

# Visser Family History - Oma & Opa's Life

- Neeltje & Leendert Visser by Tini Visser Cook

# About this book.

This is a record of the life and times of my parents, Neeltje Adrianna Kok and Leendert Visser.

I have undertaken this so that my sons, nieces, nephews and subsequent generations may know something about their forebears in the Netherlands and the drastic step Mum & Dad took in 1951 to leave family and friends to come to Australia believing it would offer a better and safer future for their children - my brothers Aris, Yonny, my sister Nellie and me.

With every generation another family becomes a part of the history and a family tree has many branches, ever multiplying.

I will record what I know of previous generations but it is mainly about our parents Leen & Neeltje Visser.

Mum & Dad enjoyed a long and active life filled with many experiences, many they would never have imagined or thought possible in their youth. They grew up in a time that experienced enormous social, geographical & technological changes. Previous to their generation, people's lives were very insular, confined and predictable, living in the same area, in the same way as generations before.

Mum & Dad were born in Holland in 1910 and 1912 respectivelyin the days of horse & buggies and as they grew into adolescence bicycles came on the scene, then as young adults they were amongst the first to embrace motor bikes and then cars. Dad never lost that passion for vehicles and to keep on the move.

Aeroplanes and telephones were still to come.

To fly was the stuff of science fiction when they were young, and then when aeroplanes first appeared in the skies, they would never have thought they would experience that, let alone fly many times the long haul between Holland and Australia.

They passed away in Australia in 1995 & 2001, just before computers, email and mobile phones invaded our lives.

I did an earlier version of this book in 2010 with just one printed copy. In this I have added more information and the details of the growing number of great grandchildren since then and the first great great grandchild who was born only weeks ago.

Rather than re-doing some pages I have just added them as photographs so this explains why some pages present differently.

It is a pity Mum & Dad can't see this book. The technology and time was not available to me when they were still alive.

Luckily Mum never threw out photos, documents, newspaper articles or letters, so I have been able to access much of this. There is more if someone wants to go through it.

May you enjoy learning about your ancestors lives.

Tini Visser Cook

December 2021.

Dad always loved a bit of adventure and was always ready to try new things. He also challenged the status quo, going against his parents wishes, something rare in his time. Mum was more conservative but always stood by her man and went along for the ride.

Here is their story.





Dad and Mum when each about 18 years old.




# Visser Family History



The name Visser means 'Fisher'.
It is a common name in Holland as many were fishermen because the country was bordered by the North Sea in the west, bounded by a huge inland sea in the middle, had great rivers from the east traversing the country and was criss-crossed with innumerable canals.

Dad, or 'Pap', short for Papa, (pronounced pup) told us that way back in the Visser family history our forebears were whalers in the North Sea. Our sentiments are much changed and no such occupation would be considered now.

Our stem of Vissers came from Sleidrecht, near Doordrecht in South Holland and became involved in building things connected to water - windmills, floating bridges, dredgers and boats.

Dad's great grandfather Pieter Visser (b.1817) came to North Holland to work as a surveyor for the construction of the North Sea canal, which is still a major, busy canal. He then stayed on to work on the St Martins flood bridge. He specialised in building bridges and it is from here that the family's hereditary occupation of building - or timmerman in Dutch - continued through successive generations.

It only missed one generation and that was my generation, but I am pleased to say, and so certainly was Dad's sister, Tante Trijnie, that my son Charles Visser Cook is a builder. In fact from a very early age, that is all he ever wanted to be. There must be something in the genes.

Dad told us that in the 1500s, Spanish sailors from ships sunk in battle against the Dutch swam ashore and as they could not return to Spain, settled and married and thus the Spanish features of dark skin and hair can still be seen in our family, eg. Dad's sister, our Tante Trijne and my brother Aris.
That may not be the correct interpretation. I think Dad wanted to protect us from the reality of war.

Our cousin Wim Meijnen from Holland says it was rape and pillage during the Eighty Years War against the Spaniards that mixed their blood amongst the Dutch. It was the 'Slag bij Alkmaar' ie. The Seige of Alkmaar in 1573 that brought the war to an end. The Spaniards finally retreated after the people of Alkmaar threw boiling tar and burning branches over the city walls as the Spanish tried to enter and by breaching surrounding dikes to flood the Spanish camps.

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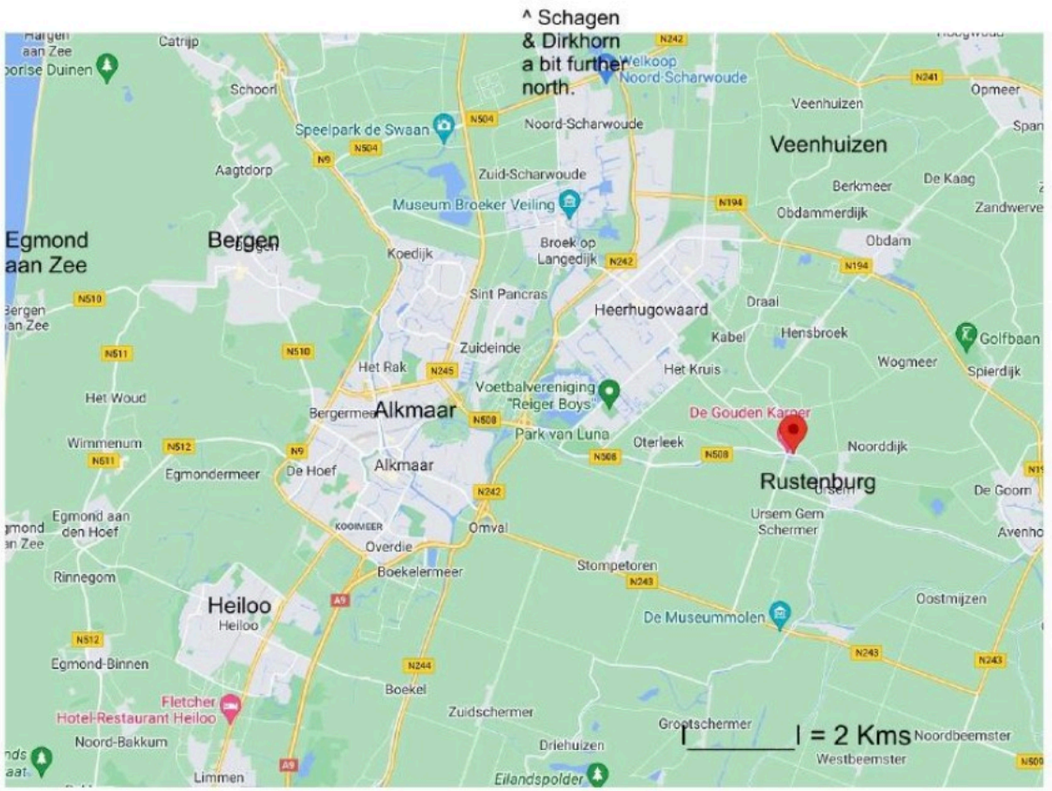
Opposite, you will see the area of North Holland (in yellow) where Mum & Dad grew up.

Until bikes and cars enabled further travel, people rarely went beyond a day's walking or skating range, so for generations, hundreds of years, people were born, lived, married and died in the same town or close-by, as you will note in the genealogical history.

# Where did we come from?




Veenhuizen where Dad grew up and Rustenburg where mum lived are still very small towns in North Holland.




The area highlighted in yellow on the map of the Netherlands is enlarged above.

VEENHUIZEN in the municipalitie of Heerhugowaard. This building was the workshop of the Visser family for generations, now converted into a house.






# Dad - Leendert Visser

As told to and written by his grandson Adrian Cook in 1993.

"My Opa, Leedert Visser, was born on a vicious stormy night on 15 July 1912 at Dirkshorn, North Holland. His parents were Aris Visser and Grietje Mooy.

When he was about 4 years old, there was a huge flood which he remembers as one of the most horrible things ever. One of the dykes broke and because much of Holland is below sea level, the flood was hundreds of kilometres wide. Their own house, fortunately was not flooded.

When he was 7 his father owned a bicycle repair shop and Opa got his first bike, which he rode everywhere. He went to a Christian school and says he probably would have been a minister if he had stayed there. (Instead he later became a non believer as he saw the church responsible for many problems in the world ).

The family moved to Veenhuizen. As canals led everywhere, they moved everything by boat - even the carpet, curtains, stove, as in Holland, when a house changes hands, you take everything.

Opa left school at 12 in 1924 to work with his father, a carpenter. By the time he was 16 he was able to build a house by himself but as cars were just coming onto the scene, he set his heart on being a motor mechanic. However, because he had started as a carpenter he continued on reluctantly.

One day when working with his father he got so angry, he threw a hammer straight towards his father's head. Luckily he missed, but he stopped working with his father for a while to cool down.

By 18 he could build the unique North Hollandse boerderijen (barns) which earned him an extra 10 guilders per week. These were farmhouses with animal stalls that required special skills, craft and technique to build because of their high pitched roofs.

His father had a car and because they could not afford to take it to a garage to get fixed, Opa who had no training or experience in motors, would teach himself by fiddling around until it worked.

Opa was a bit of a fearless driver for his time. Not even the thickest Dutch fog or the hardest rain would put him off.

There were times too, when Opa would have to drive his father's Harley Davidson motorbike home for him because his father did not want to drive in the fog.

Opa enjoyed ice skating and was very good at it. It was fun and a form of transport in winter as the canals froze and you could skate anywhere. Opa would skate to work. One day Opa and his friends skated to Amsterdam and back - some 50 km each way. Stalls selling hot treats set up along the way meant you didn't have to stop off in the towns and gave it all a carnival atmosphere."



Dirkshoorn in North Holland where Dad was born.


Leen at 16, working for his father. His father, middle back row; Dad 2nd from L front.


Dad driving his father's car. ca.1930 aged 18.

# Dad - Leendert Visser's family.



ca.1914. Dad on R as a toddler with his older sister Brecht. Dad is wearing a skirt ?! Perhaps this was a fashion at the time or just a hand-me-down from big sis.



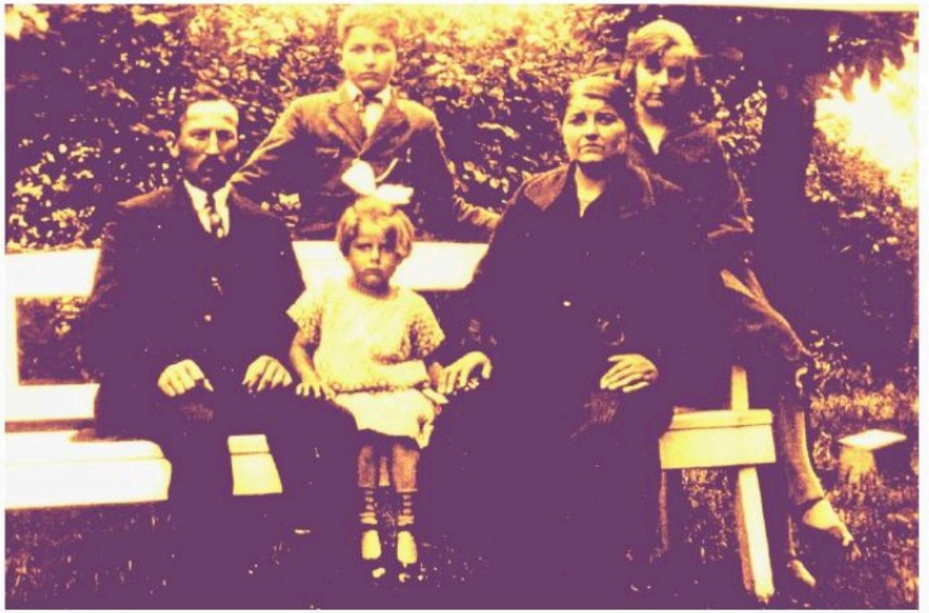
ca.1917. Opa Aris Visser, sister Brecht, Dad, Leendert, Oma Grietje Visser



ca.1920. Opa Visser, Dad, Brecht, Oma Visser.



ca.1923.
Siblings, Brecht, Leendert, Trintje.



ca.1924.
Opa Visser, Dad Leendert standing behind younger sister Trijntje, Oma Grietje Visser & Older sister Brecht.



1927 aged 15 in a new suit. His proud mother sent him to have a photo taken - on his pushbike. But in a sudden burst of rain his suit shrank! His mother was so disgusted, she got rid of the suit and it was never seen again!



The Visser Family in 1914: Back - 1st Left - My grandfather Aris ( 1st son ); Piet (4th) who died in 1918 Spanish Flu epidemic; his girlfriend who after he died, never married; Grietje, wife of Cornelius; Cornelius (2nd); Teun (3rd) who married Jantje Bronder,
Front, My grandmother Grietje Mooy holding the baby, my father Leendert; My great grandfather Leendert; my father's sister Brechtje and great grandmother Trijntje Aarsen wearing the traditional lace cap with gold clasps. Both she & Dad's mother also wearing traditional coral chokers.

# Dad's parents - Aris Visser & Grietje Mooij.

As Dad told Adrian:

"Opa ARIS VISSER was born 3 November 1883 in Dirkshorn near Schagen in North Holland. He was the eldest of 4 boys. He was a carpenter, a true perfectionist who made beautiful cabinets and also built houses and coffins!.

He married Grietje Mooij 17 January 1908, aged 24.

He was a real gentleman, but dominated by his wife. He was no businessman - if he liked a customer he didn't charge enough, and if he didn't like them, he charged too much. He hated doing the accounts, preferring to read instead.

Leendert had to take over the business side of things to save them from bankruptcy.

Aris Visser died in 1965 at 82. (He had waited to see his only son once more and died content a few weeks after Leendert had gone back to Holland in 1965 and returned to Australia).

Aris Visser's, wife GRIETJE MOOIJ was born 13 Aug 1886.

Before marrying she worked for a farmer milking and doing housework. She was a good housekeeper and hard bargainer, 'drawing blood from under the nails' of shopkeepers. When shopping she would say 'No, much too dear', and walk on; the shop owner would then run after her, offering a cheaper price.

She was a good dressmaker, designing her own patterns and sewing the clothes by hand. She was not a reader like everyone else in the family and would get angry as there was no one talking. "All that reading! Put those hands to work".

One of her sayings was "A woman's hands, like a horses mouth, should never be still".

She was very ambitious and wanted her only son Leendert to be an architect. He disagreed and she was most put out. She also did not want Leendert to marry as he was the bread winner and she did not want to lose him to someone else. She never accepted Neeltje. However she was loving to the rest of the family and loved having everyone around for birthdays and Christmas.

She was a big heavy woman and had the greatest fun teaching her grandchildren, the 3 boys of Brecht, to swear!"...Dad told Adrian.



Dad's parents
Grietje Mooy & Aris Visser, engaged 1907, aged 21 & 24.

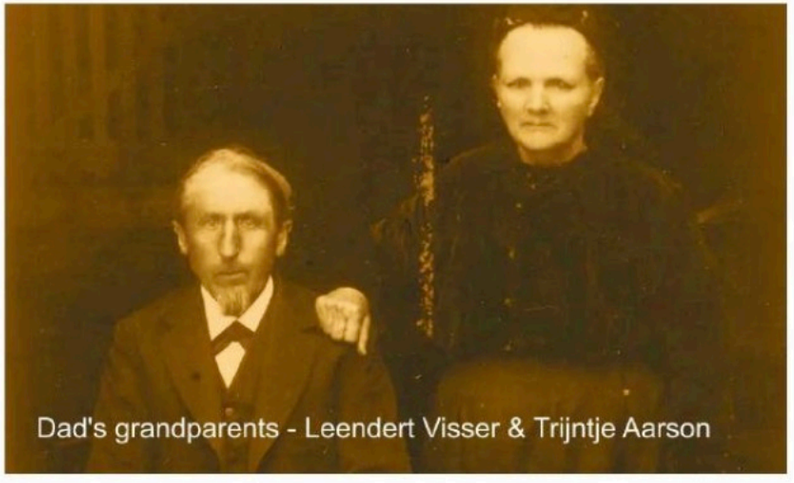


Grietje & Aris in later life

# Dad's grandparents - Leendert Visser & Trijntje Aarson.

Dad's father's father was LEENDERT VISSER was born in Zijpe (near Schagen) N.H. on 17 January 1858, the 12th child of 12.
He died in 1929 aged 71.

He married TRIJNTJE AARSON who was born 3 weeks before him on 29 December 1857.
She died 7/3/1931 aged 74.
They had 5 sons. The first Pieter (1882-1884)_died when not yet 2 and when Dad's father Aris (b. 1883) was still a baby. The next son born in 1886 was then also named Pieter so that his grandfather Pieter had a namesake, however this Pieter died in 1918 from the Spanish Flu epidemic. We have some letters written at this time that I will translate. This Pieter was engaged to be married I believe and then she never married someone else.
The other sons were Cornelius Visser 1889-1972 and Teunis Visser 1891-1975.



Dad's grandparents - Leendert Visser & Trijntje Aarson

# VISSER GENEALOGICAL LINE

Thanks to relatives in Holland for copies of their research. This is just the direct Visser line. Of course there are their wive's lines as well and there were many brothers and sisters, so there are many ancestors we have a connection to.

Mum & Dad followed the tradition of naming the 1st son after the father's father, Aris, the 2nd after the mother's father, Jan, except that the first daughter who would normally be named after the father's mother, was named after Mum as she did not like her mother-in-law (more on that later), so when I was born I was the only one to get a second name and I was named Catharina Margaretha after both Mum's mother and Dad's mother.

You will notice Szn often added to the name, this means 'son of' and you will see that name corresponds to the one below it. Similarly daughters had 'dr' added. Many surnames such as Visser were very common, so this was a handy way of identifying which family they belonged to. These traditions makes it somewhat easier when researching family history in the past. This tradition broke down completely in our generation with parents chosing a names they liked instead. Fortunately it is no longer so important for children to be named after grandparents (and if more than 4 children, then after their uncles & aunts) or genealogical research because better records are kept and available online.

I have much more detailed information on the Visser genealogy for those interested.

Dad - Leendert Visser 1/7/1912 - 10/3/1995. 2nd of 3 chn.

His Father - Aris Visser 3/11/1883 - 7/11/1965. 2nd of 5 chn. Married Grietje Mooy 17/1/1908. (1886 - 1940) 3 chn.

His Grandfather - Leendert Visser 17/1/1858 - 1929. 12th of 12 chn. Married Trijntje Aarson 29/12/ 1857 - 1931. 5 chn, 1 died at 2 yrs, another with same name died of Spanish Flu aged 32.

His Great Grandfather - Pieter Visser 1817 - 1891 in Slieddrecht, South Holland. 1st of 7 chn. Married Metje Groennewgen in 1840.(1819 -1879) 12 chn, 5 died very young.

His 2nd Great Grandfather - Pieter AbrahamSz Visser 1794 - 1856. 3rd of 12 chn. Married Cornelia Lanser in 1819. (1791 - 1858) 7 chn, 2 died very young.

His 3rd Great Grandfather - Abraham Visser 1766 - 1819. 8th of 9 chn. Married Pietertje Roskam in 1790. (1769-1809) 8 chn.
Married Marigje Meywaerd ( 1778 - 1813) 4 chn, of which 3 died before 1 yr.

His 4th Great Grandfather - Lucas ArijSzn Visser 5/ 1725-22/1/1801. 3rd of 3 chn. Married lFijken (Fijgje) Sijrett in 1752. (1791 - 1858) 9 chn.

His 5th Great Grandfather -Arien ( Arij) PieterSzn Visser ca. 1694. Sliedrecht. 3rd of 4 chn. Married Jannigje Teunisd De Waerd in 1719. (1688 - 1755) 3 chn.

His 6th GreatGrandfather - Pieter ArienSzn Visser ca. 1680 - 1725. Sliedrecht.1st of 7 chn. Married Cathalijntje Lucasdr Macharis in 1695. (1769-1809) 4 chn.
Married Ariaantje Dekker ( 1778- 1813) 1 child.

His 7th Great Grandfather - Arien AartSznVisser ca. 1660 - 1720. 1st of 2 chn. Married Merrigje (Margje) Pieters in 1670. (ca. 1654 - 1730). 7 chn.

