gymnasium and University, who had moved to Canada, and Titia, even though not well, visited her in Winnipeg in 1990.

Titia read widely, and most often in English. She read Gurdjieff, N Sri Ram, Krishnamurti, Bertrand Russell, and Kant. Later in Australia she joined the Gurdjieff Society, and met Krishnamurti on a visit. She dabbled in mysticism and the occult, and learned about Eastern religions from fellow students. Also later, in Australia she would experiment with hypnosis, with Johan's clients Chris and Val Leon, and had a pyramid built, of wooden poles large enough for her VW Beetle or Subaru to park in, and improve their karma.

Marriage, first children, and Indonesia

I think, listening to her and reading Johan's story, that at University Titia chased Johan, a little more than the other way around. Johan's mother was very supportive, having no daughters of her own, and finding Titia's assertiveness quite refreshing. She had a Jewish background, born Maria Weismann, and may have felt at risk during the German Occupation. Johan, in his own interviews, said he didn't have a good relationship with his mother. Titia may have seen in Johan a soulmate with a similar issue to her own, regarding their mothers.



Believing that the German Occupation and the War would soon be over, Johan and Titia became engaged on his birthday, in Utrecht, on 20th January 1944. An announcement card was printed, but no rings exchanged because all precious metals and jewellery had been commandeered for the German war effort. Johan's father was fairly strict Protestant, and pushed them both to be confirmed in the Liberal Catholic (meaning Protestant) Church. Titia said she had only reluctantly agreed.

She married Johan on 14th August 1945, in Leeuwarden, in the Waalse Kerk (The Walloons Church, in the Calvinist tradition, and not unlike the Baptist Church, which was Akke's church). Titia was 23, and Johan only five months older. He was by far the youngest of three brothers, the only one not a dentist, a champion table-tennis player, and I think he couldn't believe his luck. The lady of his dreams. Whether and how hard he pursued Titia is not known, but I never once heard her complain that she hadn't made the right choice, or that Akke her mother objected.

There was no honeymoon. They moved straight back to Utrecht, and stayed on the second floor of Johan's parent's house in JW Frisostraat. The war was over, but the privations remained. Food and everything were still scarce. More and more Dutch people were disappearing.

Eight months and three weeks after the wedding, Their daughter Marianne Livia was born, in Leeuwarden, a healthy, happy baby to show to Oma Akke.

Much has been written about babies born after the severe winters in Europe in 1943,44, and 45-46. Times were very hard, in the midst of war. Mothers who were severely undernourished and underweight tended to produce healthier babies, less prone to childhood diseases, and far less prone to handicap or disability.

Postwar Holland was slowly working its way to normality. By the end of 1946 Johan had developed a knowledge of Indonesian Law, and had made one visit, albeit surreptitiously, and dressed in military uniform, via Trincomalee in Ceylon, to Soerabaya in East Java. There was a joint government between Indonesia and the Netherlands, centred in Soerabaya, and responsible for the whole eastern part of the country including East Java, Bali, Lombok, and the Celebes (Sulawesi). He received a job offer, as Crown Prosecutor in Lombok, based in Mataram.

Titia's University study had been interrupted and she had not yet embarked on a career. The work situation in postwar Holland was grim, and there was a family to support. The opportunity in Lombok would have been exciting, and not open to just anyone. By that time in her life, after a fairly easy first baby, she may have seen her immediate future as a mother, and I think Johan would have been quite supportive.

And so they went, arriving in Mataram after hotel stopovers in Jakarta and Soerabaya, for what became a momentous change to their lives, and to ours as their children. Johan had - and always had – a strong work ethic and often travelled from Mataram to Soerabaya, Denpasar, and Makassar. Titia I think revelled in her independence, and the colonial lifestyle with a babu-anak, cooks, housekeepers, a sports club, and several Dutch friends with similar colonial lifestyles, in Lombok.

I think it was there in Lombok that her partnership with Johan gained its shape. She would take care of the household things, set up and maintain the social network, and raise the family. He would be the Breadwinner. They became very good at their roles, and it was a pattern that would endure successfully for the whole of their married life. There was no possibility of any support from their extended families, like for when babies arrived or family supported was needed. Immediate family was too far away, and in any event Titia, as an only child with a less-than close relationship with her mother, and Johan with a large age gap from his two older brothers, and with deceased parents, were both likely quite happy to prove their independence.



Unfortunately, Indonesia, which had been a Dutch Colony for more than 300 years, (except for a brief period of Japanese occupation in WW2) had decided immediately after the War that it was determined to be an independent country, so even before the Van Riels arrived to start work, the writing was on the wall.

Their second daughter, much anticipated Joyce Titia was born in Soerabaya in May 1948.

President Sukarno had already announced that Independence Day had been set for 17 August 1949, but had assured Johan and his colleagues in the East Indies Government, personally in a visit, that they could stay on for a period, while things in the East were stabilised. I don't think that was a secure

enough future for Johan, Titia and their young family. Another Dutch chap Johan knew there in Indonesia was Bill Witzand, who was in the same situation.

Titia was expecting another baby, me Tjeerd Auke, in early 1949, and had gone back to Holland by air, with Marianne and Joyce, for the birth. Johan stayed on working in Indonesia, and joined them in August, shortly after I was born. I was born in Utrecht, not in Leeuwarden where Akke lived, and in the same house in JW Frisostraat where Johan and his two brothers and his father were also born. I say 'house'. It is still there, but one of the older locals I met on that street some years ago said he remembered the house was actually a sort of small maternity or birthing hospital for many years.

The whole family then returned to Indonesia, this time by ship, accompanied by much furniture and personal effects, on the '*Oranje*' via the Suez Canal, Aden, and Karachi. I'm told I was slung ashore in a cargo net in Karachi and temporarily lost in the crowd. On arrival in Lombok I was taken in by my own babu-anak, a man who was apparently convicted by Johan of a murder, and who was working out his sentence with domestic duties.