His 8th Great Grandfather - Aart ArienSzn Visser ca. 1640. 3rd of 10 chn. Married Teuntje Ariens. (b.1634) 2 chn.

His 9th Great Grandfather - Arien JanSzn Visser ca. 1606 - 1650. 1st of 3 chn. Married Adriaanje Schram (ca. 1615-1652) 10 chn.

His 10th Great Grandfather - Johannes (Jan) PauluSzn Visser - 1588. Fisherman Sliedrecht. Died ca.1640.Married Neeltgen Jansdr. ( ca. 1594) 3 chn.

His 11th Great Grandfather - Paulus JanSzn Visser - 1556. Married Marietje Jansdr. (ca. 1562)

His 12th Great grandfather - Jan Visser - 1524.

And now we already have the 20th generation since Jan Visser in 1524.

# Dad's mother's side - Mooy / Tentij / Wink.

GRIETJE MOOY

Dad's mother, Grietje Mooy was born on 13 August 1886.
She married Aris Visser on 17 January 1908 when she was 22 years old.
She died 29 January 1940, aged 53 from a blood clot after an operation for fibroids.

Her father was Jacob (Jaap) Cornelius Mooy (14 August 1861 - 1 Nov 1891) who was a 'landman' - a farmer - at Schagen.

BRECHTJE MOOY - TENTIJ.

Grietj'es mother was Brechtje Tentij (b. 22 Aug 1863) who married Jacob Mooy on 7 May 1886 when she was 23. Grietje was born 3 months later.
Now, this is where it gets interesting.
Dad's cousin Nel Mooy who came out to visit us in Australia in 1981, told me that Brechtje worked for a farmer who was married and got young Brechtje pregnant. The farmer, whose name was Witt or De Witt arranged for Jacob to marry her.
Grietje had dark hair and was of stocky build. The subsequent children of this marriage were very different in looks, being fair and of finer build.

So the Mooy line may not really be in our blood as it appears Jacob Mooy was not the biological father of Grietje, Dad's mother. When I brought this up with Dad's sister, our Tante Trijnie, she was shocked and denied that this was the case.

Brecht's husband Jacob Mooy died 1/11 1891 aged 30 and in 1892 Brecht married Reindert Buisman (b.1862).
Brecht died 28 March 1907 aged 44.

However even though Jacob Mooy may not have been the biological father, the family considered themselves Mooys. Jacob Mooy's father was Klaas Mooy (18 Oct 1832 - 26 Aug 1914) who married Martje Pronk on 1 May 1859.
His father was Jan Mooy (29 Mar 1801 - 4 January 1891) and married Rensje Bos.

Brecht Tentij was the daughter of Cornelius Tentij and Grietje Wink.

GRIETJE WINK.

Grietje Wink was born 6 Dec 1836.
A record says she died 23 Sept 1933, aged 96, which means she well and truly outlived her daughter Brecht who died in 1907. I wonder if this is correct.
Grietje Wink's father was Cornelius Andries Wink (14 Sept 1810 - 23 Feb 1879) and her mother was Bregje Waijboer (26 Oct 1806 - 14 January 1872).

Cornelius Wink's father was Andries Wink ( 8 Sept 1771 - 23 April 1817), his mother was Johanna (Hanna) Pieters Donk (21 Sept 1777 - 23 Sept 1841).

I do have further generations but as it doubles each time, it is too complicated to record it all here.


Grietje Mooy 1908.
Dad's mother, Our grandmother.


Brechtje Tentij
Mother of Grietje Mooy, Our Great grandmother.


Grietje Wink
Mother of Brechtje Tentij. Our Gr,Gr,Grandmother.

# Visser letters from early 1900s

I found these old letters amongst Mum & Dad's things. They just deal with the ordinary, everyday things. It is interesting that Dad must have kept them as they were written before he was born and when he was very young, or perhaps they were given to us later.

Telephones did not exist so dropping a line on a letter card was how they kept in touch and got messages to one another. Postage was very cheap - equivalent to a few cents cents today.

I have translated as best I could but the writing was not always legible.




*Letter card to: Miss G Mooy* *Keinsmerbrug 2 Aug 1906*
*C/- Mr P Buis, Schagen.*
*Dearest daughter G.*

*You will say mother does not write anymore but I am doing my work so slowly that it has passed my mind. Monday I did half the washing but Tuesday I was so sick that I could not do anything. Wednesday and today go better but lots of coughing and pain in the chest that the children must again tonight go to .... ?.. for....?*

*Your little brother is also not well and of course very busy. Otherwise no other news. Hearty greetings from your mother and to others in your house my regards.*

To Grietje Mooy when 20, still single & working for this family, from her mother, Brecht Tentij 43 at the time and who died, 7 months later in March 1907. Keinsmerbrug was not a village but just a small cluster of houses near Schagen.

*Letter written on grid notepaper.:* *Keinsmerbrug 25 Oct 1906*
*Loved Greitje.*

*You would have thought there comes nothing of mother's writing but because father called in last Thursday, I thought he would have said it all.*

*I have not been too good for a while and Maartje comes here often to do the washing and such work and after Christmas for good, if it continues, as everyday I have to go to the loo all the time. I also have it in my stomach and cannot have anything other than milk, crust? and meat, and a couple of eggs a day. Your hat is not here with us and don't know where else to look.*
*I received your letter card the other day and a letter from Dirk and that the rent at Ap is put aside and on Wednesday guests were coming but father was so cross that I had to write a letter that they better not come home as he found her so annoying because she complains about coming and now complains that she did not come. Mrs de Graaf's maid was was to come as guest on Wednesday but they did not come but a letter that they would still pay the rent.*

*Anna Veter van Schagenbrug is coming by ..... nice that Anna is going home. This morning father again bought a cow and a young pig but the ... and now we are less 300guilders that we'd scraped and saved but they look like good milkers. On Monday father begins to build the new ? with only Leen.*
*Hearty greetings from your mother.*

This Leen was not Dad as he not born and there was no connection to the Vissers -yet. Grietje's mother Brecht Tentij died 6 months after writing this.

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*Letter on notepaper from old savings bank book of 1906-1907 but no date.*
*Keinsmerbrug*

*Cor,*

*Mother did send your box but the transport driver could not manage it all and the chickens I could not catch as they went into the tree all the time but now yesterday we managed to get them them in the shed, 7 chickens from.....and was not happy that I did not give him ..... but I had the earlier letter that we keep them for the shoemaker. The package from the lady ..... with your clothes ..... but you must fold the clothes neatly in the cupboard.*
*On Sunday wear your best suit and your collar and your shoes polished because it is carnival and we have visitors coming. I shall send you later in the week clean ones again.* *Bye from your mother.*

This too was written by Grietje's mother Brecht Tentij ( Dad's maternal grandmother). I did not know if Grietje had a brother Cor, then I found his death notice in amongst Mum & Dad's stuff. He would have been 16 at the time his mother wrote this to him. Brecht died in March 1907, so it must have been written in 1906. Cornelius Mooy b.1890 (an uncle of Dad) died in 1949 aged 59.

*Very faded letter written in pencil on both sides of folded notepaper.*
*No date.*

*Valued ?and ? ! (Initials only)*

*So you see Grietje, here finally some steak and we hope that you will enjoy eating it.*

*Yesterday father Buisman came to visit.....(too faded).*

*Last week Trijntje Kutman came over and she said that it was not serious yet. He will have to take a half years rest.There is a little shack being built for him.*

*I have been very busy sewing, I have it nearly ready.*
*With the farm everything goes well luckily but we .....all the steers and that is a pity because we must must buy the same.*

*Last week Klaus sold a cow and bought a young one which is already milking well.*

*Every week I can sell 12 or 14 ponds of butter, that is nice work.*

*Do you hear anything from Cor? Not us. Father said that he has 4 workers and that he had written that he had much to do and to think through.*

*Last week Jan and Alie called on us, which was a nice surprise. .*
*..... guests could not come because wife ..... was not well.*

*What did you all win in the lottery? Nothing for us otherwise we would have been notified.*

*Now Grietje are you riding (bike) again? and how goes it with sister and brother?*

*Now I must end as there is washing and darning to do.*
*Don't write of ..... as it has gone in the cupboard.*

*Hearty greetings from Uncle K? and Aunt.*
*M. (Mother).*

This too was written by Grietje's mother Brecht Tentij.
As she had remarried in 1892 to Rein Buisman after her first husband died when Grietje was 8, the Father Buisman referred to here would have been Brecht's new father-in-law.

*Lettercard To Mr A Visser* *Lutjewal 19 June 1918*
*Stroomerslaan 689 Bergen N.H.*

*Valued ? and ?and children!*

*I thought I would would just quickly write Grietje. Have you already heard Grietje on which train to Schagen the seamstress comes? Please be so good as to write me her address, then I shall ask her myself by lettercard.*

*Now Grietje we hope very much for good weather another day soon as we expect you to stay for a night. As long as it doesnt rain hey, because then it is not to do with the young children. We will live in hope.*

*But Grietje please bring your bread coupons as we can no longer meet our bread needs. Some lovely rain hey, have you also had good rain for the garden?*

*How is Aris, is he working hard again? How different it will be for you Grietje. Have you already let (rent) it?*

*Well our hearty greetings and 'til we meet. K & M & chn.*
*K Kutman, Lutjuwaal Schagen (probably a friend of Grietje).*

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*Lettercard To Mr A Visfer* *Dirkshorn 6 Aug 1918.*
*Stroomerslaan 689 Bergen N.H.*

*Valued Son and Daughter!*

*With this letter I let you know that Pieter and Grietje ( ornelius's wife) and Cornelis lay in bed with the Spanish Flu.*
*Grietje is getting a bit better but Pieter is very sick with it, fever and pain in his back and sleeps heavily and is so weak that he he needs constant help and Cornelis also has heavy fever but the doctor said it is going ok.*
*Mother stayed with Pieter for a few nights but she is now home again; we have not been affected, how goes it with you?*
*Can you still come Sunday? I am in quite a quandry as Jan Moeijes is also sick and now I am entirely alone from the crew in Dirkshorn and I have to finish a new house for the building fraternity can you please help me!*

*Love from your parents, L Visfer Dirkshorn.*

This was written by my Dad's Grandfather Leendert Visser when he was 60 - interesting to note he spelt Visser as Visfer, but sadly we know that the son Pieter written about died of the Spanish flu. As right now (2021) we are dealing with the worldwide Covid pandemic, we have some understanding of the anxiety they went through. Interesting that although the mother spent a few days caring for him, she did not seem to get the Spanish Flu.

# Mum - Neeltje Adrianna Kok

Neeltje was the first child born to Jan & Trijntje Kok.
She was born on 21 April 1910 and weighed a mere 2½ Dutch pounds. As was the norm in Holland, she was born at home at the hotel her parents Trijntje & Jan ( the Dutch for John) Kok owned in Rustenburg, North Holland.

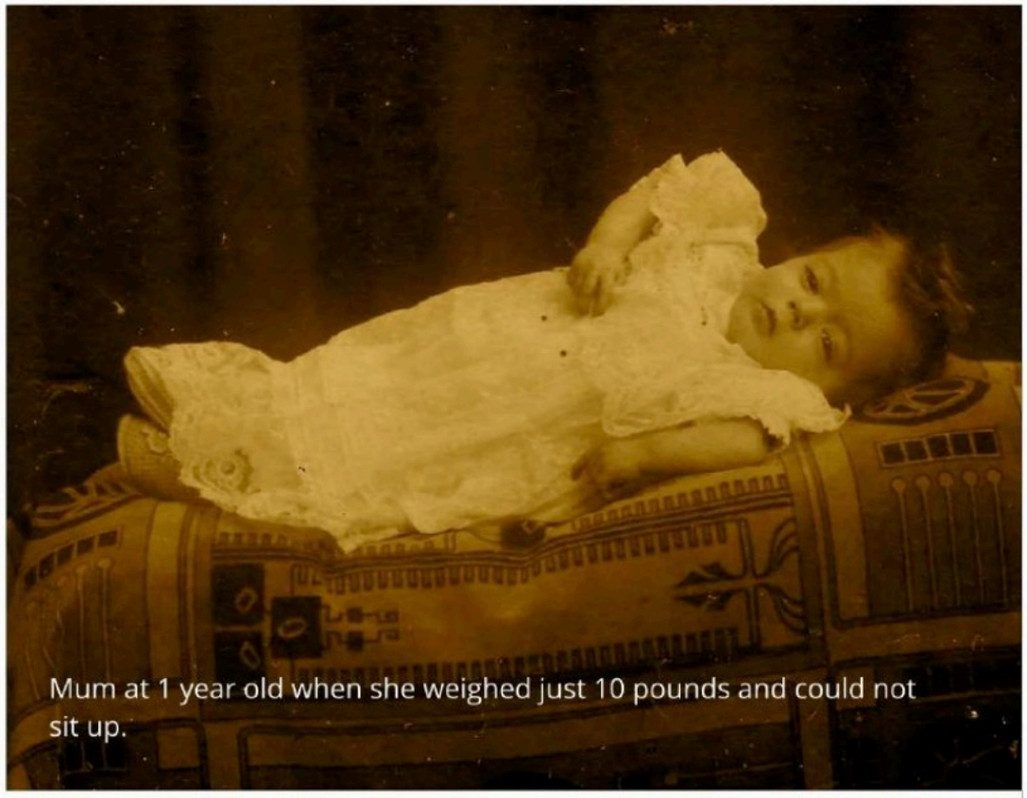
Because she was so tiny, to keep up her body heat she was placed in a drawer with blankets and kept near the wood fired stove.She was not expected to live. She could not keep her food down so was fed only on barley water.

Customers coming to the hotel would ask "Leeft dat kindje nog?"
"Is that baby still alive?"

But alive she was and survive she did for 91years, 1 week and 1day, out-living her younger brother, sisters, husband and many friends.

The smallest, frailest of them all ended up being the strongest and most courageous.

Below - Mum with her parents Jan & Trijntje Kok with their horse and cart outside the Cafe/Hotel they ran at Rustenburg, North Holland.



Mum at 1 year old when she weighed just 10 pounds and could not sit up.



# Neeltje's early life.



Neeltje with her mother,

Over the years patrons at the hotel still asked after Neeltje (Nely). Her father's reply: "Ja, zij leeft wel, maar is kleine gebleven".
Yes, she still lives, but remains small.

She was 2 when her brother Adriaan was born (1912 -1987).
She was 4 when sister Elisabet ( Bets, 1913 -1974) arrived
and 10 when sister Catharina ( Tlnie, 1920 - 1987) was born.

Despite her poor start she was always healthy and lively. She always said she had a wonderful youth, full of fun and lots of friends.

She never grew much - at her peak she was 4'10" (145cm) but those little legs could really move. She was always busy and active and hard to keep up with.

One winter when playing with friends on the ice, Neeltje fell through where the ice was thin. She was struggling to keep afloat and would have drowned if a friend didn't manage to save her. She never liked swimming much after that.

Although good at school she was not interested in continuing after turning 12. As was the norm then, girls left school to help at home. Home for her was the Cafe/Hotel and she worked very hard there for no pay for 17 years until marrying at 29.



This photo shows Neeltje with their dog when she was about 4, taken by a travelling photographer.

Sometime later an aunt was surprised to buy a children's story book and find Neeltje's photo used for the tale, 'Jo en Haar Vriendje' - 'Jo and Her Friend.'
I have a copy of the book.



Neeltje with her brother Adriaan.



Brother Adriaan, sister Bets, Neeltje.



All siblings - sister Tinie, Neeltje ( who was 10 years older than Tinie), Adriaan and Bets.

# Mum's family - the Kok side.



Neeltje Brak, mother of Opa Jan Kok. When younger and wearing traditional headgear, coral necklace & scarf.



Neeltje Brak, mother of Opa Jan Kok - 'a difficult woman' - when older.




The two samplers my Oma Trijnitje Pluimgraaff did in 1892 when she was 12 years old. Mum's sister Tante Tinie knew I was into embroidery and family history and she sent them to me. I have them framed and hanging on the wall.



Klaas & Sjaan Pluimgraaff, the parents of Mum's mother.




The headstone of our Opa & Oma Kok. They are buried together at Heiloo.



# KOK FAMILY HISTORY

The name Kok is the Dutch for Cook and somewhere in our family's past that would have been their occupation.

MUM'S FATHER, our Opa, Jan Kok was born at Hensbroek, North Holland 5.10.1878. He was a small man, full of fun, talented at playing tricks with cards and telling stories. He was always happy and never angry even with difficult guests. His hotel was called 'De Rustende. Man - 'The Restful Man' which was appriate for him but I think it was named that when he bought it In 1906 when he married Trijntje Pluimgraff.

As well as looking after his guests with the utmost respect and generosity, he had a small farm, milked their 6 cows, grew vegetables and did all the 'inmaaking' - bottling, salting, etc to preserve food over the winter.

During world War 2, when people were starving and wandering in search of food, his skills, generosity and self sufficiency in having eggs, milk and flour, enabled him to make and give pancakes to a steady stream of people begging for food. Pancake making has been a family favourite with Mum, me and my sons - that's already 4 generations!

Opa Kok died 1st Feb 1959 at 81 years of age.

His father, Gr. Opa Pieter Kok was born at Qterleek 8.10.1849 and married Neeltje Brak on 16.2.1873 from Schagen. He was a farmer and had 6 children before he drowned in a canal on 1.2.1911. It was said he drowned himself as Neeltje Brak was a difficult woman and they had a bad marriage.

MUM'S MOTHER was Trijntje Pluimgraaff born at Egmond Aan Zee on 24 .12.1879, a coastal town, buit on the sand dunes, near Alkmaar, bordering the North Sea. When she was 12 years old, like all girls of the time, she learned needlecraft by stitching a sampler. Little would she have thought that those samplers would end up framed and hanging on the wall of her granddaughter in Australia. I feel privledged that my Tante Tiniee sent them to me many years ago, as she knew I liked stitching and also family history.

Trijntje was a wonderful organiser and with her husband ran the hotel at Rustenburg which was a popular meeting place, not only for those of their own community, but people came from surrounding towns too.

She was highly regarded in the community, affectionately called 'Moeder Kokie' (Mother Cookie) by all. She was a very hard worker and generous to poor people. They were not rich but well off and never went without anything.

Oma Kok died 8.12.1960 at almost 81 years old.

It would have been so sad for Mum that she never got to see her parents again after leaving for Australia. We kids also never knew our grandparents.



Trintje Plumgraaff & Jan Kok - when engaged, before they got married in 1906 aged 27 and 28.



Outside the hotel on their 40th wedding anniversary 1946 aged 67& 69



When retired and living at 236 Kennermerstraatweg Heiloo.

# Mum's genealogical line.

From some very complicated information from relatives in Holland.
I have tried to simplify and follow direct lines.

## KOK.

Mum - Neeltje Adrianna Kok b 21/4/1910 Rustenburg. d. 29/4/2001 Carrum Downs, Australia.

HER FATHER - JAN KOK b. 5/10/1877 at Hensbroek. d. 1/2/1959 St. Pancreas m. 5/10/1898 to Trijntje Pluimgraaf b. 24/12/1879 Egmond aan Zee.d.8/12/1960.

Grandparents - Pieter Kok b. 8./0/1849 at Oterleek. d. 1/2/1911; m. 16/2/1873 to Neeltje Brak b./11/1851 Ursem - d. 18/9/1930 - the difficult one - well, according to this she did loose both parents at a very early age. Her parents were Simon Brak, landholder, b. 24/8/1805 Ursem d. 24/8/1859 (On his 54th birthday?); m. 16/6/1833 to Diewertje Over'tWater (2/10/1811 - 1./6.1856) Her father Simon had been married earlier to a woman who died.
Simon was son of - Pieter Brak christened 1/9/1773 Ursem d. 9/5/1821 at 47yrs; m. Maartje Vet b.11/5/1783, daughter of Arien Vet &Trijntje Gerrits Visser ( interesting, but possibly no relation).
Pieter Brak was son of Sijmen Brak & Dieuwertje Swart who married 23/7/1769, daughter of Jan Zwart.
Sijmen Brak was the son of Jan Brak.