And so, what I think was an idyllic life in the Dutch colonies again continued for the young Titia. She became skilled in several languages, learned Indonesian cooking from the kitchen staff, and played tennis at the Club. She said she did a lot of reading. She had brought with her a copy of *Het Achterhuis. Dagboekbrieven*, first published in Dutch in 1947, and later published in English as *The Diary of Anne Frank*, a 13-year old Jewish girl who hid with her family in an attic in Amsterdam for two years until discovered by the German Police, and transported to Bergen-Belsen.

Titia's letters home tell a lot about her and her life. She was thrifty (always), patient, the opposite of racist, very tolerant, never smoked or drank, and was able to hold her head up in the local colonial society as the wife of an important Dutch official. She was able to travel, and Johan's letter home of 13 October 1950 tells of how she and Marianne had gone to Bali, and stayed in a hotel there, and she complained how expensive a hotel was, in Bali.

It was there in Lombok that she gained her insight into natural remedies, and the benefits of not separating the ailment from the person. Modern scientific medicine was only very formative in Indonesia at the time. Trained doctors were not easily reached, and much could be learned from the local 'Jamu' doctors who would treat with small amounts of natural substances which in large doses could possibly worsen the symptoms they were trying to treat. She knew the local 'Dukuns' who would approach the person's situation as a whole – what today may be known as Homeopathy. Later, in Australia she knew that oral vaccines like the Salk for polio were likely to be more effective orally than if injected, to allow the body's natural defences to be recruited more readily and more fully. In the 70's when Jan and I lived in Jakarta, the Jamu ladies with their distinctive collection of remedies on display, roamed the streets with special bells announcing they were there, and whether they specialised in headaches, limb pain, or whatever. Their evident success made them quite popular.

She must have been greatly disappointed to have to leave Indonesia when their contract term expired. By early 1951 they were back in Holland, along with many other colonial Dutch, and were contemplating their future.

Their friends from Indonesia Han and Jaap Zonruiter had emigrated to Australia, and taken up some farming land at Redland Bay near Brisbane. The Zonruiters recommended Australia, and offered to help sponsor the Van Riels to emigrate to Australia as well.

Bill Witzand entered their lives again. Bill and Dina had met in Indonesia where he had worked, and Dina had nursed him through a bout of diptheria. They were married and had earlier returned to Holland where Bill re-trained as a surveyor, and they had then moved to the Redcliffe Peninsula, just north of Brisbane. Bill also encouraged Johan and Titia to come to Australia, and arranged a house for us, at 45 North Rd, Brighton, not far from where they lived at Clontarf at the other end of the

Hornibrook Highway. We arrived by air, in our sandals, on a blustery and cold August day in 1951, and spent a couple of months in a flat in Woody Point, close by, also arranged by Bill Witzand, before moving into the house at Brighton.

Brighton

They had saved £750 from their lump-sum bonus, earned at the end of three years' service in Indonesia, added £200 which Johan had received in an inheritance, borrowed £1,500 from the Commonwealth Bank, and were able to buy the house at Brighton for £2,450. They found it marvellous that in Australia they received Child Endowment payments, which were enough to progressively pay down the bank loan. Titia was all her a life a glass-half-full girl, and no doubt paying off the house with Child Endowment money helped to justify her optimism about Australia.



I also remember her repeating her abiding belief, after JFK was assassinated in 1963, by quoting his memorable speech: 'Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country'. I think it was an underlying principle that both she and Johan shared, in their new adopted country. Australia would prove to be good to them.

That was a great start in their new country, but what a dramatic change to her life! Not yet 30 years old, with three children under 6, and with another, Patricia on the way, with the momentous days of WW2, University and Indonesia already behind her, and with a new language and culture to take in. Summer was hot. There was an ice-chest in the kitchen, where a man delivered a block of ice every few days. There were no servants. No car initially. Timber floors had to be waxed and polished (initially by hand, until later they bought an electric floor polisher). The floors in the kitchen and dining room were linoleum and had to be scoured every so often with kerosene. The toilet was an outhouse. There was a copper in the lean-to out the back to boil dirty clothes using firewood, Lux soapflakes, a stick, a washboard, and copious Reckitt's Blue. Johan had to make some double-decker beds from scrap timber and with kapok mattresses, a job he disliked and never mastered.

Titia played tennis at Bowd's Tennis Court, on North Rd, almost opposite. There were no other Dutch people except for the Bloemers, who had the barber shop a block away on Beaconsfield Tce. In keeping with her pattern, Titia maintained contact with the Bloemers for many years.

Marianne was able to start school straight away, at Brighton State School at the top end of North Rd, in Grade 2, I think. Joyce would start school in 1954 in grade 1, and I started at the school, in 1955 in Grade 1.

It was at Brighton that I first remember Titia arranging for each person's chair at the table to be decorated, with streamers, balloons, and colourful crepe paper, on their birthday, and which made each of us feel very special for the day, a custom which endured all the way to Mitchelton, and for many years later.

Her fourth child Patty was born in December 1951, at the Royal Brisbane Hospital.

Johan was studying accountancy at night through the Hemingway Robertson Institute, and working in the city as a clerk during the day, with the City Electric Company. He fixed an old bicycle and made a brake from some wire and rode four km to the Sandgate train station each morning, and back home

again each night. Titia must have had her hands full with the children and daily household tasks. There would not have been much social life outside the home in those days. Money was short, but I don't think I ever heard a complaint, or was told of one.

It is testament to Johan's determination – and Titia's encouragement - that he completed his accountancy exams, at that time done through the new University of Queensland at St Lucia, and he topped his year in the Taxation subject, in not his first language, and with a fulltime job and a growing young family. In one photo of the family, taken in the front yard at Brighton, appears a sign on the house wall 'JHK Van Riel. Public Accountant. Tax Agent'. He was admitted as a Certified Practicing Accountant CPA in about 1956, was admitted as a Fellow of the Institute in 1968, and a Life Member in 1973. Titia went proudly along to the award ceremony in City Hall. At the time of his death Johan held one of the longest continuous memberships of the CPA Institute in Australia.

Soon, in Brighton an old car was bought, an Austin A36 Tourer, with a canvas roof, which allowed us to visit friends, always Dutch, and often whom they had met in Indonesia. The Zonruiters at Redland Bay had children of similar age, and we spent many weekends, school holidays and Xmas with the Zonruiters at their farm. The four older children stayed with the Zonruiters, and the older three went briefly to the local school in Thornlands in May 1955, while Titia went to have Wendy Helen, who was born at the Royal Brisbane Hospital in June 1955.

Mitchelton

We had quickly outgrown the house in North Rd, Brighton, and travel to Johan's work on the Southside was taking up a lot of time. At Titia's insistence in mid 1956 we moved to a bigger house at 124 Blackwood Rd, Mitchelton, purchased from Tom Barlow and his wife, who had built the house and lived next door. It was a solidly-built high-set house with enough bedrooms to share, on a large 40-perch block, a separate room downstairs with a stable-like door for the only boy, with a large chook house, terracotta tiled roof and which proved perfect for our large family. A Hills hoist in the back yard, after the old wire-and pole clothesline was taken away. A copper and a water-softener in the laundry downstairs, and later an electric washing machine, with a wringer. Monday was I think washing day, and the entire laundry would be hung up to dry, outside. All by her. There was an outhouse, emptied once a week by a man from Hunter Bros, but sometimes full beforehand.



There was a banana tree, lemon tree, pawpaw tree, mulberry tree where we all fed our silkworms, loquat tree next door, peach tree in the far back corner – although the peaches forever seemed stunted and infested with grubs - chokos and passionfruit growing along the fence, chooks, a rooster, and later some ducks. All of this must have impressed on Titia that at least her family could eat for a while, if another Occupation came along. Rabbits weren't allowed in Queensland.

Blackwood Rd was still unsealed, but there was a train station, Morey's General Store and Post Office, Rill Garozzo's Pharmacy, Roy Uhlmann's barber shop, Sid Loder's Cash & Carry, Waldock's Butchery, Olsen's shoemakers, Jim Jeffrey's Electrical Store, Jim Clinch's fruit shop up on the corner of Samford Rd, Mulholland's shop right opposite for forgotten sugar, chook pellets, lollies, milk, razor blades and everything else. Dr Carter had recently set up practice as a GP next to Garozzo's pharmacy, and was later joined by Dr Brown. Titia got to know them all. Mitchelton Primary and High Schools were in walking distance. There were plenty of friends for all of us children, within a

few blocks. There was lots of noise, with the girls on their fifes, Marianne on her accordion, Titia on her piano, and me in the school drum band.

The laundry downstairs had two concrete tubs, used for all washing, chook plucking, paintbrush cleaning, and Titia's hair washing (with beer, which gave body, I understand). There was no hot water downstairs initially, the sole heater being a gas-fired unit above the bathtub in the only bathroom, upstairs. She managed to get the whole household accustomed to it all. Five kids in the bathtub together, if the weather was cold, or when the Pears shampoo in the conical ribbed glass bottle ran short.

This period in Mitchelton from 1956, until they moved to Kara St Tarragindi in about 1971 was, I think, when Titia became thoroughly Australian, if that was possible. She was Brown Owl to the girls' Brownie and then Guides group, played tennis, was a keen and very regular bridge player, made cakes and cookies and helped out in the school tuckshops and fetes, came to all the ballet concerts and rehearsals, gymkhanas, school plays, dances & breaking-ups, made costumes for the kids' annual Ball at Cloudland, applauded at the Speech Nights, did the kids' taxi runs all and every weekend, negotiated with the man not to cut off the electricity because the bill was unpaid, and drove her first car. The Austin A36 soon literally wore out. We kids often got in via a hole in the canvas roof, so it was soon replaced with an Austin A40 sedan, and later a Holden with registration NBM 813, in which Titia proudly gained her driver's licence.

She took me with her to see Hitchcock's 'Psycho' at the Gaythorne Theatre in 1961 when I was in Grade 7, making me the class hero – no one else was allowed to go to an adult movie.

The Van Leeuwens lived six doors down the street, and the Bosma's four doors away, both Dutch families, but I don't think she was friendly with them. Maybe there was a certain class consciousness there. On the next street Pascoe St lived Hedy de Jong with Nick de Jong and their children of similar age, and two dachshunds. I think Johan and Titia had known them earlier and had helped them come to Australia. I remember welcoming the de Jongs off the boat in Brisbane, and at the flat where they temporarily lived at New Farm. After Mitchelton they had moved to Barnehurst St in Tarragindi, quite near Titia in Kara St, Tarragindi. Nick was Dutch, but Hedy Austrian. Titia had a serious friendship with Hedy, judging by the times they got together.

Over the road from the house was Amy Sharman who was a JP, and her family, who Titia got to know fairly well, often through getting things witnessed and signed, and next door to her the Careys, with me in school with Peter, and Wendy at school with their Jenny. Almost over the back fence in Pascoe St were Marshall and Jess Lehmann, whose daughter Kay was in class at Mitchie with Marianne, and I was in class with their son Des, from Grade 2 at the Infants School. At the other end of Pascoe St were Alan and Joan Cuffe, and their three children Ross who was Joyce's age, Peter who was with me at Mitchie, and Julie who was Patty's age at the school. I was at school with Rex Breheny and Jan Roles (who I later married) at school with Rex's sister Paige, from Felstead St in Everton Park. Their Mum Di Breheny took over some of Johan's brother Emil Van Riel's furniture when Emil went back to Holland, but I don't think Titia knew Jess, Joan, or Di very well.

Johan's older brother Emil came from Holland in about 1966, intent on migrating, with his two daughters and Willem, a hanger-on. They bought a house in Aronia St, Kenmore, but stayed with us at Blackwood Rd until their furniture arrived. The two girls didn't enjoy Mitchelton High School, and in any event Emil's dentist qualifications didn't meet Australian rules, so they soon went back to Holland. In that time, Titia cooked and cleaned by herself for the whole team, including visitors, a job which she was good at, and likely enjoyed, given it happened pretty often.