Gr. g/p - Jan Kok b. 9/3/1821 at Zwaag. d. 26/3/1913, aged 92; He was a farmer and later a wagon maker. On 29/4/1849 he marriedTrijntje Groninger b. April 1832 HeerHugoWaard d. 21/7/1897 aged 65. Both buried at Oterleek.
Trijntje Groninger's parents were Dirk Groninger b. 15/11/1797 N. Schermer; m. Trijntje Watertor 2/11/1798 - 20/4/1832 HeerHugowaard.
Dirk Groninger a farmer, was son of Cornelius Groninger who married Antje Athenia Wijtman14/2/1794 Farmers at Oterleek. Dirk Groninger's 1st wife Hillegard Met died at 34 yrs. Cornelius Groninger's father was Jacob Groninger. His wife Antje's parents were Antony Wijtman & Grietje Bakker.
Trijntje Watertor was daughter of Jacob Watertor b. H.H.Waard 7/11/1764 died H.H.W. 16/4/1831 at 66 yrs. He married Trijntje Paardebos b H.H.W. 18/3/1792. She died 29/4/822. Her father was Adam Paardebos. Jacob Watertor's father was Willem Watertor and mother was Belitje Hoogland.

2nd Gr g/p - Pieter Kok b.1/2/1790 Kolhorn - d.1/4/1870; He was a school teacher. m.18/2/1816 to Neeltje Schagen b.1788 Wevershoof. d.1/1/1827aged 37.

3rd Gr, g/p - Klaas Pietersz Kok b. 11/12/1759 Kolhorn. d. 25/9/1844 aged 85; m. Cornelisje Ariensdr Petten b. 1765 d. 19/6/1799 aged 34.

4th Gr g/p - Pieter Jansz Kok b.31/10/1723, was a 'watermolenaar' - watermiller, m. Maartje Claasdr Liefhebber. b.10/1733.

5th Gr g/p - Jan Kok b. 1698 in Kolkorn? m. Jantje Liefhebber b. 1698.

## PLUIMGRAAFF.

= the superviser of the Royal poultry.

MUM'S MOTHER - Catharina (Trijntje) Pluimgraaff b. 24/12/1879 the 10th of 16 children!

Mum's maternal grandfather - Klaas Leendertsz Pluimgraaff b. 13/1/1836 Egmond aan Zee. d. 4/8/1924 aged 88. He m. Eefje Schaak in 1862 and she died aged 32 after 7 children who all died before reaching adulthood. Klaas then married Adriana van Duijn and had 9 more children of which it appears only Mum's mother reached old age.
Gr G/p - Leendert Jacobsz Pluimgraaff b. 3/1800 in Egmond aan Zee. d. 4/12/1864 aged 64. m. Trijntje Cornelis de Groot b. 16/12/1800 d. 23/10/1872 aged 71.

2nd Gr g/p -Jacob Leendertsz Pluimgraaff b.10/1758 in Katwijk aan Zee.d.20/4/1805 aged 46. m.Rachel Jans Planteijt b.11/1759 Egmond aan Zee d.14/11/1822 at 63.
3rd Gr g/p - Leendert Dirksz Pluimgraaff b. 12/1731 Katwijk aan Zee d. 22/10/1801 aged 69. m. Geertruij Dirksd Krekel b. 10/1733 d. 30/5/1803 aged 69.

4th Gr g/p - Dirk Jaspersz Pluimgraaff b. 3/1692 Katwijk aan Zee d. 17/10/1764 aged 72. m. Annetje Teunisd Geiteman b. 7/1697 d. 20/2 1775 aged 77.

5th Gr g/p - Jasper Leendertsz Pluimgraaff b.23/9/1646 in Katwijk aan Zee. m. Trijntje Oliviersdr b. 1650? d. !700?aged about 50.

6th Gr g/p - Leendert Jansz Pluimgraaff b. c.1618 Katwijk aan Zee m. Guurtje Dirckx b.c.1617.
7th Gr g/p - Jan Pluimgraaff b. 1595 Katwijk aan Zee m. Leuntje Jacobsdr b.c.1595.

.....and I have more on all lines going back to 1430.







The original family hotel 'De Rustende Man' at Rustenburg that had to be demolished to make way for new canal diversion.




L. This shows the hotel with the 'boerderij' - barn at the back for housing animals & hay in winter.




Another view of Rustenburg. Photos late 1920s.




L. Mum 18 at the window of original hotel.

R. Bar of original hotel.

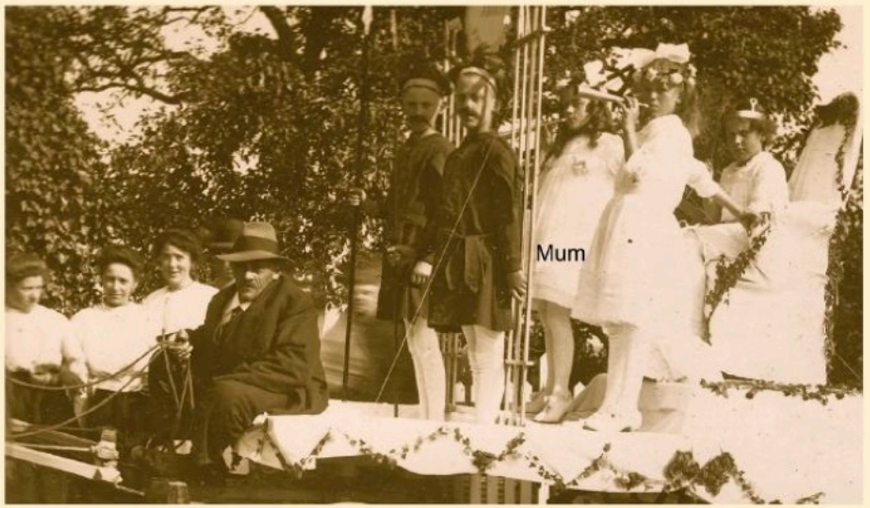





L. Another view of Rustenburg.

R. Friend, Mum, sister Tinie with hotel and barn in background.






L. Mum 10 on a float for Queen's birthday celebration 1920.

R. Mum and locals watching special race.



# Life at Rustenburg.

Rustenburg is a very small village in North Holland. Much of this part of Holland is reclaimed land and below sea level.

Mum's parents bought the the Café/ Hotel when they married in 1906. It became the focal point of the town and wider community as they were very genial hosts. Anything that was on, was on at their place. Meetings, dances, balls, weddings, concerts and parties were all held at their abode as there was no town hall. There was music, drink, food, billiards and dancing, all with a great atmosphere. There was accommodation too for travellers, mainly fishermen from the city who came back year after year and became part of the family's life.

Opa Kok had a horse and carriage to pick up guests. Mum and her sister Bets worked hard at the hotel even though there was some paid help too. The main room upstairs meant hauling big vats of hot milk to warm the guests tummies and coals to warm their feet for winter time functions. The coals were placed inside special wooden foot warmers for each guest. The women had these under their long dresses - no work-safe regulations then!

Their place was where everyone gathered. Mum's friends, Iet & Anna De Waal would come and give a hand after doing all the chores on their farm, as they loved to be a part of all that was going on. As well as all the housekeeping, cooking, cleaning, serving in the bar and at tables, Mum entertained guests playing billiards and even sang and played the piano! Mum was a lively lady and loved to dance so was a real asset to attract the young ones.

Each summer season there was 'carnival' time, and the hotel would be full. For this festive season every night Mum and her sister Bets would not have finished cleaning up till 2am then have only two hours sleep before starting work again.

It was hard physical work with lots of dragging of chairs, food, urns of boiling water, etc, up and down, to & from the 'zaal' upstairs where all the special celebrations were held.

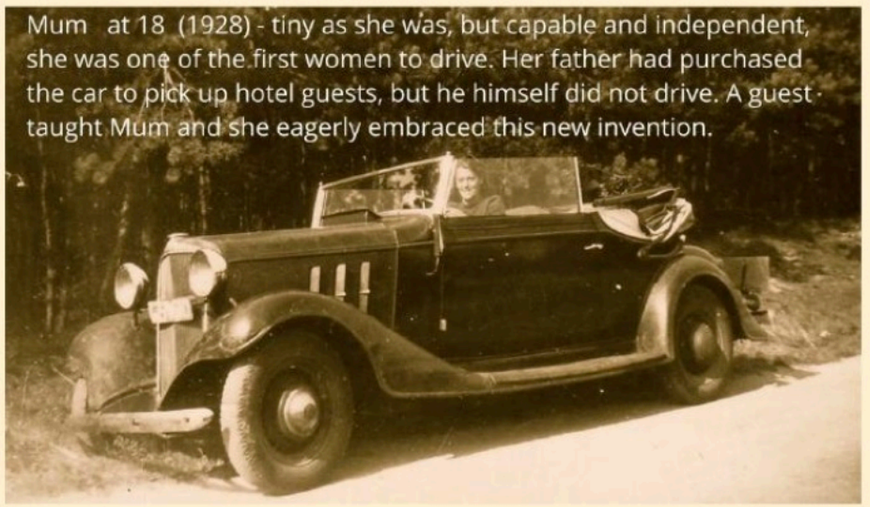
No doubt her life at the hotel/café set the quick and busy pace she always moved at.



Iet & Anna De Waal with Mum on the milk cart towed by the family dog.



Mum sitting on motorbike with a goat as pillion passenger!
On her right sisters Tinie & Bets & brother Adriaan. Others unknown.



Mum at 18 (1928) - tiny as she was, but capable and independent, she was one of the first women to drive. Her father had purchased the car to pick up hotel guests, but he himself did not drive. A guest taught Mum and she eagerly embraced this new invention.



Mum, sisters Bets & Tinie in a later car

# Mum's life when young.



Mum with her new bike
when about 18.



Mum on the back of a 'brommer' -
motor bike with sister Bets driving.



Opa Kok milking the cows kept behind the hotel.
In winter they were kept inside the barn.




Mum and her sewing class in 1929. Many of whom were her lifelong friends who wrote regularly to Mum in Australia.



A bit of time out side to enjoy the sun
and a visitor.
Adriaan, Oma Kok, visitor, Mum & cat.




Oma& Opa Kok took a rare day off from the hotel and went to view the new flying machines that had been recently invented.





Opa Kok, Bets & Mum preparing beans for bottling.
Above R. Mum & Bets peeling potatoes for evening meal.

Below: Mum hanging out the washing behind the hotel.
Note the patch - Mum was an expert at inserted patches.



# Mum's life before marriage.



Beating rugs & carpets.
No vacuum cleaners in those days.



Mum with family dog & staff on dyke of canal beside hotel enjoying a break in the sun.

As well as playing the piano & dancing with guests at the hotel, Mum also had several little performances in her repertoire to entertain them. Once she showed us how she would put on a 'kaboutertje' - gnome - outfit over the top of her body, socks & shoes on her hands and then perform amazing high kicks and tap dancing on a table top whilst singing a special ditty. We were amazed!



Mum with her mother and sister Bets.
Taken by a street photographer in Amsterdam on one of their shopping expeditions. Although they were never paid for their work at the hotel, they were always well decked out.



# How Mum & Dad met - New Hotel built ...& Romance triggered...



The Visser building crew. Dad 2nd from left at front; his father in the middle at back.



Dad's father and a cousin working on the new hotel.

The canal that passed near the Kok family hotel 'De Rustende Man' was being redirected, so the old hotel had to be demolished, as it was right in line of the new waterway diversion.

In 1931 a new hotel was commissioned, the builder was Aris Visser from Veenhuizen and his handsome young son Leendert.
This was in the time of the Great Depression and there was very little work, so Leen & his father and two cousins were lucky to get the job to build the hotel, even though they made very little money on the project.

Leen rather fancied the attractive and vivacious Neeltje who virtually ran the hotel. He cut a dashing figure in all his leather gear on one of those exciting new contraptions - a motorbike !

One day he asked Neeltje to tighten the strap of his helmut and stole his first kiss. She flirted with this charming young dare-devil but was not ready for anything serious.

## Romance dissolved...

After a few outings, including Dad's parents 25th wedding anniversary in 1923, Nely sent him on his way. Leen was devastated.




The new Cafe / Hotel 'De Gouden Karper' at Rustenburg. Completed 1932.

# Nel & Leen go their own way.

Leen was disappointed Nely was not interested in a serious relationship but they were still young Nely 23 and Leen 21.

Leen took to other enterprises and adventures, including it seemed drowning his sorrows, however that must have cured Leen of drinking much alcohol ever again. - just a bit to be sociable.

Leen also worked for an uncle who owned a chook farm, feeding the fowls and cleaning the sheds. This uncle would go to all the fishermen asking for their scrap fish which he put through a mincer with mice, leftovers and a few oats for chicken feed. This uncle did pretty well for himself as he used to speculate on the stock market as well. One day he bought a new Chev vehicle and asked Leen to convert it into a ute so he could take his chickens to market. Leen cut away some of the cabin and built a tray on the back which could carry 600 chickens. After this Leen created many utes for others as they were not manufactured on the assembly line.

Leen loved motorbikes and cars. They had only recently come on the market and although he had no experience or training in motors, he taught himself how to fix and service them. He was a fearless driver for his time. Not even the thickest Dutch fog or the hardest rain put him off. There were times too, when Leen would have to drive his father's Harley Davidson motorbike home for him because his father did not want to drive in the fog.



L. Leen on his beloved BSA motorbike - wearing CLOGS! - with his sister Trijntje on the back, infront of their place at Veenhuizen.



Leen at front with friends enjoying beers on a Sunday afternoon.




Leen with friend Jan Sheer when they rode their bicycles to Devil's Mountain, Germany.
They stayed about a week in Germany and one night got very drunk and smoked pipes, which cured him of ever smoking again.

# 1933 Nely & Leen go their own way.

## For Nely there was always lots happening at the hotel... lots of work but time out too.












The three sisters with the gentlemen that came each year for a 2 week holiday at the hotel. They loved the girls.







The beach was not that far - an hour and a bit by bike.







Nely & friends paddling in boat in canal beside hotel.

Below: Mum with girlfriends dressed in costume, some as men.






# ... and Leen becomes a poultry farmer!

By 1933 the depression was bad and there was no work for builders, so Leendert bought land at Veenhuizen, and built and started his own poultry farm., having learned the ropes at his Uncle' poultry farm.

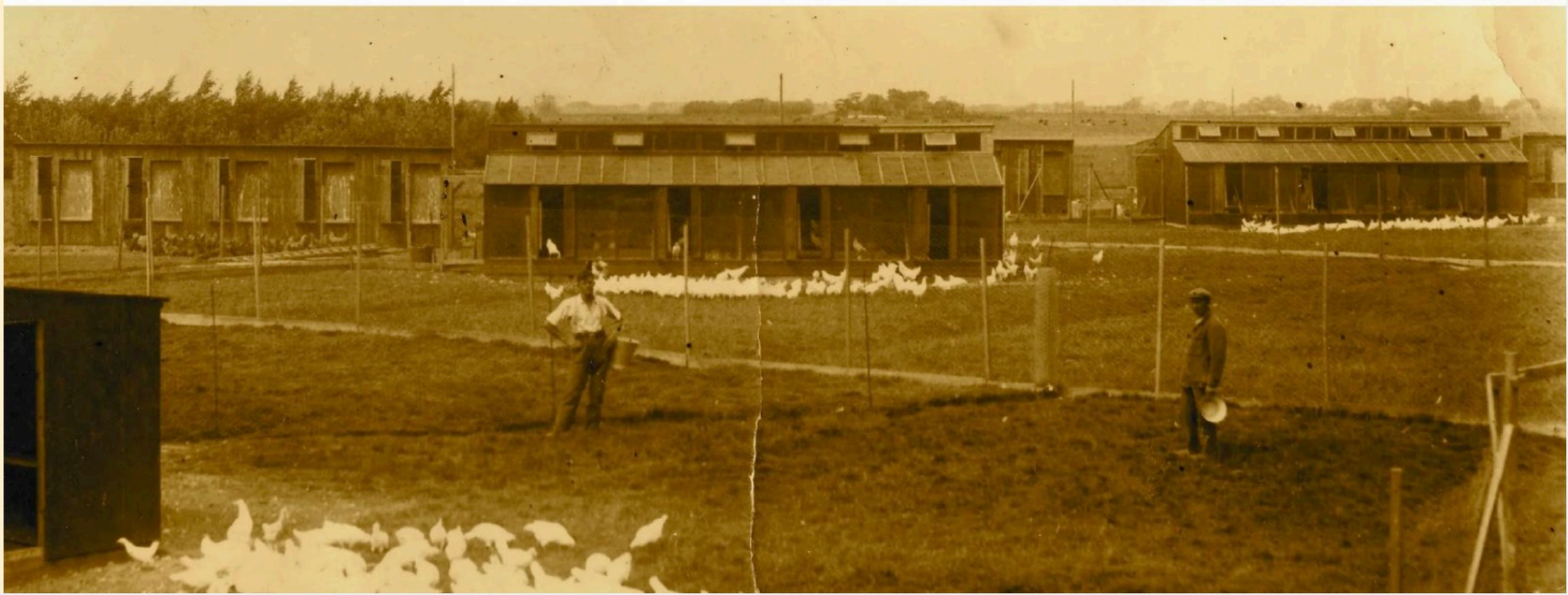
He had 4,500 laying chooks and 2000 meat fowl housed in 21 chook sheds.

As well as this he also made utility cars similar to the one he made for his uncle. These were very popular because utes were not in production in the marketplace. He did well out of the utes but he nearly went broke with the chook farm - chooks died in their droves due to a bird plague.

R - The Visser family house at Veenhuizen.

Below - The chook farm at Veenhuizen. Dad and his father, feeding the chooks.





# Leendert - Man about town and off to the 1935 World Fair.

At 23 Leendert and a friend went on a motorbike trip to Brussels, Belgium for the World Fair in 1935.
As Adrian wrote:

"When Opa and his friend rode into Brussels, they could not find anywhere to stay as everything was booked out. A policeman pulled them up, noticing they were foreigners as they took a wrong turn. Opa asked him if he knew of anywhere to stay. The policeman said if they waited half an hour, they could stay at his house. They did, and it was good and for a very reasonable fee.

While they were at Brussels, Opa's friend came off his bike when his front wheel got stuck in a tram track. Opa's friend flew off the bike and skidded along on his backside, This left him with an embarassingly large hole in the seat of his pants. Opa remembers that as being very funny.

The Fair sounded like a big circus. There were obese women that were so fat it was unbelievable. You could pay further money to touch them. Opa shuddered remembering them. There was also a large rock tower with naked women diving into a pool continuously. He found that quite fascinating.