Also in 1966, Titia visited Holland, with youngest daughter Wendy, in the northern summer. By all accounts they had a marvellous time, catching up with friends and family They were looked after particularly by Johan's nieces Lilly and Lulu, and by Ludolph, the son of Dolf Wentholt, who she knew from Samsonvale. Titia recalled two things in particular from the visit: that everywhere they went to see family, they had talked, talked and talked into the early hours, but also that she found her Mother 'rather stiff and indifferent' and in respect of another person living at the Pension, they were 'not allowed to speak to inferior people'.

In order to fit the whole family and any visitors into the kitchen for meals at Mitchelton, she ordered a new table built, a rectangular one, with a newfangled Laminex top, which was fixed to the wall at one end, under the Smiths Electric clock, which had come with the house. The wooden folding chairs she brought from Lombok, part of a matched set which included a wooden sideboard with six drawers, three on each side, which did duty in the loungeroom.

Johan had a lifelong love of table tennis, and a table was soon installed under the house in Mitchelton, where many of our young friends came and played, and she would be a welcoming Mum. Later, she would be just as welcoming to our friends when a party was thrown, with kegs of beer, and she had obligingly gone out for the evening.

She had a soft spot for outsiders. She took in Fritha, and another young aboriginal girl for a while from her OPAL friends (One People for Australia League) for their holidays. I don't remember the connection, but a Malaysian student Khoo Boo Thuan came to stay. He claimed he could cook Asian food, which delighted her, although he couldn't. For many years she sponsored an Indonesian child Suprapti, in a village in Java.

I don't know where Titia would have learned it all, but sewing was an important part of every young girl's upbringing. And so it was for our family. Dresses and blouses had to be made from patterns, or taken in, to serve as hand-me-downs. Socks had to be darned on the little wooden toadstool. Some knitting done. We learned from her which knitting needle to use for thick wool salvaged from an old jumper, and how to re-set the little counter at the end of the knitting needle. There was a Singer sewing machine to help with the sewing work, initially a treadle machine which came out from Holland, then later an electric Singer with a light and a foot pedal, and later again a used Pfaff which did zigzag, buttonholes, and a great deal besides. We learned how to load up and change bobbins, sew on buttons, change a zipper. One year, I wanted a bright red shirt for going out in, and one was made, with raglan sleeves, which looked a little different, but she convinced me was all the rage. Jess Lehmann added a red piece to my old jeans, to become bellbottoms, which was de-rigueur then. Titia taught us what hat elastic was for, and how to put new elastic in pyjama pants, how to iron with starch, and that the same starch could be used as glue for school projects if we had run out of *Clag.*

The *Australian Women's Weekly* (back then, actually, a weekly) was an important part of her reading, along with back copies of the Dutch women's magazines *Libelle* and *Margriet*, which arrived each month in bundles. She learned about antiques from Stanley Lipscombe who wrote the antiques column, and she knew the latest exploits of The Phantom and of Mandrake the Magician, which I could talk to her about, all from the *Women's Weekly.*

Her house decoration was at all times practical. There were very few items hanging on walls, apart from wall hangings of Thai scenes, or Indonesian shadow-puppets and batik. On the shelves or the piano-top were chiefly books, records, some items from her parents, and often small printed homilies like 'O Lord, help me keep my mouth shut until I know what I am talking about'. One major addition to the house in the 60's was a front porch or verandah, where she and the family or guests could sit and talk, or watch the traffic go by, or wait for someone to arrive home. Sometimes she would be awaiting a phone call (just two rings only) that signalled someone had arrived at the Enoggera tram terminus and needed to be picked up.

She must have thought we kids needed spiritual guidance, or something less unruly to do on Sundays, so early on she enrolled us in Sunday School at the Enoggera Baptist Church. Of course, anything but Roman Catholic would have done, and there was a perfectly good Presbyterian Sunday School less than a block from our house, and a Methodist up on Samford Rd, but maybe she had her reasons.

She may have been a little short on sympathy and empathy from time to time, and sometimes a little judgemental, but she was I think anything but selfish. Anything that happened, or was bought, or planned was for the children, for the family, for others. She was modesty itself, really.

Pets n Animals

Skipper the Heinz dog was with us very early at Mitchelton, mostly covered with ticks and fleas until Titia got into him with the Mallawash. Later in the early 60's she brought home Panda the Boxer, which I think she bred with another champion Boxer, and produced four or five good looking puppies which she sold. One of them Brutus she sold to the neighbours a few doors away. We were allowed silkworms and guinea pigs of course, but only if we looked after them ourselves, and that it wouldn't fall to her. All good so far, but a few rainbow lorikeets and scaly-breasteds (Blueys and Greenies) later, and we found the birdcage door mysteriously open one afternoon after school, birds vanished. Pet white mice were allowed, but there was also a cat, and one day the old fish aquarium which served as a mouse box and nursery was found with the lid off, mice missing and a smug cat looking on.

Never doing things by halves, when the need to interact with the Canine Control Council on the pedigrees of her boxers Panda and later Geta came about, she would naturally get involved with the Committee. That was not the only Committee. I'm pretty sure she became a committee member of the Australian Indonesian Association, Federation of Australia Astrologers, Theosophical Society, Mitchelton High School and others. She was also involved with the Princess Marijke Relief Fund, a charity for disadvantaged Dutch people.

Later, at Kara St, she was very proud of her large fish aquarium, built into the bookshelf, which held her angelfish, zebrafish, clown loaches, guppies, goldfish, and more.

A bit alternative

Titia always thought of herself as different. She fancied Theosophy, and the teachings of Annie Besant and Helena Blavatsky. She joined the Brisbane Theosophical Society, whose premises were (and still are) right next door to the Liberal Catholic Church in Wickham Tce, which she had some affiliation with, (the same religion she had me baptised in, in Utrecht). I never understood it all, but I think Marianne and Joyce both became Young Theosophists. Titia put us into the junior group, the Round Table I remember, under Mrs Starr, who met at those premises each Sunday, (myself and the two older girls) and where we walked around the table singing 'Around the table, circling, we march and gladly sing' and then ate pieces of bread dipped in salt. It was somehow affiliated with the Church next door, and allowed Titia to indulge in her mysticism.

Astrology was important to her and she had a good collection of books where she could trace dates and events in detail, write horoscopes, and predict important stages in people's lives. She was a Gemini, but on the cusp of Taurus, which actually makes perfect sense.

She practiced and believed in Yoga. A lot, and over many, many years. She attended camps in Brisbane, Sydney and country places like Mangrove Mountain, often as part of a Spiritual Retreat. Yoga was not widely understood or practiced in Australia, at least in our circles, and I don't know much about it.



She spoke a bit about the "Primitif Lounge' an underground Bohemian place clouded in blue smoke near the corner of Queen and Creek, and may even have visited a few times, with Bohemian friends, but I don't think it was Johan's thing. By the time we kids were old enough and courageous enough to have a look, it had become the Folk Club, just as smoky, but quite tame.

I don't think she was a feminist. In fact, in a long article with photographs in the Utrecht Newspaper on 30 July 1960, where Johan's story was told – that of a successful businessman in Australia, with five talented children - her name was not even mentioned. And I think both she and Johan were lifelong Liberal voters, except for once, when Titia cheerfully admitted to voting for Gough Whitlam and his Labor Party in 1972, which resulted in Conscription - compulsory army service for me - being abandoned, so saving me from serving in Vietnam, and all the dangers that would come with it.

Foodwise, and Cooking

We kept chooks at Mitchelton, and I think Marianne, Joyce and myself would still know how to pluck and cook a chook and some tripe, for dinner. Titia taught us how to grease a baking dish, add a few drops of school ink in the cake icing to make it blue, how long to boil pig's trotters, how to cook rice, potatoes and macaroni, which was the only pasta we knew, and how to make porridge for breakfast. The cooking was on a gas-fired "Early Kooka" with a pilot flame flickering on a wand hooked to the side, which she used to light the oven, after standing back. The fridge was also gas-fired.

How she managed to conjure up some meals for the multitude in the evening, when the larder looked bare that afternoon was something of a recurring miracle. A real treat was her Indonesian Bakmi Goreng, with fried noodles and pork pieces in sweet soy sauce, which we just knew as 'Bami', and she made quite an authentic Nasi Goreng, complete with a piece of fried chicken, a fried egg on top, and kroepoek on the side. She loved her kroepoek. At some dinners for special guests which she held at home, she would tackle a genuine Indonesian Rijsttafel, with many dishes that needed a full day to prepare and get just right.

She had a wooden food trolley made, on wheels, with shelves on two levels, and calling out 'Awas, kaki lima!' as she trolleyed out meals or tea to the dining room or lounge room, when there were guests. Later, steamboats become very popular with her, particularly when there were guests.

To her credit, she managed to get all of us onto a roster for the washing-up and drying, which from memory she had early commanded to be the childrens' job.

Late in 1979 they paid Jan and I a visit, in Jakarta, for a week. She would engage Soenasi the cook for long periods, in pretty good Bahasa Indonesia, on all the intricate aspects of local cooking. One day we booked the grand tennis courts at the Sahid Jaya hotel for a game of mixed doubles together with our friends Kemal Stamboel and Mike Travers, and we secretly arranged for drinks and morning tea to come out onto the court, borne by men in white jackets and ladies in Javanese dress, with shade umbrellas, in true colonial style. She was glowing. Local girl made good, on a visit home. She met Kemal's parents, who had been in the Indonesian Foreign Service shortly after the war, and delighted in reminiscing over their life in Lombok. Later, on that visit we all went to Soerabaya. She insisted to the 'becak' rickshaw driver that she wanted to go to the black market – the Pasar Glap – to buy some pirate music tapes. Thirty years earlier, the Pasar Glap was where they had to go to buy almost anything useful, after the Japanese Occupation, but not now. Pirate music tapes were available on almost every corner, and there was no Pasar Glap.

She was enthusiastic about performances at the Arts Theatre, Twelfth Night Theatre and La Boite Theatre over many years. For us kids it often meant a stop at *Mama Luigi's*, upstairs at Brunswick St New Farm where we children could gorge on chicken and spaghetti, on the way to some Shakespeare play or other production.

Titia did take over one item from Emil, a top-loading dishwasher, which lived next to the fridge and was wheeled over to be plugged into the sink tap, and which soon earned us notoriety as one of the few families with a dishwasher.



Medication, recognition, and sympathy

She could be a hard marker. One day at the end of 1965 Arnold Perkin the High School Principal dropped by the house to pick up some P&C papers. I had been promoted to Under Officer in the School Cadet Corps. I was standing on the back landing with them and Mr Perkin said to Titia she must be proud of Ted on his achievement. She said 'I'm proud of all my children'.

I learned when aged four, playing with the girls on the log swing at the Brighton School one Sunday, and the swing banging me hard on the head, that there needed to be some blood for the medicine cabinet to be opened, or for sympathy to be extended, but not otherwise. The medicine cabinet was a carved wooden thing that hung on the wall, and it later moved with us from Brighton to Mitchelton. It held some bandaids and maybe some aspirin and iodine, and a spare jar of Nixoderm for Johan, but I think not much else.

When I was invited to become a Partner in the global professional services firm Price Waterhouse in 1985 and was heading to London for my investiture, I don't think she congratulated me, but I remember her saying something about a migrant from Mitchelton, and she admonished me over the phone to not lose any sense of honesty.

To be fair, when the heavy wooden lid of the outhouse toilet fell down on my poor willy in Mitchelton one day, and turned it all bloody and black, Dr Brown was called to the house, amid much concern.

She packed us all off to the Brisbane Dental Hospital in Turbot St, whenever she felt an amalgam or braces were needed (which was a lot), and she had to argue long and hard with the admissions people there each time, that our financial circumstances qualified us.

People

Other people came into her life, often by way of being clients of Johan's emerging home-based tax practice. Dolf and Maria Wentholt, who lived in the grand re-located Samsonvale House at Samsonvale, and Harm and Annelies Zeissink who lived in the 'Cottage' adjacent to Samsonvale House, Maria Tummers, wife of Martin, who had an egg farm and strawberries at Thornlands, and where Titia would buy crates of cracked eggs - good, but unsaleable - which she brought home and re-sold locally. Bert and Joopie Thannhauser, who had a luxury house, pool and tennis court in Coopers Plains, where we spent many a weekend.