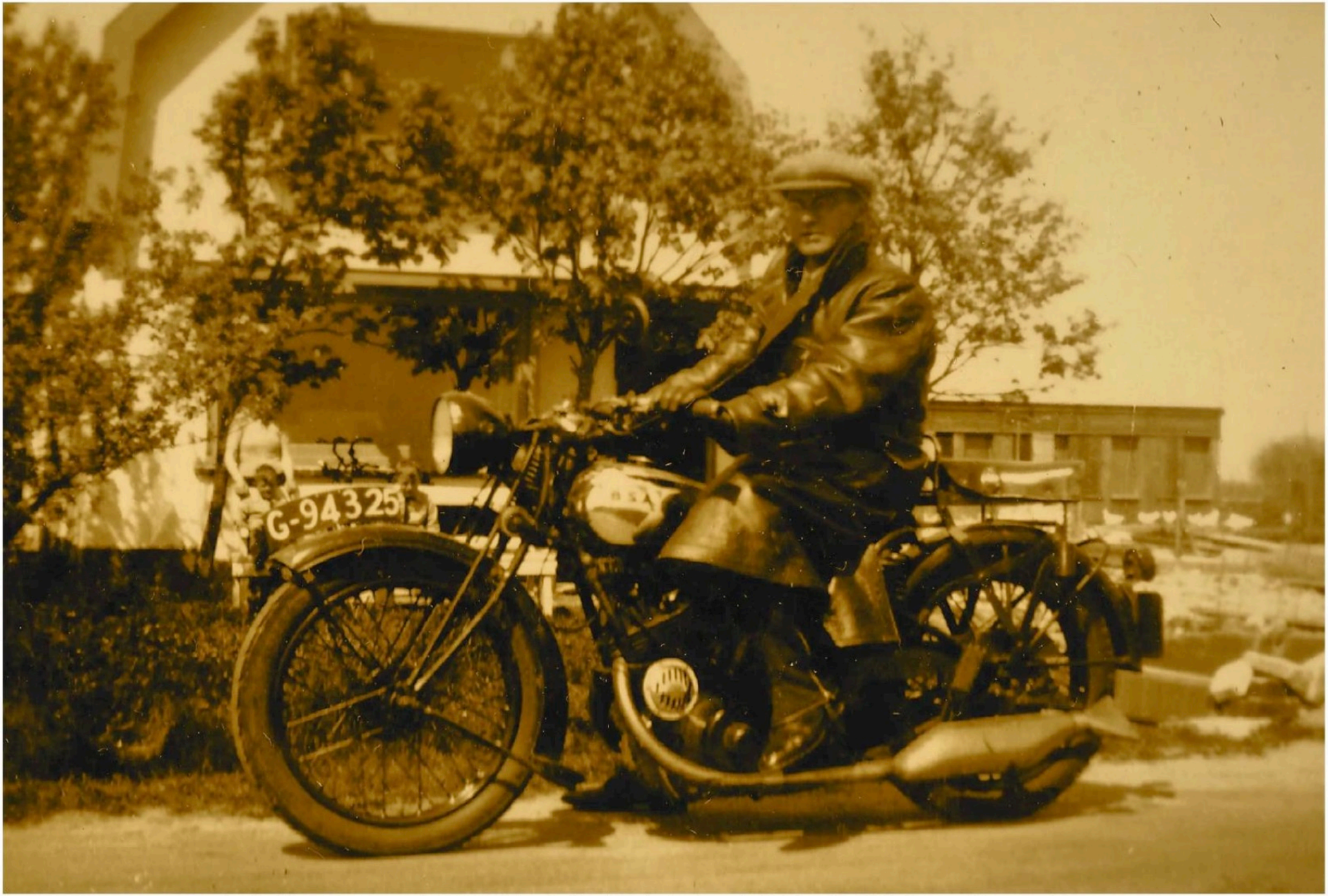
At a pub with cheap beer he got very drunk and remembers dancing on the tables.

Yep, my Opa was a bikie from way back !"



Above: Setting off for Brussels.
Below: Leendert at back with glasses.






Dad, all in leathers, ready to set off for the World Fair at Brussels, Belgium in 1935. He was 23 years old.
The photo was taken infront of the family home and poultry farm at Veenhuizen, North Holland.
The woman standing at the front of the house is probably his sister Brecht with one of her son's.

# Romance Re-ignited

Six years after giving Leen the boot, something stirred inside Nely when she saw him go past with another girl ! on his motorbike.

There was a special 'feest' - ball - at the hotel that night and she suggested to her brother Adriaan who was also a motor biker and had always remained friends with Leen, to invite him along. Neither Adriaan nor Leen hesitated at this suggestion.

He came, wooed her and so began their long and loving life together.

Their union was blessed by her family, but sadly not his. Leen's parents did not want to lose their income producing son.

Nely's parents went to call on Leen's parents to discuss the situation but they had the front door slammed in their faces.

Leendert Visser & Nely Kok were married on Wednesday 30 August 1939.

His parents came to the ceremony but did not stay for the wedding reception.

Having worked for nothing for her parents for 17 years, her parents came good when she married and fully fitted out their house with furniture, furnishings, linen, crockery and all household needs.

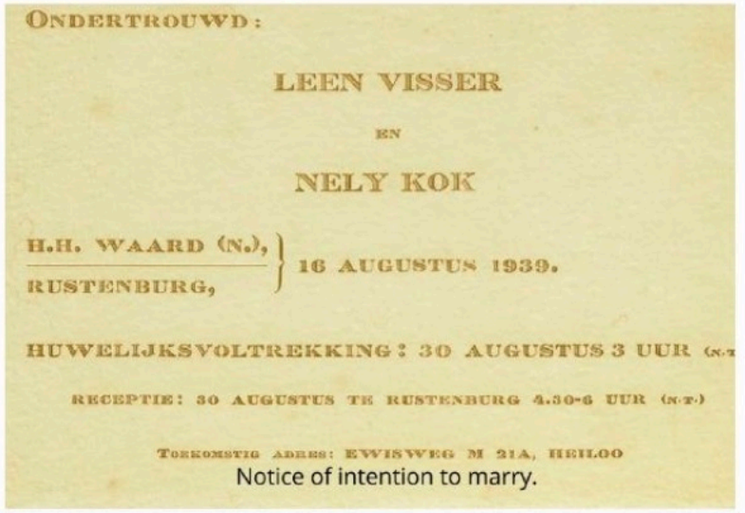
Some of the furniture is still in the family. I salvaged a lovely little side table from Dad's garage many years ago as he was using it as a saw bench! I had a new top made for it and I love it. I also have one of their wooden kitchen chairs from when they first married, now with many coats of different era's paint on it.

Yonny and Kate have some of tMum & Dad's original dining chairs that used to have maroon flocked velvet seat covers, but Dad had later covered them with cheap green vinyl. They also have Mum & Dad's original Dutch 'pluseé' tablecloth that Aussies saw as carpet.

That Dad's parents refused to discuss the situation when Mum's parents called on them and that they did not celebrate the wedding with them, was a sore point that still stung when they told their story years later.

Both Mum and her mother-in-law were side by side in hospital with only a curtain between them, as Mum had had a miscarriage and her mother-in-law had a 'fles-boom' - a fibroid - removed from her womb. Dad's mother never spoke to Mum. After she went home she developed a blood clot after the operation and died on 29 Jan 1940 at 53 years.

Mum told me this tale, only in her later years. I think he mother-in-law's treatment towards her, still hurt her.



ONDERTROUWD:

LEEN VISSER

EN

NELY KOK

H.H. WAARD (N.), RUSTENBURG, } 16 AUGUSTUS 1939.

HUWELIJKSVOLTREKKING: 30 AUGUSTUS 3 UUR (N.T.

RECEPTIE: 30 AUGUSTUS TE RUSTENBURG 4.30-6 UUR (N.T.)

TOEKOMSTIG ADRES: EWISWEG M 21A, HEILOO

Notice of intention to marry.



Mum & Dad when they got engaged.



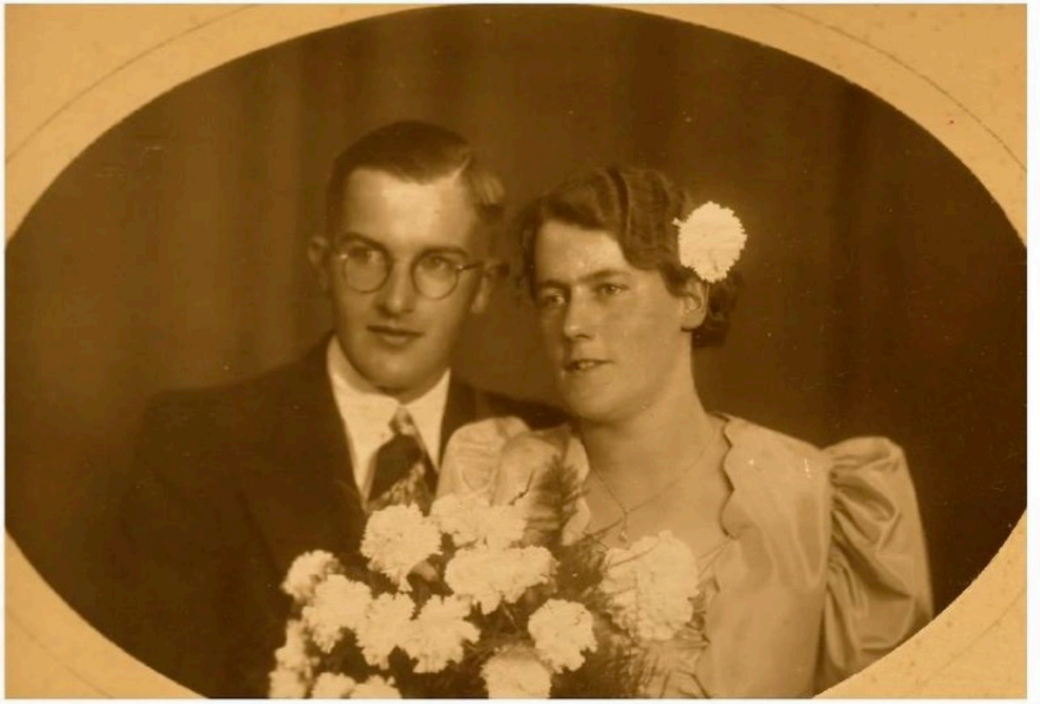
Mum, Dad's sister Trijntje and Dad in Dutch costume, before marrying.











Wedding Day - 30 August 1939 which was 3 days after the mobilization of the Dutch forces ready for the outbreak of World War 2, which began 4 days later on Sept 3.
Top L - Proudly and happily married! Dad's parents can be seen behind Mum's parents, but they did not stay for the celebrations held at the Café. Mum's dress was blue - there was no tradition of white in Holland at that time. We later had it for dress-ups!

The following is from my son Adrian's school assignment when he interviewed his grandfather:

# WAR!

World War 2 broke out 4 days after Mum & Dad married.

CHOOK FARMING AT HEILOO.

Just before they got married, Opa's father sold the timmerman business without consulting him. His father then took over the chook farm and the new house at Veenhuizen all of which had been promised to Leen, and into which he had put in a lot of work.

So when Opa married he had no money. However Oma's parents really liked Opa, so they organised bank finance which enabled Opa to buy a new chook farm at Heiloo. Opa paid the farm off in one year and had 4,500 chickens.

The house they were living in was only 1 year old and was very nice with all the furniture and fittings Oma's parents had bought for them.

Below: the house in Heiloo with chook farm in background.
Mum & friend & Bob their dog



Bob the dog infront of chook farm at Heiloo.



As the war continued, feed fo[illegible] Opa to sell the chickens over 2-3 years, and at very low prices as everyone else was forced to sell up too and no-one wanted to buy chickens.

Never in the Visser family had any of them gone to war. They just weren't military material. Men were being conscripted into the army. Opa went for his medical test but failed because of his poor eyesight. The examining doctor asked Opa if he wanted a pass, offering him a place in the army if he wanted it. "Absolutely Not!" replied Opa. The doctor then gave him a thorough lecture and telling off, but Opa just laughed at him, quickly grabbed the papers and was off.

TRUCK DRIVING.

Now that Opa's chook farm wasn't any good, he needed a new job, so he started to work as a truck driver for a friend, but only for a few weeks.

Then he drove for a Japanese business man, all over Holland and Belgium, where he went to all the big poultry farms to determine the sex of the new chickens, as the roosters were not wanted.

Early during the war when Opa was driving for someone else he had to deliver loads of stones for the Germans to an airfield where they were building bunkers. He did this for 3-4 weeks. One night they were told to unload their rocks in the wrong spot, but it was lucky for Opa, as the place he usually went to was attacked by an English air raid bombing run, which killed 19 people. Opa was very lucky that he was given the wrong directions.

BLACKMARKETING.

After that Opa went into blackmarketing. He bought old bicycles and motorbikes, did them up and sold them. He also bought cars and converted them into utes with a tray at the back and earned well on them.

The blackmarketing worked in tricky circles as some of the motorbikes were stolen from the German army by friends of Opa. These bikes were re-chromed and baked enamelling was used to make them look like new. They then sold them back to the Germans who they originally stole them from!

During the war the Germans took all the unemployed people to work in factories in Hamburg. Beacause of this Opa always made sure he always had work, so he bought his own transport business around 1942-3 and called it 'Visser's Snel Dienst' (Visser's Fast Company). He paid for the business with money he made blackmarketing and was licensed as food transport.

USING ANTHRACITE FOR FUEL.

Opa always earned a fair bit out of his truck driving. Petrol was impossible to get but he had rigged up his truck with a system that ran on burning anthracite, ie., black coal. This however was very dangerous, but Opa was one of the few who dared to do it. The anthracite was burned in a device on one side of the vehicle which produced gas to drive it. There was another device to remove the tar it produced on the other side which also cooled it. One time the truck wasn't working properly and it blew up, putting the truck out of action for a while.

Because Opa was licensed to travel to Amsterdam, his services were in great demand, both legally and illegally. He was given a lot of fake papers and always carried big bundles of these papers which he used to bamboozel the police and Germans at check points. Usually the police just took a glance at the papers and waved him on without actually reading any of them.

## BLACKMARKETING AT NIGHT.

Opa was certainly kept busy with his truck driving.
During the day he did the usual carting of furniture & things to and from Amsterdam, then during the night Opa continued for the blackmarket trade.

Opa was commissioned by a butcher to pick up slaughtered animals in the middle of nowhere during the night, then deliver the dead pigs or cows, return home, clean the truck and then go on to a big potato dealer who was into black marketing in a big way.
Opa would load the potatoes, take them to Amsterdam and then drive back and be home again by 11pm.

Early next morning he would do his normal, legal, truck driving for the day. He got very little sleep but the pay made up for it. In one day of carting and delivering furniture, Opa could earn 2000 guilders, which was a lot of money in that time. With all goods it was cash on delivery. However if it was for the Germans, they just made their own money on the spot, which was of course worthless. This fake money had to be accepted though, even though it was useless.

Opa was involved in some pretty dangerous and risky business, but he always acted as though nothing worried him. But in fact Opa was often very frightened, but never showed it. If he sensed danger, he went the other way, but still got in deep water as the next episode shows.



Dad & helper, with truck all loaded up for regular runs to and from Amsterdam.

## TRUCK AND BLACKMARKET WHEAT END UP IN THE CANAL.

On Saturdays, Opa always transported black market stuff which was of course illegal. One day he had a full load of wheat on board. He was taking it across a large canal on a pont. When they reached the other side the ferry operator waved him off but the chain was still tied to the back of the truck. As he drove off he got half the truck on land but then the chain tightened. The back wheels kept spinning, driving the pont vertical into the air, at right angles to the truck. Opa tried as long as he could to hold the truck but it was slipping backwards and disaster was unavoidable. The truck started to slip back into the canal. The wheels turned in vain as the canal sides were steep and covered in slime, so driving out was impossible. Opa tried to hold on to the truck as long as he could, but abandoned it once the water was over his knees. Opa jumped out just in time, as the truck and all the wheat was soon completely submerged.

The police soon arrived on the chaotic scene and the truck was dragged out. It didn't take long for the police to work out that the wheat was black market. They confiscated the truck and the sacks of wheat.The police told Opa the truck was 'fixed up' and he could not have it.

This did not deter Opa, who went to see his mate Bert, and although it was chained up, they thought they would be able to retrieve it quite easily. In the dead of night. Wth Bert's truck, they towed it away, cleaned it up and got it working. Monday morning he was driving again and the police saw him. “Hey, it doesn't go that easily!" Opa called back cheekily “It goes very easily, thank you” and he kept on driving. He figured he was safe in his truck as the policeman was on his pushbike!

Nothing more was heard for 6 weeks, then the police summoned him to reveal where the wheat came from. Not wanting to be imprisoned, he told them. The farmer was fined 10,000 guilders (which was nothing then as he could earn 2,000 guilders in a day of black marketing). The money from the fine was sent to help widows of the underground resistance - so all were happy.

If it had been discovered by the Germans it would have spelt disaster for all.

## DRIVING WITH WORN TYRES AND POOR LIGHTS.

After that, everything went smoothly until Opa's tyres became too bad to drive with, and he had to leave his truck on the side of the road for 3 days until he was able to procure 3 new tyres, which cost him 1000 guilders each!

Driving at night was made almost impossible because of the strict restrictions on how big your headlights could be. Headlights were blackened so that there was only a 5cmx5cm strip of light, which made it very hard to see ahead. At night everything had to be blackened, all the windows, etc, as any light seen from above became a bombing target. Even the slightest light could be seen 7 kms away from the air, so you had to be very careful.

# MORE WAR TIME EXPERIENCES.

CRASH!

Once when he was driving at night with only a tiny strip of light, he hit a big, heavy steam engine, used to repair the roads. It had been left on the side of the road and the warning lights had blown out on this stormy night. In the back of Opa's truck was an organ plus the owner to hold it steady. The truck flipped and skidded on to its side, the man was catapulted across the road and Opa was knocked unconscious.

The man had landed safely in the grass and Opa soon came to. He was trapped between the steering wheel and and the back of the cabin, but he managed to scramble out through the broken front window. Soon after, another truck came and helped them out, even delivering the load, which luckily was not black market stuff.

Opa then had a problem, he had a truck driving business, but no truck. He did not have enough money to buy even a small truck for 30,000 guilders. Then two friends, who were mechanics offered to fix the badly damaged truck. Opa asked how much? He was surprised and relieved they just wanted amounts of wheat, butter, cigarettes, potatoes and anthracite. These things were hard to buy, but for Opa, it was not a problem, as he had plenty of contacts and could get anything easily. In fact they didn't call Opa 'the butter wagon' for nothing.

During the war Opa & Oma with their two sons always had somewhere to stay and never went hungry. They were lucky.

Anyway, Opa gave the go ahead to repair his truck and in 4 weeks he was in action again.

Meanwhile Opa had to keep his business afloat. He had lots of friends who were driving for the Germans, carting cement. They helped Opa out by providing their trucks for Opa to drive. Then they lied to the Germans, saying their truck had broken. Even if they had been caught, the controls were so slack that they could easily put in a few hours work for Opa.This all cost Opa a lot of money, but at least he was able to keep his business running.
This shows how everyone stuck together and helped each other. Everyone hated the Germans and did all possible to spite them.

LUCK ON HIS SIDE.

About 1 year before the war was over, Oma's sister and her family moved to safety in the country. All of the furniture and other goods had already been moved, but there was still a goat, washing machine and other odds and ends. Opa said he'd help out and gather these. He was driving a friend, Bertus Hoo's truck. Little did Opa realise that the other things on board were illegal artillery. Bertus had got Opa to do his dirty work!

Oblivious to it all, Opa piled the washing machine and goat on top of the loaded vehicle. He then drove all the way through the city and was then pulled over by the Germans, who gave it a standard check and Opa was given the O.K.

It wasn't until he delivered his load he found out it was full of ammunition for the underground resistance. It was a cover, but had Opa known about it, he wouldn't have handled it so coolly. Had the ammunition been discovered at the checkpoint, Opa would have been shot on the spot.

Things were starting to get more dangerous and more serious, but still Opa's luck held out.

Once again Opa was asked by a a friend to do a favour. He was asked to pick something up, so Opa of course obliged. He called in at the designated place and was invited in for a cuppa. When he was about to leave he noticed a very shiny, black luxury car, an Opal. They wanted Opa to tow it for them and gave specific directions to go over a certain bridge. Opa delivered the car to a garage and went inside to find they were handing out huge bundles of ration coupons. Opa was then suspicious, he wondered what was going on, but he didn't ask any questions. When he was offered some coupons, he didn't knock them back as they meant extra food.

Two weeks later he read in the paper that a black Opal car had been blown up with all the people inside. The Germans had found out that they had been stealing ration coupons from where they were made and were distributing them. The Germans had then been waiting in ambush and blew them all up.

Opa was often the innocent participant in very dangerous work. He didn't know what he was getting into - if he had known, he would not have gone through with it. He did the favour for his friends, as they had helped him, but it could have been at a terrible cost.

Opa realised he was on shaky ground. Things were getting too dangerous and he was too well known, so he decided to stop. Whats more, a bomb had landed only 100 mtrs from their house in Heiloo and left an enormous hole in the ground. All of these factors brought Opa to the decision to move his family back into his wife's parents hotel in Rustenburg.

Rustenburg translates as peaceful place, however it did not live up to its name.

BURYING HIS TRUCK IN THE DUNES.

Before moving back to the family hotel, Opa learned of the German's plans to take his truck and also probably him.

However if you drove for the Germans, you never returned, so Opa was dead set against their idea.

Opa had been pulled over by two Germans with revolvers, who filled his truck with grenades, and wanted him to take them somewhere. Opa obeyed and when they were unloading their dangerous cargo, the German in charge approached him. As it turned out, this man was actually a naturalised Frenchman, who hated the Germans, even though he was a part of their army. The man's name was Luiet, and he was was the one who told Opa that the Germans were going to confiscate his truck.