There was Ann Carr McDonald who ran the fashionable Ann Carr Hair Salon in the City, where Patty worked for a time early in her career. Her son Don McDonald grew a legal practice of some notoriety in Tank St, City. He took some equity in Johan's car enterprise. His junior partner Doug Whalley did a great deal of the legal work for Johan. Don married Gayle Murray a Brisbane TV personality, which gave Titia the opportunity to attend a celebrity wedding and mix with society people. Don and Gayle became regulars at dinner. There were Alice and Bernard Bruns, who ran the Salon Artistique in the Wooloongabba Arcade , and of course remained clients of Johan, and Alice a good friend of Titia, who would help look after their baby son Emile. One customer of the salon, Mrs Madden and her husband Jack Madden ran '*Coniston'* a large sheep property south of Charleville. They would come in from the bush each year for the Ekka, and Titia arranged with Mrs Madden at the end of 1958 for me to fly out to Charleville, and I had the most memorable six-week holiday on their sheep station there. And there was Fred Vojtjisek who ran Fred's Restaurant in the same arcade, and often treated our whole family to meals, perhaps in part-payment for Johan's tax work.



There was Henk and Toos (Cathy) Kabel, who had gone into business with Johan in about 1958, but I think Titia considered them of a different class. There were the Bierman, Kraa, Kylstra, Boele van Hensbroek, van Hees, de Zwaart, Steginga and Floris families, all Dutch, and of course Dr Jeff Payens, and Cootje Koenemann, who Titia was very close to. Annelies Zeissink was also very

friendly with Titia and she had sometimes stayed with us in Mitchelton. Unfortunately Annelies, while running for the bus at the stop opposite us on Blackwood Rd in 1966 slipped, and her leg was quite badly injured under the bus. She had lengthy stays in hospital and Titia willingly helped out, and at times looked after her young children Beryl and Andrew, and also looked after them later when Annelies was living at Samsonvale House, after the Wentholts had moved.



The Liberal Catholic Church was a rich source of friends and acquaintances of the non-Dutch variety, but not I think in any religious sense. And most became close friends, often coming for dinner, and sharing weddings, engagements, holidays. There was Ellen Parr, Gladys Toogood, the priest Carl Roemermann, his wife Daphne and their son Ian. Also the Bradleys, one of the Preston twins Graham who became ordained in that priesthood, and Bill and Barbara von Ploennies and their son Jonathan. Bill was a Judge on the Federal Circuit Court and she would visit them with Johan when he was serving in Rockhampton, and also visited Jonathan after he moved to Canberra.

The Dutch Consuls in Brisbane Hein Bouwknecht and later Kasper Kuiper became firm friends and of course came to dinner, and had introduced Titia and Johan to the Dutch Ambassador in Canberra who they visited on at least two occasions.

The other day I popped in on Chris and Val Leon's home in Holland Park, to find that Chris himself had passed away six years ago. Chris was a well-known hypnotist, and it was Chris and Val who nurtured Titia's interest in hypnosis. Val, who is a hearty 84, told me Chris and Johan had first met when Johan approached Chris, who had a tailoring business in Brunswick St Valley, off the street and said his wife Titia had pushed him to go doorknocking to get some accounting and tax work.

She was a quick and I think pretty good judge of people, in my experience. In his first-ever move into business, Johan took a partner John Koster, and leased a petrol station at Dutton Park, opposite the cemetery, late in 1956. Titia judged John Koster's wife as shifty, straight away. And so it was. The Kosters lived a high life, constantly moved address, and, it turned out later that he had his hand in the till. On one memorable trip we turned up as a family where they were staying in Toowoomba to confront them, something which Johan and Titia were never really good at.

By contrast there were Bert and Evelyn Ivey. Bert was a very successful car dealer and race car enthusiast in the UK. They moved to Australia and opened the iconic BP Servo overhanging the Brisbane River next to Breakfast Creek. They lived in a palatial house at Upper Mt Gravatt, later demolished to make way for Garden City, and then moved to a house up on the hill at Barmore St Tarragindi. Bert became a partner in Johan's next investment, a car workshop in East St Fortitude Valley, next to the Valley Baths. Titia got along famously with Evelyn (although funnily enough, not with their adopted daughter Sally) and she eagerly went along to Evelyn's tea and cucumber sandwich afternoons at their home.

She said she tingled each time she met Les Leahy, a private detective who was a client of Johan's in the same Wooloongabba Arcade. Leahy was tied up with all manner of shady characters, and lived for a time on a boat moored along Kingsford Smith Drive, and which mysteriously was found on the bottom one day. Roy Byrne, an accountant who helped Johan in his tax practice was a regular at dinner, unless his wife May Byrne was with him. And Edna Cornelius, who was a long-time secretary to Johan as his business grew was never invited over, from memory.

I don't think she got to know the neighbours at Mitchelton very well. Old Mrs Scanlan next door lived alone, until the Steers bought her house and subdivided the land. Tom Barlow's widow lived on the other side, and then next door to her Mr Worrell, who had lost an arm in the war. Over the road were Tom Laird and his sister, who owned a TV before anyone else, and allowed us to come over after school and watch, but I don't think Titia ever went over there.

It struck me as I was writing this, that in Australia Titia may have felt herself an economic refugee of sorts, seeking a better life, one of thousands of families in that situation at the time. So, she was different, and that even with the exemplary job she was doing to assimilate her family over the years, she may never have felt fully assimilated herself, not for want of trying, and she even transitioned from being called *Titia*, to *Trisha*, and finally to *Trish* in her later years.

Walking: from her earliest years at Brighton, she would wait for Johan to come home, and after dinner and the children were settled, she and Johan would walk around the suburb in the cool of the evening, often for long walks to the chalk hills in the west, to the waterfront at Brighton in front of the Eventide Home, and to the start of the Hornibrook Highway. Later, in Mitchelton the walks would include the dog, and would be long enough to get her some distance away, like up to the hilltop monastery in Church Rd where she could look down over the streets and see our house. Her long beach walks on the holidays and later were legendary. Johan would go with her on many beach walks, although at the long-term expense of his fair skin.



On their evening walks and drives she would look forward to one day seeing little 'groene mannetjes' landed from outer space, not so much for the fame I think, but more likely to invite them home to try her Dutch *oliebolle*.

And reading. I would often come home from school to find her engrossed in a novel, with curlers in, and hairdryer running. She had many paperbacks. Lots of Agatha Christie murder mysteries, JD Salinger's '*The Catcher in the Rye*', all of John Wyndham's thrillers. She said she read '*Bonjour Tristesse*', risqué as it was, at least four times. Kartini's '*Letters of a Javanese Princess*' and Multatuli's '*Max Havelaar*' had been with her since before University. She invested wisely in Arthur Mee's '*Childrens' Encyclopedia'*, which all of us absorbed over the years. I think it still exists, somewhere.

Music. While I don't remember she went much to concerts (except to see South Pacific and West Side Story as movies, and the world famous Winfred Atwell and her honky-tonk piano, and who she

reminded me is buried in the public cemetery in Lismore NSW, together with her famous piano), her record player worked overtime. Krontjong music from Indonesia, Maurice Chevalier, Richard Tauber, Yma Sumac, Vera Lynn (who turned 102 this year), Harry Belafonte, and later Slim Dusty and Lionel Long, as she moved into Australian ballads. There were at least 50 LP albums in her collection, I think. Her Pye record player, plugged into the back of their red-and-white bakelite HMV radio played LP's, 45's and 78's, many of which survive in boxes, somewhere.

Education. There would be little doubt that she and Johan had an unswerving belief in the importance of education. Both of them were denied a full University education as a result of WWII. Johan in particular showed at a very early stage his intentions in Australia to study further. Although Titia herself did not, perhaps in view of all her family responsibilities taking so much time, and perhaps she did not feel as capable. Those feelings would be put to rest later, when she showed plenty of ability and perseverance in studying subjects like Indonesian and Astrology. She certainly showed plenty of close interest in the education, exams and progress of her five children.

Swimming. One thing she insisted on was that we all learned to swim, early. It may have come out of an event at the Zonruiters farm, at the Xmas of 1952. I was not yet four, but it's seared in my brain. The older girls and I, and one or two of the Zonruiter children had gone for a swim down at their dam. We were mucking around with a floating log. Johan and Jaap were sitting on the shore, watching. Suddenly the bottom disappeared and down I went. I had struggled up once, and I remember glimpsing Johan, fighting to get his sandals off to swim over. After a while Marianne found me underwater and plucked me up, spluttering. She reminded me many times that I owed my life to her, which is likely true. At Titia's insistence, from the very next week Johan took me and the girls to the Sandgate baths, on the foreshore, for waterproofing, and over many years we spent all the time we could at the Ithaca Baths, or Greenlanes at The Gap if there was tennis to be played, or the Oasis at Sunnybank which was a trek, but a marvellous day out for Titia.

My optometrist in Perth Barry Waddingham noticed what looked like a tiny weird sea creature lodged in my left eye in 1983. When my ophthalmologist in Brisbane Ken Hutchinson fixed a cataract in that eye a couple of years ago he remarked on it, and called in some colleagues for a look through the ophthalmoscope. It was confirmed as a pentastome, a creature with five mouths which is found in tropical waters, likely to have crept in when swimming in Lombok, and died, leaving its outer skeleton. Er - why have I included this bit in the story? The swimming, maybe.



Titia had a busy life. It was a rare week when there was no-one over to dinner, or twice, and she was never short on conversation, and would happily discuss all sorts of erudite topics with the guests. Dinner guests included in-laws like David and May Dargie, Robert Hecker and his wife, Hill Wilkinson and his wife, Harry and Kath Roles, Ed May and his wife, my schoolfriend Marten Brouwer's parents, and Robert May's folks from Everton Park.

She encouraged us to bring friends home, often to stay. There was the other of the Preston twins, Michael I think who was pursuing Marianne, and his young sister, a friend of Patty. The de Jong's daughter Elizabeth, the famous Delvene Delaney, Ricky Dicker and Lucky Mann, Robert Condor from Mt Isa who we billeted for the school athletics, and Bill Williams from my Boy Scouts troop, who lost both his parents. Also the Wentholt's children Piet Hein and Lisette, when it was too late to get home to Samsonvale before dark, and the two van Barneveld boys, Nick and John, older sons of Maria Wentholt. Patty was horsey and owned Victory, a mare with a beautiful quiet temperament, at times living in our backyard. Staying over were her friend Julie Kershaw who was also horsey, and Jane Vincent, a friend of Patty's, who was boarding at her Ipswich school and with her parents living in New Guinea.

In the 70's Titia was heavily involved with Children by Choice and as a Lifeline Telephone Counsellor, on the evening shift. Of course the Dutch Club, later the All Nations Club took a central role in Johan's calendar, and Titia was eagerly involved. The annual highlight was the *Oranje Bal* each April, the ball to celebrate the Dutch Queen's birthday, which later became the Holland House Ball, a time to glam up and catch up. For highbrow discussion there was the Borrel Club, a men's-only society for university graduates, who sometimes brought their wives along to functions and other events like car rallies, which she loved. She entered co-masonry, and often went to 'Lodge' but I don't know much about it.

As often as possible, Xmas and Easter holidays were taken in a rented holiday house at places like Mermaid Beach, Springbrook, Coolum, or Hervey Bay, but often with Johan commuting back to work in Brisbane, so he only spending a week or two with us. That would have been anything but a holiday for Titia, with the housekeeping and cooking continuing unabated. One client Geert Doornbos had a boatbuilding business at Labrador, and we had the most marvellous holidays there in their old house on the water, or at least I did, sailing, fishing, crabbing, getting brown, if not nearly black from the sun. Titia loved the beach, and the sunshine, all her life. She saw a lot of old Mrs Doornbos in her later years.