Luiet then told Opa to take the back roads home to avoid the Germans and never to come back this way again.Opa took the different route home and made a plan.

When he got home, with his mate Bert, they disassembled his truck. Then Opa and Bert set about burying the truck that was now in 7 pieces. They dug out a sand dune and hid the body in there, the wheels in another place, gearbox elsewhere, until the whole truck was buried in 7 different sites. Well at least the German's had no chance of getting Opa's truck now!

After the war, they just dug up the bits and reassembled it without a problem.

RUSTENBERG (PEACEFUL PLACE) PROVES TO BE NOT SO PEACEFUL.

But back to where Oma & Opa were moving back to Rustenburg. Opa borrowed Bert's truck to move all their stuff, as of course Opa's was buried. The hotel was very chaotic as Oma's sisters and their husbands had also moved back. There were Oma's parents, Oma & Opa with their sons Aris & Jan, Oma's sister Bets & husband Jan Hoed, sister Tinie & her husband Jan Van Det and Opa's sister Trijntje & her husband Wim Meijnen.

It was a full house, plus there were also customers and townsfolk that would come to the café.

Opa had the foresight to build a hidden compartment by creating a new wall where they could all hide behind if the need arose.

One night they found themselves very glad they had the compartment, as there was shooting outside. The men all crammed into the narrow space, scared out of their minds. The shooting continued just on the other side of the wall and around the hotel, but then it stopped and all was quiet.

Next morning they all piled out of their hiding place like sardines from a tin and were pleased to find the hotel was untouched.

The Germans were not as impressed. They made the threat that if the people who were shooting that night, were not revealed by 12 noon, then the whole town would be burnt to the ground.
This was no idle bluff as the Germans would not hesitate to put their words into action.

This left everyone distressed and worried. The Germans found out who the shooters wereand that they were in another town, hiding on a farm, in a hayshed. The Germans called them to come out. With no response, they set the hayshed alight. The town all gasped. Then, as each man jumped from the blazing barn, the Germans shot them dead. The wife and baby of one of these men witnessed this brutal murder and it horrified everyone in the area.

This may be the time when some men were shot and the dead bodies were left to lay on the bridge, not allowed to be removed, as a warning to all who sheltered people from the Germans. Whether this was part of the same, incident, I am not sure.

YOUNG ARIS FALLS INTO CANAL.

While staying at the hotel, Aris, Opa's eldest son fell into the canal. He was only very young and could not swim. He was very lucky to be saved by a passing fisherman who had a big hook on a pole. He caught Aris's collar and dragged him out.

Soon after that Opa moved his family into one of the chook sheds at Veenhuizen. They cleaned it all up and made it very nice and cosy. There were others too, living in some of the other chook sheds, who were also 'underground', away from the Germans.

There were lots of farmers around so they didn't ever go hungry. Opa still received his portions of anthracite, but because he didn't have a truck anymore, he could trade this which was much in demand, for anything he needed.



Aris on the day he fell into the canal. Luckily a fisherman in a passing boat saw him and was able to use a hook into his thick jumper and save him. However Aris was most upset because he lost one of his clogs.

# Battle of Rustenburg 10 Oct 1944.

The wide area of Rustenburg was a drop zone for weapons for the last 6 months of the war. At least 150 tonnes of material was parachuted down.

There is a memorial on the bridge at Rustenburg, close to the family hotel. I found the following account online.

A parachute drop of weapon containers was expected in a field east of Alkmaar at Spierdijk, in the Wogmeer Polder, a new location codenamed LOBSTER.

It was bad weather, clouded. They heard the aircraft circle over twice, but apparently the pilot did not trust the light signals or something else was not in order, which proved to be correct later. The aircraft flew on without dropping.

That night the resistence transport-team had to take the assembled weapon containers out the polder by truck. Unaware that the dropping failed, they were on their way on the road from Stompetoren to Rustenburg, heading for 'Lobster.'

They approached the Rustenburg bridge where 7 roads come together and as often, the bridge was guarded, but this night by no less then 20 'Landwachters' Dutch Nazi-collaborators, armed with outdated carabines and hunting rifles.

The high number of Landwachters suggests that the weapon drop was betrayed, but there were almost no German forces around.

The truck came towards the bridge and was halted. It was pitch dark and the resistance men in the truck smelled trouble, but the engine of the truck refused to re-start for a getaway.

Dark figures approached the truck. The two men in the cabin opened fire with their stenguns. The landwachters returned fire. All the other men in the back jumped from the truck to find cover on the sides of the road, shooting as they went. Of the Landwachters three were killed, four severely wounded and another wounded.

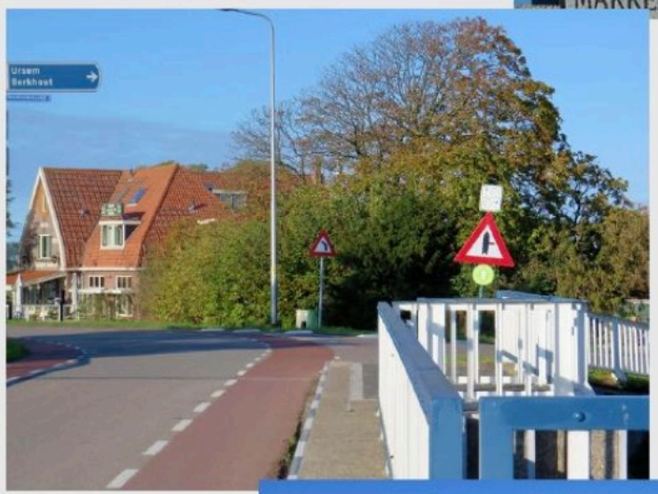
The resisters found rescue in a barn nearby, but traces led to this farm and next morning a group of 150 Germans surrounded it and burned it to the ground.

Trying to escape the fire the hidden men were shot dead as they jumped from the top of the barn.

In total 13 resistance fighters lost their lives in the shooting at the Rustenburg bridge and its aftermath at the barn.

Here killed in action for
his country on the night of
10 october 1944
Gerard Veldman
born at Noordschrwoude
3 january1918
in a brave fight with
traitors while defending a
weapon transport.
He and his fight
stay in our memory.



These photos show
how close the hotel is
to the bridge.



# Veenhuizen also copped it.

Another tragic war time story happened at Veenhuizen where Dad's father and sister Trijnie lived. Dad's mother had died 6 months earlier.

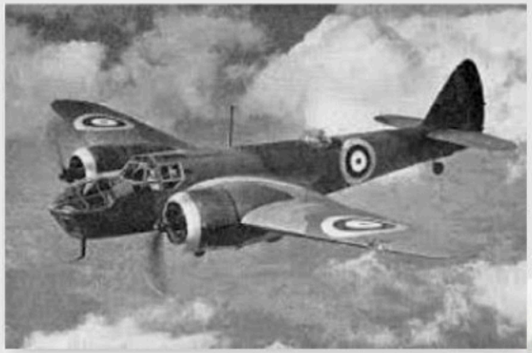
In 2007 when I visited the gravesites of of my grandparents Grietje & Aris Visser in the small graveyard behind the church at Veenhuizen, I noticed 3 tombstones of British airmen.

Tante Trijnie later told me that one morning as she was going over to the shop across the road from their house, a big contingent of British planes came flying overhead. The Germans were firing at the planes and suddenly one plane came so low, it just missed their house and crashed into the fields.

The three young British men got out alive ..... but then they were machine gunned down by the Germans. All this happened in seconds, before her eyes.

All so sad. War is full of tragic loss. There are never any winners.

I googled the airmen's names and it said they were shot down on a raid to the Dortmund-Ems Kanal in Germany.



Blenheim P6895 S/Ldr Chester Veenhuizen



The actual plane in flight and below how it ended.











# War - but life goes on.



Their 1st home - in Ewisweg, Heiloo.



Proud new parents. Aris born 4 April 1941.



Baby Aris with mum's mother, Oma Kok.



Dad, Aris, Mum, Tante Bets, Opa Kok, Oom Adriaan.

During the war, Aris was born in April 1941, then 2nd son Jan (John) was born in Nov 1943.
They had to leave their lovely new home when a bomb landed close by.

It must have been a very worrying time for Mum wondering each day if Dad would return safely home at night, knowing he was working for the resistance and if found out by the Germans could have been shot on the spot.



Mum bathing Aris.



Photo at right: When I asked Mum who this lady was with her and baby Aris (1941) she said it was a Jewish lady living with them.

Dad got a letter of recognition for harbouring Jews during the war but Mum and Dad never told us about this.
This would have been even more to be worried about and was a risk to their lives if found out by the Germans.

# Living in the Chook sheds at Veenhuizen.

Whilst living in one of the chicken houses, as there was no power connected, Opa rigged up a bicycle to generate electricity.
To get light, Opa would have to pedal and he would usually read while doing this. The others living in other sheds would join them. They could always tell when he was reading an exciting part, as he pedalled like crazy and lit up the whole room. Sometimes too, he would be so engrossed, he forgot to pedal and the light slowly faded as it did in the boring parts.

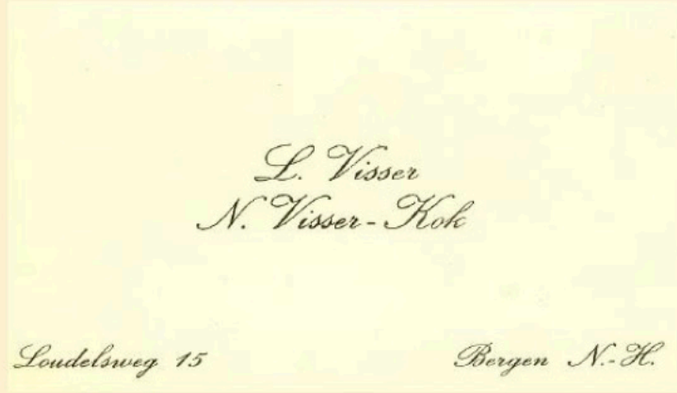
The 'undergrounders' were in a community of their own. They all helped each other and shared what they had, as they were all in the same situation.

The chook sheds however did have a lot of rats. They got rid of them by taking a big stick and knocking them off the rafters. The dogs did the rest.

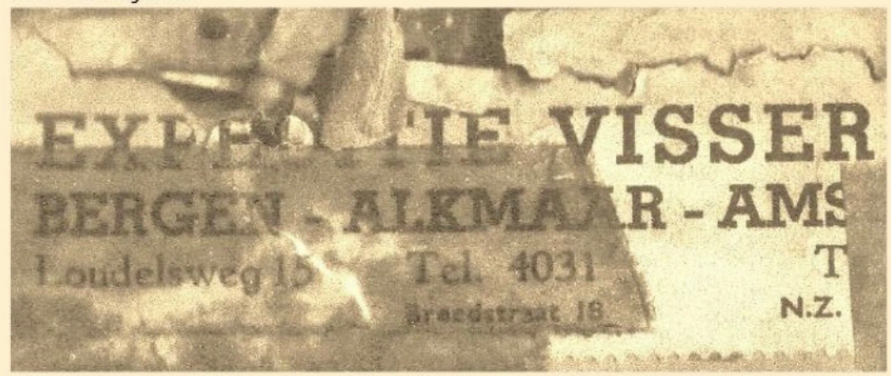


Dad out milking a cow when they lived in the chook sheds during the war.

## After the war.




Mum & Dad lived at Loudelsweg 15 Bergen before coming out to Australia. Yonny remembers Dad building the houses for Aust. in the front yard.




'EXPEDITIE VISSER' - One of Dad's transport business names.
This tape is still at the back of a photo frame of the old Hotel that I have hanging on my wall.
They lived at Loudelsweg15, Bergen before coming out to Australia.

# The Netherlands in World War 2.

Prior to the German invasion, the Netherlands had adhered to a policy of strict neutrality. The country had strong bonds with Germany, and not so much with Britain.

The Dutch had not engaged in war with any European nation since 1830. During World War I, the Dutch were not invaded by Germany and the anti-German sentiment was not as strong after the war as it was in other European countries. The German ex-Kaiser had fled to the Netherlands in 1918 and lived there in exile.

The German invasion, therefore, came as a great shock to many Dutch people. Nevertheless, the country had ordered general mobilization in September 1939.

On May 10, 1940, German troops started a surprise attack on the Netherlands without a declaration of war.

The Rotterdam Blitz on 14 May that destroyed much of the city centre, killed about 800 people, and left about 85,000 homeless.

One of the most widespread resistance activities was hiding and sheltering refugees and enemies of the Nazi regime, which included concealing Jewish families like that of Anne Frank, underground operatives, draft-age Dutchmen and, later in the war, Allied aircrew. Collectively these people were known as onderduikers ('people in hiding' or literally: 'under-divers').

The first German round-up of Jews in February 1941 led to the Dutch February strike of 1941, a mass protest against the deportation of Jewish Dutch citizens. Many citizens of Amsterdam regardless of their political affiliation, joined the strike against the Germans in Europe (and indeed one of only two such throughout occupied Europe). This showed that the general sentiment among the Dutch population was anti-German.

The Germans also forced males between the ages of 18 and 45 to work in German factories or on public work projects. In 1944 most trains were diverted to Germany, known as 'the great train robberies', and in total some 550,000 Dutch people were selected to be sent to Germany as forced laborers.

# The 'Hunger Winter' of 1944.

The 'Hunger winter', the Dutch famine of 1944 was caused by a number of reasons - an exceptionally harsh winter, bad crops, and four years of brutal war, on top of which the Nazis imposed an embargo on food transport to the western Netherlands in September 1944 in retaliation for the exiled Dutch government supporting the Allies in liberating southern parts of the Netherlands.

The population was forced to live on rations of 400-800 calories per day. To survive, people had to eat grass and tulip bulbs. Besides the after effects on the Dutch survivors such as poor physical health, the famine resulted in long-term effects on the descendants of the Hongerwinter generation. Babies born during this period were conspicuously small and extremely vulnerable to diabetes, schizophrenia, and lung diseases.

22,000 people died and 4.5 million were affected by the direct and indirect consequences of the famine.





# Pancakes for the hungry at Gouden Karper



During the war when people were starving, leaving the cities in droves and wandering through the country in search of food, Opa Kok at the hotel would make pancakes, as having his own milk and eggs, and could get flour, it was a quick, filling (and delicious) way of feeding many.

It sounded as though he was serving a steady stream of wanderers coming to the kitchen at the backof the hotel.

# The Resistance Foundation.

STICHTING 1940-1945.
Translated this means Foundation 1940-1945.

It provided services to members of the resistance, victims of persecution and civilian war victims from the years 1940-1945.

During the Second World War, resistance circles had an unwritten promise to take care of each other and the next of kin even after the liberation.The 1940-1945 Foundation was established for that purpose.

It was established on October 13, 1944 when representatives of a number of national and regional resistance organizations gathered at 567 Keizersgracht in Amsterdam.

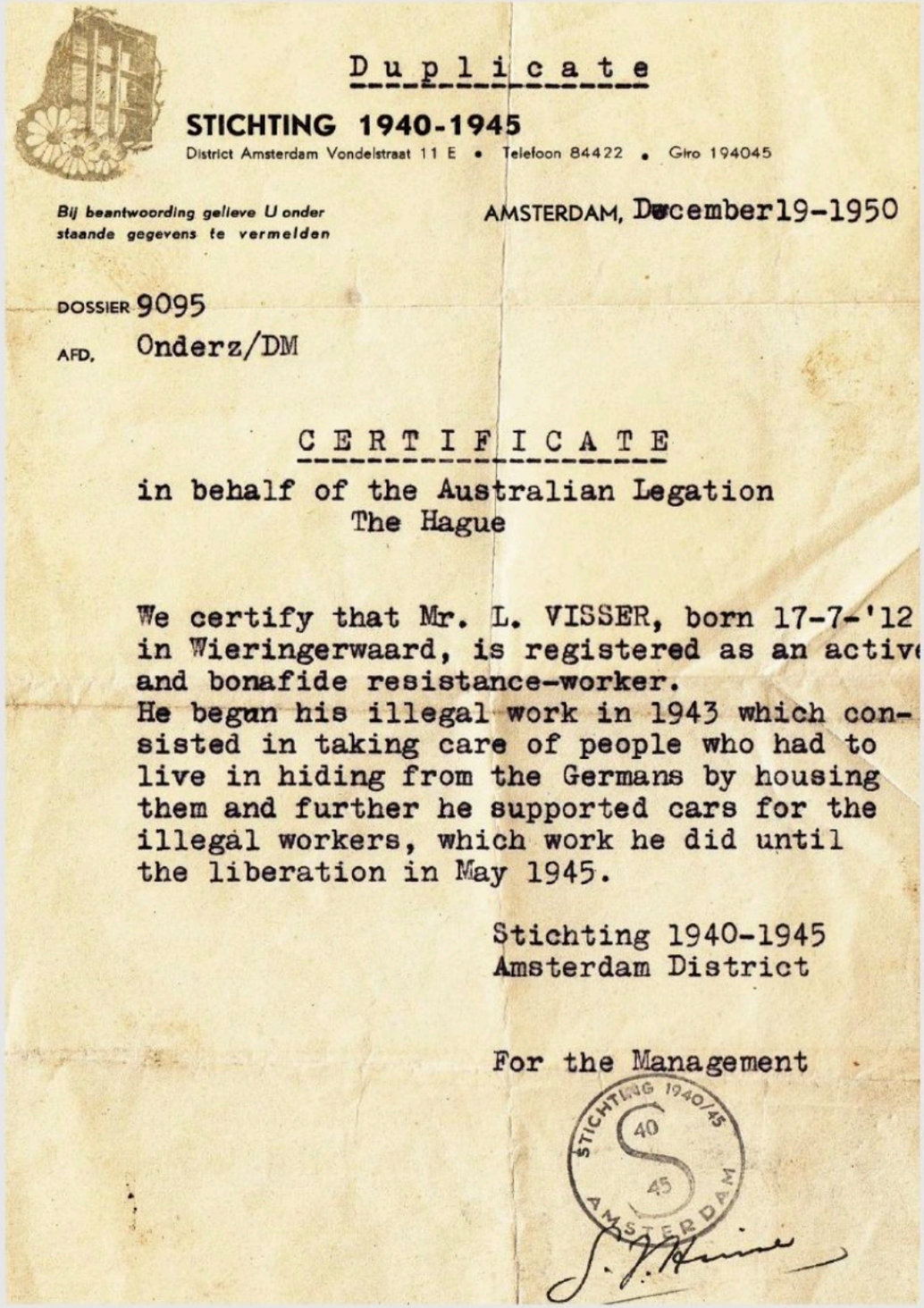
Even before the liberation, the resistance was convinced that it was important to care for the relatives of killed resistance fighters.

The statutes stated: "The aim of the Foundation is to provide for the moral, spiritual and material needs of persons or groups of persons who contributed to the internal resistance during the occupation, their families or next of kin, if, after the end of the hostilities, they in our country or a large part of it will prove to need assistance."

We found this certificate in amongst all Mum & Dad's papers after they had died. I remember Dad telling us he did receive something when coming to Australia in relation to his resistance work but I don't remember what it was. They never talked much about their wartime experiences.

Luckily Adrian chose to interview his Opa for a school project and thus we have some of their stories.

I suppose Mum and Dad like many of that generation, did not want to go back to those worrying times.



Duplicate

**STICHTING 1940-1945**

District Amsterdam Vondelstraat 11 E • Telefoon 84422 • Giro 194045

*Bij beantwoording gelieve U onder staande gegevens te vermelden*

AMSTERDAM, December 19-1950

DOSSIER 9095

AFD. Onderz/DM

CERTIFICATE

in behalf of the Australian Legation
The Hague

We certify that Mr. L. VISSER, born 17-7-'12 in Wieringerwaard, is registered as an active and bonafide resistance-worker.
He begun his illegal work in 1943 which consisted in taking care of people who had to live in hiding from the Germans by housing them and further he supported cars for the illegal workers, which work he did until the liberation in May 1945.

Stichting 1940-1945
Amsterdam District

For the Management

STICHTING 1940/45 40 45 AMSTERDAM









# A Family Grows

A beautiful baby boy - ARIS born 4 April 1941 and In the unchanging tradition for generations, he was named after his paternal grandfather.