Boating and sailing were her ultimate leisure. In the mid 60's there was a boat on a trailer she named Sir Francis, sourced and patched up by Geert Doornbos, with a 40HP Evinrude outboard, where she loved cruising, and we all learned to water ski. Later at Kara St they bought a Corsair sailing dinghy Nicole Too, and Titia was never happier than when breezing along the river or at Bramble Bay, tiller in one hand, and mainsheet in the other.

One thing that never changed was her nicknames for us. I don't know the origins, but Johan was always Knor, and never anything different. Joyce was Koer. Patty was Flaps, and I was Aliphant or Alip for short. I was pudgy. Use your imagination.



Empty-nesting

Between 1964 and 1974, all five children had married and left home, and ultimately gave her nine grandchildren, all healthy and all of whom she was most proud. The change gave her and Johan many new opportunities to travel, pursue spiritual events, often together, and embrace new-age thinking like Jane Roberts' Seth Books about personal psychology, meditation, and ESP.

Her enjoyment of sailing intensified. She took sailing lessons and they went to regattas as far afield as Boreen Point, Southport Broadwater, Mooloolaba, and Bribie Island.

Meditation, Yoga and Bridge were I think the glue that held everything together. There was activity each and every week, and she did even more camps and conferences in Sydney, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba, not forgetting the local Ashram at Ashgrove.

Travel

It was on their overseas jaunts where I think the real Titia came out. She kept diaries of each day, likely only for herself, and not anticipating they would be of interest to anyone else. For example, in 1976, twenty-five years after their forced departure from Indonesia, they visited their old haunts in Bali and Lombok. Patty met them in Bali. They eagerly became part of every venue, every event, every piece of history. Every corner they turned was an eye-opener for she and Johan, worthy of the efforts she put into her daily travel diary.

She has left us with more than 100 pages of detailed, delightful travel blog, from her travels to China, Indonesia, Canada, Holland, and Fiji. She visited Netty Morren in Canada, as well as Wendy and Benedicte at Victoria, Vancouver Island BC, while she was there.

Bridge happened virtually every week, and she often happily drove all over Brisbane, and far afield to Southport, Maleny, Caloundra, and Kooralbyn to play Bridge.

The connection with children and grandchildren also intensified, and most often around meals at Kara St, or at our own homes. There was nothing more enjoyable for her than a 'gezellige avond met kinderen'. I don't know an English equivalent to 'gezellig'. Grandchildren would be picked up, or dropped off, or to stay overnight. Jan and our children would more than once be dropped at the airport for the flight back to Jakarta or Singapore.



And all this time her activity with Lifeline and Children by Choice intensified. She undertook counselling courses, did the telephone afternoon shifts, and often the overnight shifts where difficult calls would come in, and she wouldn't be able to return home until morning.

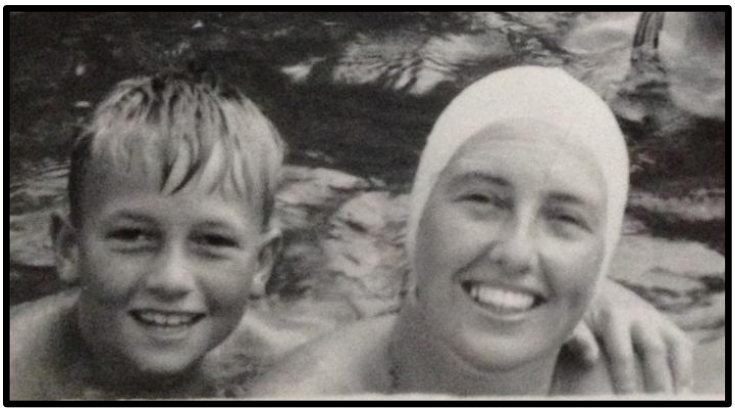
She took astrology courses so she could write better horoscopes, studied Indonesian, took out membership of the Qld Theatre Company at Suncorp for plays, and visited Holland again, to see her own old friends, and Johan's brothers and their families.

If reading all this about her leaves you breathless, it is because she was in fact extraordinarily busy, for a person her age, and very seldom could be found at home doing nothing.

In the late 1980's she admitted that she had to slow down a little. She would run out of puff more easily, and the gaps in her commitments became longer.

She and Me

She was not at all strict, or controlling, at least with me. School exams had to be passed, of course, but I was allowed to roam far and wide, and away from home till all hours, from a very young age, at Mitchelton. She likely thought I was a bit soft, and bought me boxing gloves at age 7 or so, which I immediately stored away, and she then enrolled me in the Enoggera Cubs, which, and with the Scouts, I enjoyed for many years.



I had a bicycle for my 9th birthday, which she bought from Mrs Colston,

a teacher at the school, and the mother of Senator Mal Colston, and of Jennifer Colston, who was in my class at Mitchie Primary School. From that time on, I was rarely home on the weekends. I don't remember her being concerned at where I might have been.

I brought Jan Roles home in 1967, to show her off. She was just 16 but I managed to convince Titia to lend the two of us her car in August that year, to go skiing at Thredbo. I don't think either Jan or I were surprised that she agreed. It didn't seem that difficult to convince her, nor Jan's mum, to let us go. I married Jan in 1970.

Ink smudging off

All of this, everything we saw and heard from her and her life has been unavoidably welded into our consciousness, as her children. It can't not. A lot of her ink has smudged off on us, and is likely indelible.

Unfortunately, and tragically, she didn't pay enough attention to her own health. Instead of treating her hypertension, which had ultimately carried off her Dad, she addressed it with Yoga. Her heart sustained too much continual stress, and she died of heart failure, at home in Kara St, in the early hours of Friday 9th August 1991, aged only 69, with Johan by her side.

Was she happy and satisfied with her life? She was loved, respected, and admired by a very wide circle of friends, a more-than-equal partner in a long and happy and eventful marriage, and she raised a wonderful family.

Did she achieve what she wanted? Probably not, there was always more to do. Did she leave the world a better place? Absolutely. Unquestionably.