A 2nd son - JAN - born 7 November 1943. Again following tradition, named after his maternal grandfather. Jan is John in Dutch. Because the Dutch pronounce J as Y, he was 'Yun', which became Yon once in Australia and thus Yonny.

Then a girl - NELLIE born 25 July 1946. Here for the first time they broke tradition. Mum did not like her mother-in-law and so instead of naming the first daughter after the paternal grandmother she named her after own grandmother and herself - Nellie.

To even things up - a 2nd daughter - CATHARINA MARGARETHA (me, TINI) born 18 August 1949. Catharina after my maternal grandmother Catharina (Trijntje Kok-Pluimgraaf); and Margaretha after my paternal grandmother Grietje (Visser-Mooij). She finally gets a look in. Grietje being short for Margaretha.

However despite having such an impressive name there was never any intention of calling me anything but Tinie - this was clearly stated on my birth notice.

# But what of the future?

World War 2 was over but things were very bleak in Holland. There was talk that Russia was to invade again, there were so many unemployed people, as well as an extreme housing shortage and the best thing seemed to be to escape.

There was a mania to EMIGRATE!

It was felt there was very little future for the children. A kind of mania spread through the land to emigrate. Even the Dutch Government encouraged its people to emigrate as they feared overpopulation.

Yonny and I learned the truth of Mum & Dad's decision from Mum's best friend 'Tante' let in 1999. She was 90, fit, active and delightful company, as always.

having kept up her friendship with Mum's parents, she told us that one day Opa Kok was lamenting how difficult it was for them to have their daughter with her family so far away in Australia.

Tante let said "Well, you have no-one to blame but yourself! You sent them away!"

Yonny and I were agog. She then explained another aspect to the decision to emigrate that we had never heard from Mum & Dad.

Oma & Opa Kok realised after Mum married that the Cafe had lost its spark. Mum had virtually run the place and her outgoing nature kept it humming merrily and the customers happy.

After the war things were grim, Oma & Opa Kok were old and they wanted to sell and retire. Mum & Dad approached them with the offer to buy it from them.

Opa & Oma would not sell it to them - they feared Mum & Dad would not be able to make a success of it as they had 4 children to support. This was the final turning point in Mum & Dad's decision to emigrate.

Tante let said the real reason Oma & Opa Kok would not sell it to them was because they wanted the money cash-in-hand to buy their retirement house and Mum & Dad would have only been able to pay them off over time.

And so our fate was set.

# Leaving Holland was forever
# & meant never seeing family again.

Concerned about the future, and disheartened that they could not take over De Gouden Karper, Leen, and I suspect reluctantly, Nel, joined the emigration mania.

But where to? South Africa?- No too many blacks!

Canada?- No too cold!

Australia?- Why not ? Far from war and land of sunshine!

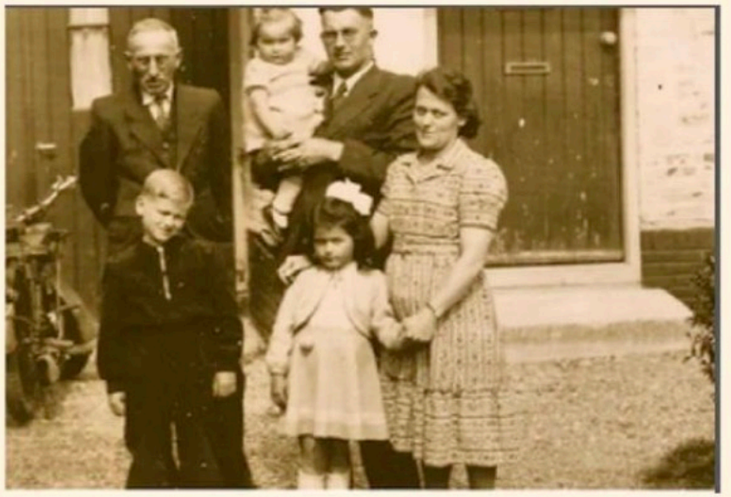
The decision to leave Holland would not have been an easy one as they knew it would be permanent and the likelihood of ever making a return visit seemed a total impossibility. It was too far - the other side of the world, too long - 6 weeks each way by ship, and too expensive - money they felt they would never have.

By constructing their house in Holland and transporting it to Australia was a means of getting money out of Holland as the government did not like money leaving the country as it was badly needed for the reconstruction of their own land.

We came before there was assisted migration sponsored by the Australian Government so the fares for the family of 6 to travel to Australia took a considerable amount of their savings.

Dad built the house in the front yard at 15 Loudelsweg Bergen where we were then living. He used the floorboards to make a 'kist' - a container (there were no commercial shipping containers in those days) and everything was packed in - house, furniture, carpets, curtains, plates, pots, clothing...everything. In fact, Mum and Dad didn't need to buy anything but food for the first two years.

And so this very Dutch family moved to a land they knew very little about and where they could not speak the language. Leen was 39 and Nely 41.

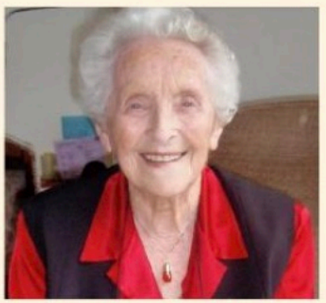


Farewelling Dad's father. His mother had died 10 years earlier.



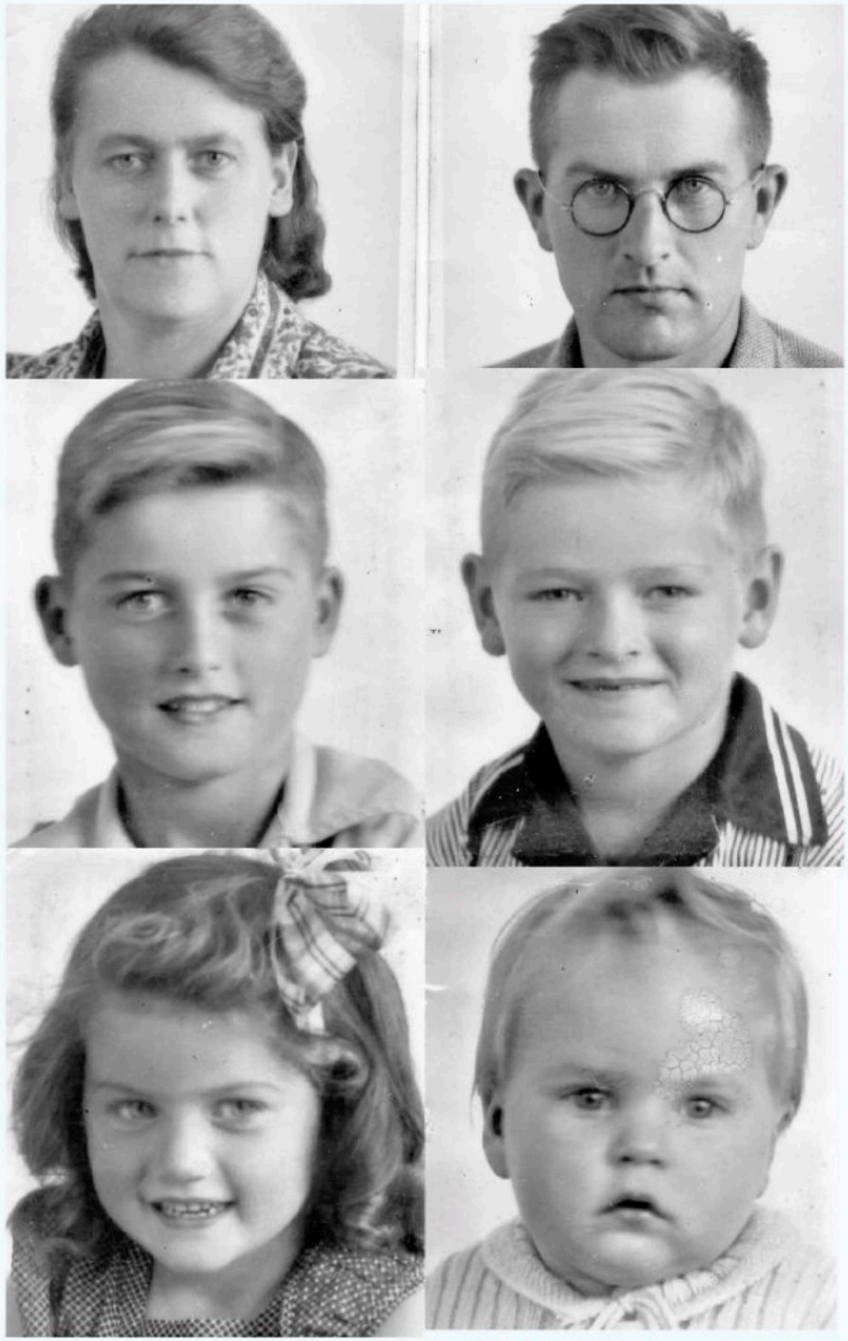
Mum's parents were 73 & 71 and Mum never saw them again or even spoke by telephone, as this was unheard of at that time, but kept in touch through regular letters until they died in 1969 & 1960 respectively.

The wonderful and much loved lifelong friend of Mum, 'Tante' Iet de Waal whom we visited each time in Holland and from whom we learned the final impetus to emigrate. She passed away at 98.



There would be no more gatherings with family and friends at the hotel anymore for Mum & Dad, such as this one celebrating her parents 40th anniversary in 1946.





Passport photos: Mum 41, Dad 39, Aris 10, Yonny 7, Nellie 4, Tini 20 months.

We left Holland Wednesday 9 May 1951 on the 'Sibajak', arriving 6 weeks later in Melbourne on Thursday 14 June 1951.

# Goodbye homeland, family & friends.





## Oh no...

At the ship, Mum's father gave her a roll of notes to help them out. She quickly stashed the money in her bra. Bras were not of the secure construction of nowadays. Imagine her further distress when she later found she had lost the lot!

Saying goodbye must have been heartbreaking for those on both ends of the streamers as the ship sailed away. Both Mum& Dad dearly loved their parents, brother & sisters.

## The Sibajak:

The Dutch ship MS Sibajak was already 24 years old in 1951 and had been an elegant 3-class liner mainly plying the Holland - Indonesia route, then in WWII she served the Allies as a troop transport ship while under the management of British shipping company P.&O.

After WW2 the Sibajak and many Dutch vessels were charted by the Dutch Government and refitted to carry 956 passengers (migrants) in one class.

Our 1951 May departure also carried 23 prefabricated houses for Australian ports. - so were were not the only ones. 118 left the ship at Melbourne and 48 of these were destined for settlement in Tasmania.

She was a much loved ship that finished service in 1959 and was sold to a Hong Kong company for demolition.




Postcard of ship sent to 'Tante' let and posted at Port Said that she had kept and gave me.

On back of postcard: Translation (no date):

Dear Friends,

Just a note from Leen & Nel on board the Sibajak just near Port Said. All is going well, no trouble with seasickness and the food and sleeping is very good.

Of England we saw little but of Portugal, Spain and North Africa we saw lots. Really beautiful and the colours are just as you always see them on postcards.

The sea has been calm, but for a day now a bit rougher, but you get used to it quickly. Nel doesn't notice it at all.

Gee the world is big - we have been sailing for 9 days and we have to do that 4 times over still. That will be boring - nothing but water.

Well friends, we will soon write a letter.

Our best wishes and warmest regards from your friends,

Leen, Nel and children.



Our family on board the 'Sibajak'.





# Travelling to Australia on the 'Sibajak' 1951 - 1st hand accounts.

We do not have a record of the trip from Mum & Dad, but I do have accounts from some of the others travelling at the same time.

## Mrs Belgraver:

The Belgravers became family friends after meeting on board the ship and living in Moe. Mrs Belgraver kept a diary of the trip - 30 pages of close-written foolscap. Of recent years I have reconnected with Sineke (b.1946) and she gave me a translated copy.

The departure was delayed and the ship finally sailed at 11pm.

*"I shall never forget the sight of my loving & well-beloved family, sitting at the quayside, quite exhausted by all the waiting. I shall also never forget the last time they waved, just before passing around the corner of the terminal. My dear, dear mother, would that be the last time we see you?"*

*"There was a sports deck and child minding area with a number of ladies to look after the 400 children on board. They are kind and patient.*

*A large dining room, beautifully decorated with dark wood & sculptures everyehere.We are served by Javanese in white jackets & black caps who do not speak Dutch but seem to understand it. The service is excellent. People dress for dinner.*

*There is lots of entertainment offered for all age groups, a library, films, English classes, dances, games, passenger concert, King Neptune ceremony at the equator,*

*There is a laundry, shoemaker, shops.*

*Everyone is fascinated by the passing scenery as they sit back in deckchairs - Gibaltar, the Atlas Mountains, white houses of Tunisia, people wearing Fez hats, the peacock blue water of the Mediterranean, Port Said (everything on board locked up 'because the Arabs steal like ravens'), a tour of the city- dirty, the men wearing 'a striped pyjama dress' and pressing you to buy their wares calling out in Dutch, the women in black & veiled, ruins from the war, bowing cafe owners, food stalls buzzing with flies and everything covered in dust.*



GOODBYE !



The dormitory accomodation we had. Dad & boys in Mens; Mum, Nellie & I in a women's one.



All photos on board Sibajak found online. SSMaritime.com

Sports deck with retractable covers for protection from burning sun or rain.



Lounge, sitting area.

In the dining room.



*Through the Suez canal so many passing boats & a ship passes with Dutch miliatry who served in Korea calling to fellow countrymen 'We are going home'.*

*Mail came on board at Aden which is extraordinarily beautiful with white buildings to the top of the mountain. They sail on to Colombo, go down the gangplank onto small boats to get ashore and have to crane their necks to look up at their big ship. They were impressed with the beautiful buildings, boulevard, gardens, the elegant women in their colourful saris, the men carrying cargo ontop of their heads, a snake charmer, the Dutch names as Sri Lanks once belonged to Holland, the cleanliness of the city and shops, but were disturbed to see men pulling people in carriages. Mail also awaited at Colombo.*

*On board everything is kept beautifully clean, the food delicious and more than enough. The children all get small pox injections and many have severe recations, so lots of crying at the childrens mealtimes made it absolutely chaotic.*

*Generally the weather was fine, very hot at the equator, then windy heading down the Indian Ocean to Australia.*

*A Javanese cabin boy went missing; they searched the whole ship but only found his slippers by a railing. The ship turns back and searched the sea for 3 hours but he was not found. The story was that he recently married and in Colombo he received news that with his gambling he had lost his house, his wife & all possessions. In desperation, he jumped overboard. He worked in Mrs Belgravers cabin and she was saddened that none of them perceived his desperation and held out a hand to help, even with a language barrier.*

*Lifeboat drill followed. A farewell dinner before arriving at Fremantle where the waves are high and 'the ship dances across the tops'.*

*"We walked in the least beautiful part of Fremantle, with ugly houses, shabby even," A bus to Perth - a beautiful city.*

*The ship nose dives 6-7 metres between the waves travelling to Melbourne. Tables, chairs & deckchairs had to be lashed together. It was very cold. All the children sat on the floor and screamed in delight as they slid from one side to the other. However two who fell on deck, broke a wrist and upper arm.*

*After 3 days of bad weather, and travelling at half speed, too cold on children's deck and too dangerous on the promenade deck, everyone was longing for the end to the journey.*

*The 900 passengers were mainly middle-class and there was never any concern about the children's safety to walk anywhere.*

*"I have nothing but praise for this ship."*

*Arrived in Melbourne Thursday 14 June 1951 and disembarked after lunch. "*

*"The future is still unknown to us. Behind us we have burned all our bridges. Slowly worrying thoughts creep upon us. Then someone starts singing and so many join in and we feel and experience the spirit of community."*



**M.S. Sibajak berthed at Station Pier Melbourne**

# Travelling to Australia on the 'Sibajak' 1951 - 1st hand accounts.

## Kitty Koopman:

All photos on board Sibajak found online. SSMaritime.com

*(b. 1946). "On board the Sibajak we had dinner time for the children, followed by dinner time for the adults. I remember being helped eat my dinner by the 'black' servants and they were very kind.*

*There was a playground for children at the stern of the ship. It had netting all around for safety. I recall brother Cees throwing a child's shoe overboard!*

*Dad used to give Cees and I a half roll of salted licorice as we went to the playground. I loved that.*

*Mum was seasick most of the journey and Marianne was about 18 months old crying incessantly, so not much rest for poor Mum.*

*Dad would put us on to the top bunk so we could look out of the porthole and watch the porpoises jumping out of the water.*

*We went through the Suez Canal. I recall small boats with people in them trying to sell things to people on the Sibajak. They would hoist the goods up by rope.*

*And most importantly that a black servant jumped overboard. I always maintain that I remember seeing the man pretending to scrape apple peel off a plate, but then jumping in. ( But this could be my imagination at work!)"*



The Sibajak is seen berthed in one of the Dutch East Indies ports



Children's playroom



Children's deck with netting.



Children's meals were served an hour before adults and were chaotic!

## From another passenger's account found online:

*"Days before we were due to depart on 9th May 1951, there was an outbreak of the deadly Small Pox disease in my Dutch homeland so all passengers had to be vaccinated by the doctor on board. I recall seeing many red swollen arms among the passengers on deck.*

*Quite early in our voyage we were warned the minefields in the English Channel had not then been cleared and there was mention of the tragic sinking, only a month before our voyage, of the British submarine the Affray.*

*Attention was also drawn to British war ships off Gibraltar and to Malta's capital La Valetta rising from its war ruins.*

*Off Greece, the Gulf of Nauplia was the resting place of the ship Slamat, a pre-war sister-ship of the Sibajak that had been sunk in 1941.*

*There was the occasional sighting of flying fish above the surface of the water."*



Promenade deck



Enclosed
Promenade deck



# Mr Zoon:

The Zoons were family friends that came out the same time.
Here some excerpts from a diary/letter he wrote.

*"8am - Breakfast - porridge, white bread, raisin bread, butter, cheese, jam, boiled eggs, sliced stras, coffee or tea.*
*10.30 Hot chocolate & biscuits.*
*12 - Lunch - Vegetable soup, pork chops, witlof, potatoes & cake.*
*4:30 - Afternoon tea.*
*6 - Dinner Baked meat, applepuree, mashed potatoe, bread & butter, jam, smoked sausage, coffee or tea. Variations each day. Very good and effificent service.*
*8pm - Exercises.*
*Pass lots of fishing boats.*
*In Suez canal the ship is tied to let oncoming ships pass. Very hot in the Red Sea.*
*There are 250 staff, 150 are Javanese. At Aden drinkwater & oil taken on board. Leaving Gulf of Aden and into Indian Ocean and half the passengers seasick.*
*Perth a really beautiful city. Stormy weather to Melbourne.*

*The Zoons had their container unloaded at Melbourne but went on to Sydney & thought the harbour unbelievably beautiful. They took the night train to Bathurst immigration camp. Everything is so well organised - hot cuppas awaited us on arrival, but the food not so great on 1st day but better the next. Very cold at night. Camp is enormous and a free bus available. English lessons and were to work on a farm for the day but the farmer never arrived.*
*Beautiful countryside, lots of hills, hundreds of coloured birds.*

*Adult son Kees visited Vissers & Koopmans in Yarragon and suggested to parents that they set up there too.*
*The distances are enormous.*
*26 June. Flew to Melbourne which was quickest and cheapest, fabulous views, same distance as Amsterdam to Vienna, then train to Yarragon where Vissers & Koopmans staying in hotel (Warragul)."*

# How did we end up living in Yarragon?

Someone knew someone already in Australia - Nic Leyen. They knew nothing about where he lived but sent him money to buy a block of land for us and another for the Koopmans.

He lived in Newborough. We don't know why he by-passed Newborough, Moe or Morwell where many other Dutch ended up settling, but he purchased 2 blocks from a farmer, Mr campbell, in Rollo St. Yarragon.

Our lives could have been very different had Nic lived in another state or even if he had bought land in any of the other towns, but Yarragon it was.

Mr Koopman had work teed up as a mechanic with Ozzie Matthews who had a garage at Yarragon and Mr & Mrs Matthews met us all when the ship arrived in Melbourne. They kindly took Aris 10 & Yonny 7, the oldest of the children, home with them.

Mr & Mrs Leyen took Nellie 5 and Mum took me, Tini, 22 months old with her to the Liberty-Inn Hotel, Warragul as did Mrs Koopman with her 3 children. I think Dad & Mr Koopman must have also stayed there but each day went to Melbourne to try and negotiate the release of their containers. The first day, travelling by train they discovered the containers were not at the wharf but in Flemington, wherever that was. Short of funds, they hitch hiked the other days. The red tape was made even more difficult by not being able to speak English!

Back in Warragul, they spotted a man wearing clogs!

With the help of the man in clogs Mr Bewalda from Newborough, they were able to get someone with a truck, deal with the bureaucracy at the docks and finally get the containers with their houses and contents delivered to their plots at Yarragon.




OUR SMALL FAMILY SCATTERED FOR FIRST 2 WEEKS.

For Aris 10, & Yonny 7, to be in a strange Australian house with people they did not know, speaking a strange language, being given strange food, and being expected to go to school was quite traumatic - they were totally lost and bewildered.

They started school at Yarragon on 21 June 1951, just a week after getting off the boat.

Mrs Matthews found they would not eat anything other than bread with jam and she had to take them to school with a strap in her hand as Aris had run off into the paddock one time.

For Nellie, almost 5, it was no easier even if her hosts did speak Dutch. She thought she had been abandoned and would never see her parents again. She says she still has anxiety issues from the experience.

OUR FAMILY TOGETHER AGAIN.

Within 2 weeks of arrival our family was again living together - there was not the money to stay at the Liberty Inn any longer and so each family crammed into a rented caravan.

1951 was one of the coldest, wettest winters on record. It even snowed in Yarragon. It was so cold in the caravans, the condensation ran down the thin walls, so they got kerosene heaters to warm them up, but everyone got sick from the fumes.

With canvas surrounds, a plank over the deep and rapidly flowing drain along Rollo St acted as the toilet in the first days. This required careful negotiaton until 'dunnies' were soon built. Avoiding being covered in mud was a real problem as the houses virtually stood in a paddock.



# Early days in Yarragon.

## From Mr Zoon's diary ...

*"28 June bought a block of land (in Winston St) for £82. (Value=$1,745 in 2021; Reserve Bank inflation calculator).*

*Moved into caravans. The containers arrived and all working together. Visser's house up in a week, then Koopmans.*

*10 July Mrs Zoon & children arrived, very tired. (From Bathurst Migration Camp).*

*14 July stumps in for our house. Pouring rain.*

*16 July Ans & Afra started school in Yarragon.*

*We get milk from a farmer only a minute away. 20c/litre with so much cream on top. Food prices are ok but tobacco is expensive.*

*19 Aug. We are already in our own house and it looks great. We are very happy with it. I will build a garage 6.6x3.5 m and it will be finished in a week.*

*Gerry Bolten is coming to live here too.*

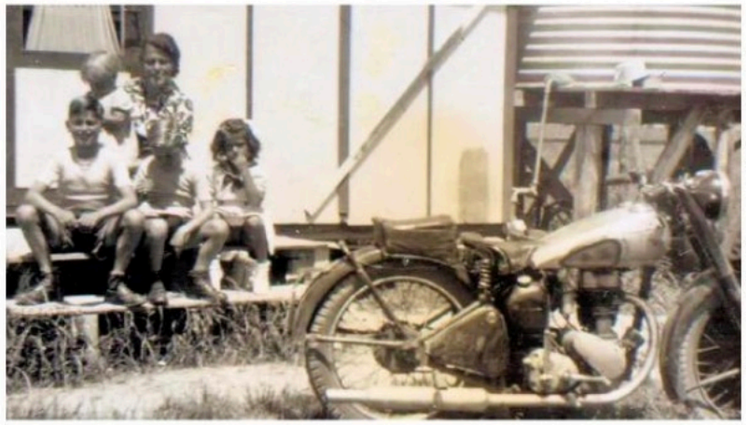
*27 Aug. Son Jan & I have got 6 weeks work painting a school earning £14/ wk.*

*1 Sept. Brother Wim is coming from Albury for the weekend, a distance from Amsterdam to Paris!*

*14 Oct. The weather is improving, lilacs & appleblossom in full bloom. Our paint work here goes at an easy tempo. Yarragon is a small quiet village.*

*This is a short synopsis of us starting a new life in Australia. Please write back as a letter from Holland is so greatfully read."*

So you can see they all got stuck into things quickly and efficiently.



Late 1951 - ah, sunshine at last! Aris, Tini, Mum, Yonny, Nellie and Dad's motorbike - a means of transport but no room for work gear and family.



Our house is up! Aris, Yonny, Mum, Tini, Nellie, Dad. 1951



Back of house with Koopman's house on other corner of Winston St (unmade) & Rollo St.



1951 Tini, Cees Koopman, Tecla Bolten, Nellie, Marianne Koopman.

# Dad starts work.

Within weeks of arriving in Australia, the houses were up, the families inside, and Dad started work with builder Ted Ireland Snr.

After 3 weeks a local farmer came up to Dad and said "I see you know how to build. Could you build me a new cowshed?"

The farmer even offered him the use of a car for the duration of building, weekends included - what generosity!

Thus Dad became self employed and began building Australian farmhouses and dairies - the new herringbone variety.

He was off to work before we kids were up and came home just at dinner time after which he always worked at the table drawing up the plans to take into Council for the next job.

He did a lot of work around Thorpdale, including building several places for the Gunn family whom he always got on well with.

I remember going with Dad to work some days and playing around the different sites, including the service station of Jep Jackson, just out of Thorpdale and my first taste of pumpkin was at the Gunn's - Dad shuddered at it, saying it was pig food, which it was in Holland, but I am glad Australians have it at the dinner table.



# Living in a paddock.

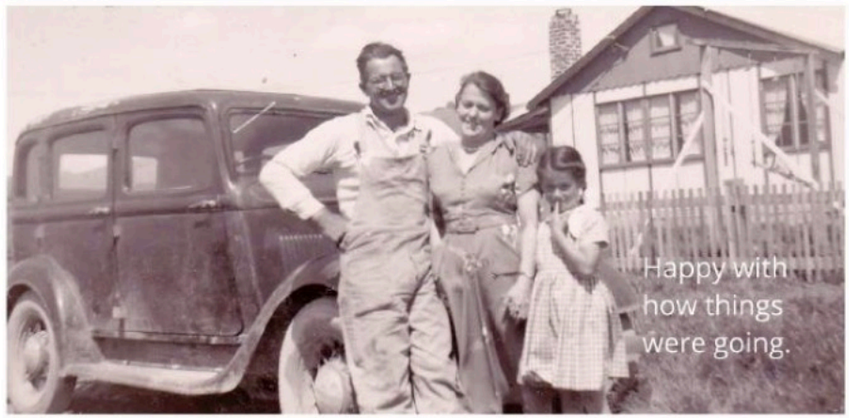
The houses virtually stood in a paddock on the west side of unsealed Rollo Street, with a very rough track in between that became Winston Street.

There was none of the infrastructure that is required today and that unmade, short Winston Street was a muddy quagmire in winter and a dry, deeply rutted track in summer - virtually undriveable year round, and in our time of living there (1951-1961), Winston street was never a proper road, nor did it have footpaths or nature strips - there was wild, unkempt, uneven grass with a deep drain with fast flowing water which had to be crossed to each house by a plank.

Before I can remember, apparently I wandered across to visit the Zoon family and fell in the deeply flowing drain. Had their 11 year old daughter Ans, not seen me coming and jumped in to save me, I may not be telling the tale now. I still find water over my head terrifying.



Aris & Yonny up on the roof giving Dad a hand.



Happy with how things were going.

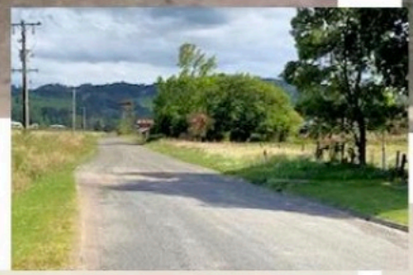
# Exploring our new surroundings - photos sent to Holland to show off the hills!
# ... no hills in Holland.



The generous farmer who lent Dad a car to build his cowshed, also allowed weekends to explore.



Rollo St from our house looking south.
Not much different today but soon will be - 638 housing blocks on the drawing board.





Outside the Yarragon Hotel with the Zoons.

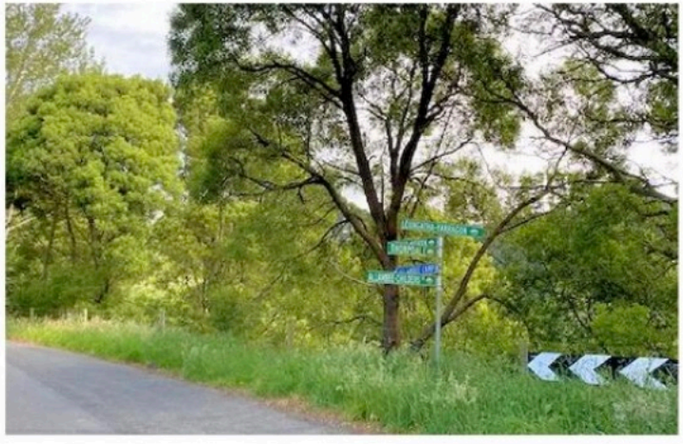


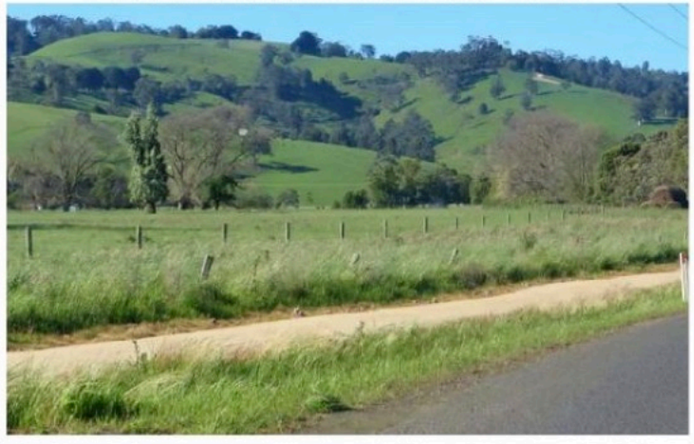





At the top of Leongatha Road with the Belgravers.

SAME SITES 2021... LOTS MORE TREES.







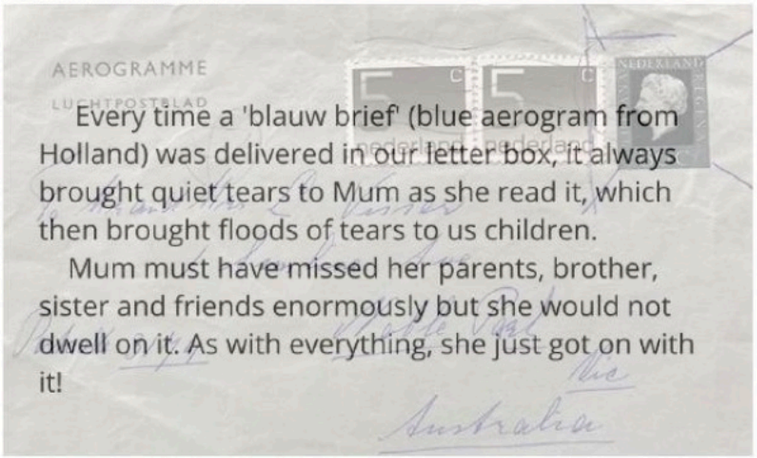
# "Was it the right move?" they wondered.

There were lots of doubts and comparisons with the familiar things back home and they missed their extended families.

They wondered about their decision to come to 'sunny' Australia, but with all the families helping together and in the evenings gathering and relating their funny stories of trying to communicate at the shops and school, there was also laughter.

Nellie: "I think that the first couple of years were the hardest, yet the most fun, especially while the Koopmans and the Zoons were living next door. They gained strength, helped and comforted each other in all the downs and rejoiced in any good fortune that came their way.

They had their health and they had their children and they thought themselves fortunate."




Every time a 'blauw brief' (blue aerogram from Holland) was delivered in our letter box, it always brought quiet tears to Mum as she read it, which then brought floods of tears to us children.

Mum must have missed her parents, brother, sister and friends enormously but she would not dwell on it. As with everything, she just got on with it!

# English classes.

The school master, Mr Poletti, an Italian, conducted English classes at night for the influx of 'New Australians'.

Mum kept their attendance record cards - Mum attended 85% of classes from when she joined on 17/7/51 to 15/5/52 and her progress was 'Fair. Dad too only rated 'Fair' attending 67% with irregular attendance noted.

They often said later the teacher was a very good man, but what they really liked was sitting around the warm fire.



Outside the Yarragon school, Kitty Koopman, Nellie, Ans Zoon, either Tini, Tecla or Marianne, Yopie Zoon, Afra Zoon, Mrs Zoon & son Kees?.

One of my earliest memories is having this family photo taken at the Yarragon hall one evening ca.1953. Mum told us later that the smart bolero tops Nellie & I are wearing she had taken on 'apro' from local William's Drapery Store and returned the next day! Cheeky, but there wasn't the spare money to buy them.

However we never went without anything. Dad was always into the new - no more cutting the grass with a sythe; when Victa lawnmowers hit the market we were amongst the first to 'turn grass into lawn'. Not that Mum & Dad were into gardening - hardy geraniums struggled infront of the house and along the fence.

Dad was quick with that other new invention - TV! We were the first house in Rollo St. to get a television and the third in the town. This meant we had to bring every conceivable chair into the lounge room to provide for all the neighbourhood to come and watch.



# We settle, the others move on.

After 12 months, the Koopmans moved to Torquay and took their house with them again and what a hair raising trip that was, Mrs Koopman would later tell. Dreadful weather and dreadful roads.

In November 1952 the Zoons also moved, but left their Dutch house behind when they went to Georgetown, Tasmania for better work opportunities.

But Yarragon always felt right for Mum & Dad, and for us as kids it was a great place to grow up.

Although both Mum and Dad were in their 40's they soon learned the language well enough to get by, but of course to really talk with others, they sought out other Dutchies and fortunately there were many in nearby Moe & Morwell to visit and quite a few came to Yarragon in those early years - the Houttuins, Lebers, Van Dykes, Lin & Theo Kroone, Bill Deroon, Jan Kuiper, and a couple of other families who soon moved on again.

We Vissers were the only family that really stayed and I am the only one of all those early Dutchies still living at Yarragon, 70 years since we first arrived.

When the Boltens, also from Heiloo, came to Yarragon after some time at Bonnegilla Migrant Camp, Dad and Gerry Bolten went into partnership as builders. 'Visser & Bolten, Builders' said the sign at our place and at the Boltens a few doors down, the sign said 'Bolten & Visser'.

El & Gerry Bolten were 15 years younger than Mum & Dad but became their best friends. Mum was glad to have El down the street.



Mr Bolten & Dad on the job.



Tini, Mum, Yonny, Tecla & Mrs Bolten.

# Growing up with 2 languages.

We always spoke Dutch at home. I grew up with two languages simultaneously, Dutch IN the house, and English once I went OUTSIDE the door. I didn't even notice it - it was just the way it was. It was the same for all the neighbours, the Lesyks, Lozinskis , Petrushkas, Nezypors and Wozniaks from the Ukraine and Poland.

However the Boltens really embraced the Australian way of life, speaking English to their children, being mad keen football fans and Gerry loved to drink beer at the Pub with the blokes - but none of this was Mum & Dad's scene. Mrs Bolten went down in Yarragon's football lore for running onto the field and attacking the umpire with an umbrella! Becoming so Australian did have repercussions when they went back to Holland.

# 1960s Many Dutch return to live in Holland.

Many of the Dutch families we knew returned to live in Australia in the mid 1960s.

It was only more recently I learned that the Dutch Government did a total turn around from their 1950s policy encouraging migration, to in the 1960s, offering incentives to "Come back." The economy had picked up and they needed more workers for all the new development and would rather their own kind than foreigners from Turkey, the colonies and other places.

About 1/3 of the 300,000 that came to Australia took heed of the call and returned.

However they found Australia had changed them and many found they did not totally fit in back in their homeland. Some kept going back and forth from Holland to Australia and found they were never totally a part of either.

For my friend Tecla Bolten returning to live in Holland in 1964 at 14 she had to start school in with the 1st graders because she could not speak Dutch, a traumatic experience. Tecla thinks of Yarragon as her 'home' and loves to return, just as I love visiting her in Heiloo where I was born.










# The Dutch house turns Aussie.

Dad quickly built a shed that housed our laundry & his workbench; a chookhouse that a Dutch friend lived in (before chooks), fences, garage and then he tackled the house again as Dad was always one to move with the trends.

He soon added a verandah later enclosed as a 'sleep-out', then at the other end another bedroom, bathroom (with shower!) and expanded kitchen. Then he renovated again - added a bedroom at the front, extended the lounge and outside a modern 'pergola'.

Out with the charming old Dutch doors, windows and 'attic' and in with 1950s fashions.

Phew! All in his spare time.

By the time we left in 1961 to move into a new brick home he had built, the house no longer looked like it had travelled from the other side of the world.

It still stands at 41 Rollo St and hasn't changed much since we left it 60 years ago.



















GEZELLIG HOOR! It was cosy.
These photos ca.1954 were taken before all the extra renovations and additions.
Top & R - Two views of the lounge - very Dutch.
Lower L - Two views of kitchen. We had a red laminex table, red checked curtains & pale green painted cupboards. Mum so proud of her Metro refrigerator. All so much the height of modernity! Photos sent to Holland to show family and friends how well we were doing.






















EARLY DAYS: From top L-R. 1, Nellie & Tini on motor bike with Dad. 2.Bill Deroon holding me on car that was lent by farmer I think.
3. We all went to the beach at Lang Lang one day- over washbord roads singing,'Long wat to Tipparary'. 4. Nelli, Ina, Eljo & Tini infront of house.
5. Nelly with new pram & doll on street in front of our house. 6. Our swimming pool. 7. Dad with his Dutch daughters...no looking back!
8. A picnic along roadside. 9. Mum & Dad on rocks at Torquay. 10. Tini supervising Dad building removalist van.
























Top-1. !st car and drive up the hills1953;2. Family photo at Y'gon Hall about 1953;3. Family photo about 1959-60.
4.Dad on the job. 5. Tini, Nelly, Yonny 1962 off to school, in front of Darnum house. 6.Mum unpacks a parcel from Holland. 7. Letter from Mum to her Mother . There was a big exchange of 'blauw brieven'. 8. All on top of the 'kist' when cousins arrived from Holland 1953;
Bottom - 9. Ina, Tini & Eljo in matching dresses sent by Oma in Holland. 10. Yonny displays his State-wide winning entry for 'Make it with Matches' in 1954, aged 11. His prize was a movie camera - and he still always takes movies!





















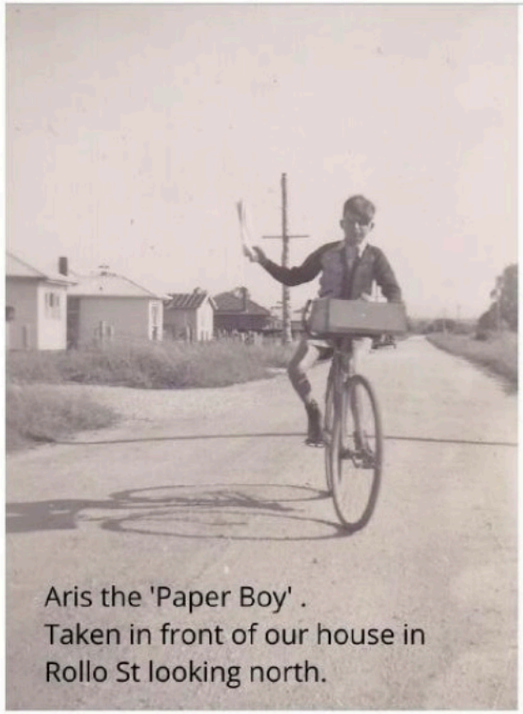








Growing up in the 1950s.
It was a simpler time, with lots of freedom and lots to do in the neighbourhood, bikes needed no helmuts, (or gears), entertainment was self-initiated, Yarragon provided all one could wish for, even dinner at times when the boys went fishing and bought back eels, which Mum then cooked ( 'paling' was a Dutch delicacie ). Nellie displaying Mum's clever dressmaking using recycled clothes. The white dress was made especially to wave to Queen Elisabeth when she visited Warragul on 3/3 1954. Despite early interest, no-one can play a musical note now.



Aris the 'Paper Boy' .
Taken in front of our house in
Rollo St looking north.



"Look Mum, no hands!"
Yonny on Aris's shoulders.

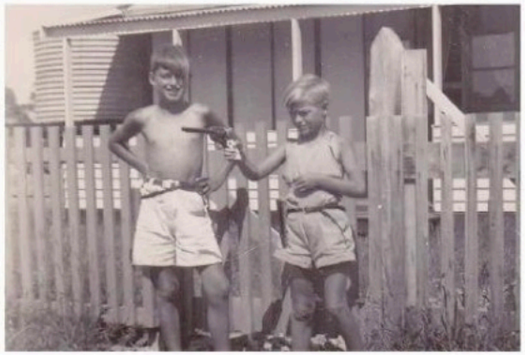


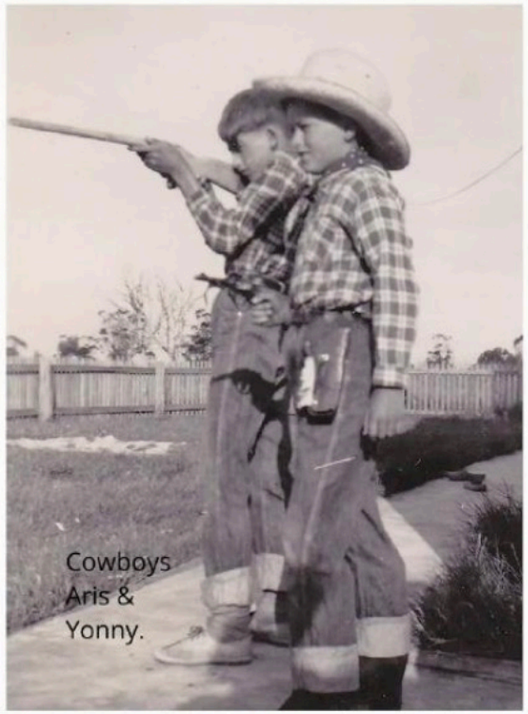












Cowboys
Aris &
Yonny.



Aris in smart
new jacket.



Cousins - Ina, Tini, Eljo with
matching outfits from Oma Kok.



The boys each earned money as 'Paper Boys', they climbed trees and collected birds eggs which were blown and displayed in a box lined with cotton wool, they went off all day in the bush with a pocket knife, they climbed the steep slopes of 'the 'Sandpit', dangling over the 'bottomless' milky green water below, played 'Cowboys 'n Indians' and made their own billycarts, comics were the bane of society. We girls played 'house' and in this time of pre T.V. we all played games out on the gravel road until 6pm when it was 'Tarzan' time on the radio and we'd race inside yelling "Oo-u-o-u-o-ooo!"









Aris & Yonny would collect bottles for pocket money.

# Summer holidays at Torquay

How lucky we were that the Koopmans moved to Torquay.
It gave us the perfect summer holiday venue. Dad built a caravan and off we went on the long, hot journey - no air-conditioning in those days.
NELLIE :"Another of my fond memories is the annual trek to Torquay for the Christmas holidays. Dad would load us all up, and with the caravan on behind, off we would go to for the whole of January. Dad would go back home to work and return weekends. The caravan was parked on the vacant block at the Koopmans and we would spend all our time on the beach. The other big event during those holidays was the trip to Geelong and swimming at the Eastern Beach. This was the ultimate, only to be topped off with fish and chips on the way home, it just couldn't ever get better than that."
After a few years, Dad bought a block in Zeally Bay Rd with just a garage on it. This became our holiday house and lots of other families would camp on the block with us. Dad started to build a house there, but it never got beyond the stumps.



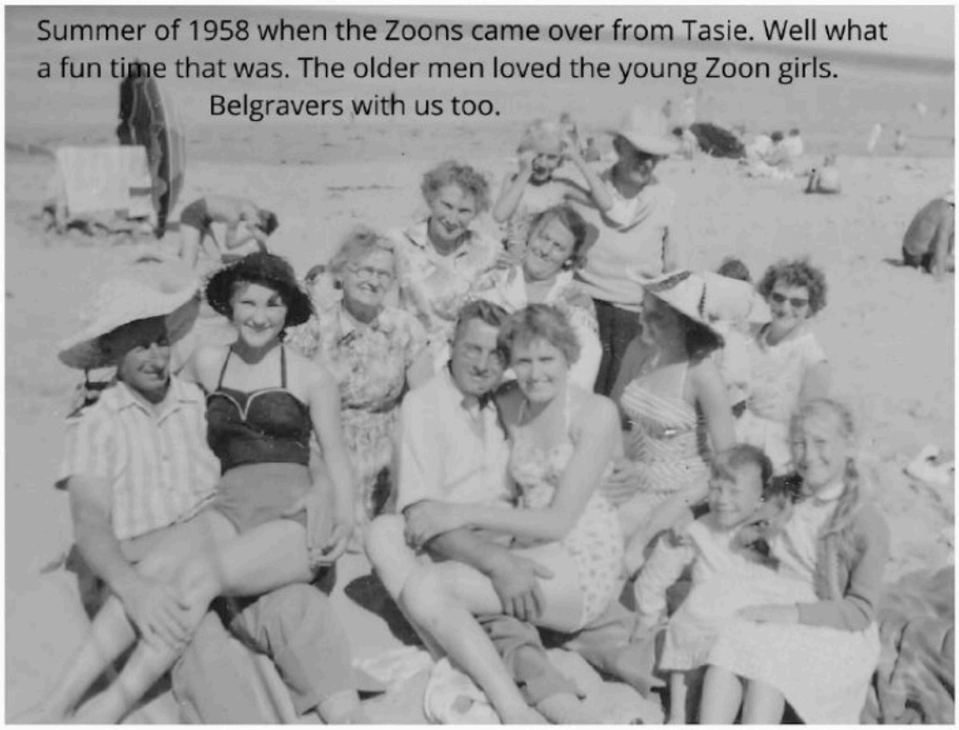
In the caravan that Dad built so we could holiday at Torquay.

The garage in Zeally Bay Rd where 3 families slept inside, another family in the caravan & another in a tent.
The families that joined us were the Hoeds, Zoons, Belgravers, Houttuins, Van Dykes (not gippsland Van Dykes).









Summer of 1958 when the Zoons came over from Tasie. Well what a fun time that was. The older men loved the young Zoon girls. Belgravers with us too.











# Monday was Wash Day.

In true Dutch tradition Monday was Wash Day.

I remember the routine well as I helped Mum with this when I was home. I tell this to let the grandchildren know how hard mothers worked in those days. It was not a matter of tossing the dirty clothes into a machine, turning a switch and walking away from it.

It would start very early in the morning, filling the 'copper' with water. This was a big, deep vat, always mad of copper, that stood in the corner of the shed out the back. A fire was lit in the little hearth underneath it, and this had to be constantly stoked.

When the water was boiling some hours later, yellow soap was grated into it and the washing was sorted into piles.

First load was the white sheets - no coloured sheets available in those days, nor were there fitted under-sheets. Each week the top sheet would become the bottom sheet and only the top sheet was replaced with a new, clean one.

When the load had been bubbling away in the copper and swished around with the wooden poker, it was hauled out, using the poker and flung into the first trough of cold water. This was hot, heavy and sweaty work.

The next load of teatowels and light coloured garments was put into the copper and the previous load was tossed into the 2nd trough of cold water and swished around to remove soap. A corner of the item was found and eased into the wringer sitting on the edge of the trough. You had to be careful and quick as your finger could get flattened as well. That load was then lugged outside to hang on the line which was wire strung between 2 posts with a forked pole in the centre to raise or lower the line.

All this was very heavy work for anyone, let alone a very little mum. The sheets would have dangled on the ground had they been strung on the line at a height Mum could reach, even with the box specifically for Mum to reach the line. Instead, the sheets were always laid out over 'de bleek veld' - the bleach patch - which was the grass in the back yard.

The sun bleached them pure white this way. And those sheets were so heavy to manoeuvre. They were meant to last a lifetime - which they certainly did, because when they started to wear thin in the middle, they were cut in half and the outsides were sewn together in the centre. This meant you always had scratched knees, first from such crisp, hard sheets, and later when they finally softened, from the seam right in the middle of the bed.

After some 8-9 wash loads, going from whites to coloureds to the final one which was Dad's overalls, the now dirty water was ladled into a wooden bucket (can you imagine the weight of that and then carried inside and the floor was washed down with it.

By now it would be late afternoon, the dry washing would be brought in. Then the stiff sheets and all cotton goods were sprinkled with water, rolled up and left to soften so that you could iron them the next day -Tuesday was Ironing Day! No steam irons then.

Everything was hard work in those days, but everything was simpler too. Mum was very happy in her role as wife, mother and full time housekeeper. There was plenty to occupy her day. She kept fit by just being busy around the home and walking or riding to the shops and as all married women were home, they weren't lonely or isolated. Hawkers came selling anything and everything from the back of their vans and this brought them all out and they'd still be chatting in the street long after buying their wares.

One day, while hanging out the washing, I remember 3 low-flying, big, brown planes swooshing over us. It was the Queen's Coronation on 2 June 1953. I was soon to turn 4. That fly-over forever captured the moment and also the pattern on Mum's and my matching aprons in my mind. I made a mosaic paver of that memory.



# Dad the builder and car man.

From L-R, top to bottom: - One of the first houses Dad built in Australia.
- The blue & white Commer ute.
- Dad's first NEW car - always a Holden, never a Ford!
- The house Dad built at Yarragon Service Station for Fred Wells, never knowing that later it would be our home 1962-1970.
- Dad on the roof whist building same house. Few subbies then, he did the lot.
- The Vanguard 1955 with its 'North Holland' number plate. Like many of the cars that followed, they were big and roomy, dozens could fit in. No seat belts then, and if you were in the back on your own, you could slip and slide from one side to the other, over the shiny, worn leather seats. Great fun. Sunday family drives were the norm then. Most outings also involved a break-down, which I found very worrying, but Dad always got us going again.
In fact cars on the side of the road, with bonnets up was so much the norm in those days.













# To Darnum, then back to Yarragon - 2 moves in 12 months...
## ... and a couple of hair-raising incidents running the garage.

Dad built a new house for our family at Darnum in his spare time, which we moved into in Dec 1961 - 10 years after arriving in Australia.
Mum was now over 50 years old and somewhat isolated at Darnum so decided it was time to drive again. Dad bought her a little 'bubble' Austin and off she would go to practise her driving along all the back roads, with me, all of 12 years old and needless to say, unable to drive, as the only other on board.

We had many adventures and I remember twice having to get a nearby farmer, with his tractor, to pull us out, as she had ended up in ditches when doing a U turn.

Darnum didn't satisfy like Yarragon and after a year there, both Mum & Dad were open to another move. So when Fred Wells offered to swap his very quiet Service Station on the Traf side of Yarragon for the new house in Darnum, Dad jumped at it.

So by December 1962 we were back in Yarragon, in a house Dad had built some years before and on the highway! Mum & Dad always liked to live on or near the main drag.

The house had a bedroom in the middle front room but within months Nellie and I had our beds on either side of where the stove used to sit in the kitchen at the back.The kitchen was now at the front, with the sun streaming in and with a view of any incoming customers. Dad cut a door into the wall, thus giving quick and easy access to the petrol bowsers and customers.


Yvonne & Tini outside Darnum house


The house at the Yarragon Service Station.

Dad was in his element - finally doing what he always wanted - working with cars. He built up the business, had another mechanic working for him and moved another house on the property for the mechanic and his family.

But before a mechanic livied there, Dutch couple Rijn & Nel Dyt moved in when they were first married. Rijn told me how one day on returning home from his bricklaying work he found Dad in a panic as the hoist holding up the car the mechanic was working under had collapsed. Quickly he and Dad with absolute brute strength managed to lift the heavy Vanguard car enough for the mechanic to crawl out (he was a skinny bloke) suffering only a bruised shoulder. Dad & Rijn were amazed that they managed to lift the vehicle because when they tried again later, they couldn't do it. That's what adrenaline and urgency makes one capable of.

Dad got his secondhand dealer's licence and started buying and selling old cars. They were lined up for sale along the highway. He then started to fill the areas at the side with car bodies for wrecking and parts. Not a great look, in fact quite an eyesore but it was a good business for Dad.

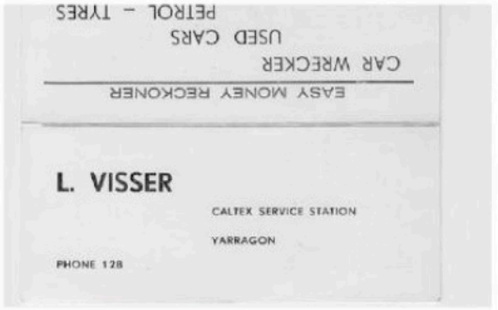
We all helped serving petrol, checking oil & water and washing windscreens for customers as this was the era of 'service' at service stations.

Mum now having a driver's licence was a great help as Dad needed help picking up cars. Nellie: "There she was, driving in Melbourne, in peak hour traffic, following Dad with another 'old bomb' to do up or sell as parts. I don't know how she managed to follow Dad in the traffic, it is very difficult to follow someone in the traffic, and she would have been terrified if she lost sight of him, but she did it."

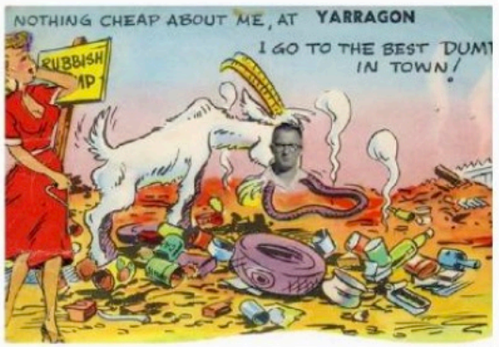
There is a classic story of when Mum was steering a car that Dad was towing. They were going through Drouin (no bypass back then) and down a hill when suddenly Dad saw Mum overtake him in the towed vehicle !














# VISSER'S SERVICE STATION - SECONDHAND CARS & WRECKING YARD

Top L-R: Mum & Dad ready to give service. The Service Station with mechanics house in background. Ready Reckoner business card.
ANOTHER VISSER SPECIAL'- No stickers survive, but were proudly displayed on the rear window of hundreds of old cars.
A Yarragon postcard that someone had put Dad's face on.
Mum pumping petrol. Young Robbie helping Pop and I think it is Yonny & Kate on the motorbike or could be me on the back.

# 1965 - Mum & Dad finally get to make a trip back to Holland.

14 years after leaving Holland, Mum & Dad made a return pilgrimage to Holland.
With the Koopmans, they travelled by ship, as aeroplane travel was not mainstream and it was very expensive - much dearer than all meals, entertainment and lodgings for 6 weeks on the high seas calling in at exotic ports along the way!
Amazing when we think of it now.

It must have been a very emotional homecoming for them, as when each of us has approached Holland, the tears flow as soon as we see its distinctive flat fields, canals , windmills and gables....and we didn't even grow up there.

It was a timely visit, as Dad's father was still alive. He had always held onto the hope of seeing his son again and died content after Dad left.

For Mum though, it was years too late - her parents had already gone.

The Holland they found was very different to the one they had left behind. It had prospered, there was affluence even, and times were good. They wondered if they did the right thing to leave the land - others who were not as savvy as Dad had done very well for themselves.

They were amazed by the sophistication - having sherries before dinner, wine with meals, eating out - a lifestyle none of them had before. Mum and Dad had still held onto the lifestyle as it was when they left Holland, but it had moved on.

The trip was planned for 6 months, including 6 weeks by ship each way.

Aris & Yvonne moved into our house at Yarragon and looked after us and the service station. I was still at school, Nellie worked and Yonny probably too by then. Yvonne was pregnant with their first, Robbie, and looking back, it was a big undertaking for them.

As much as Mum & Dad loved being back amongst their family and friends in Holland, towards the end they found they were eager to return to their family in Australia and couldn't wait to get home again.

When they boarded the ship to travel back to Australia, Mum had some niggling pain, so they disembarked in London and flew home instead, hang the expense.

They arrived home 29 Sept and Mum was inn pain. She underwent her one and only operation and had one of her kidneys removed. It was the size of a football and apparently had not been functioning since she was about 10. She recovered well and continued with life in her energetic way, as always. This was about the only health issue I remember with Mum.

Robbie was born 31 Oct.

Any regrets about leaving Holland in the first place were firmly tucked away, there was no turning back - Aris was married, first grandchild had arrived and Yonny, Nellie and I were establishing our careers and relationships.

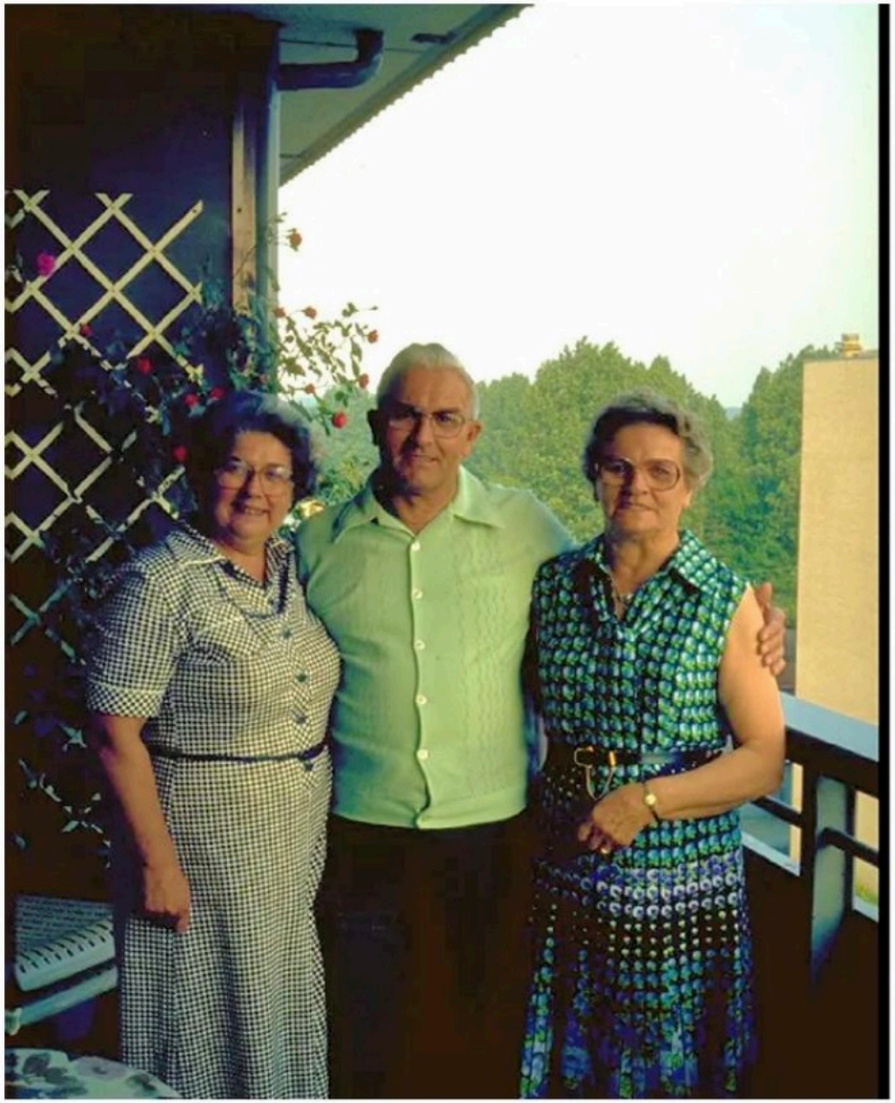
They recognised that Australia had changed them and they would have found it difficult to live in Holland again. Great to visit, but home for them was now Australia.

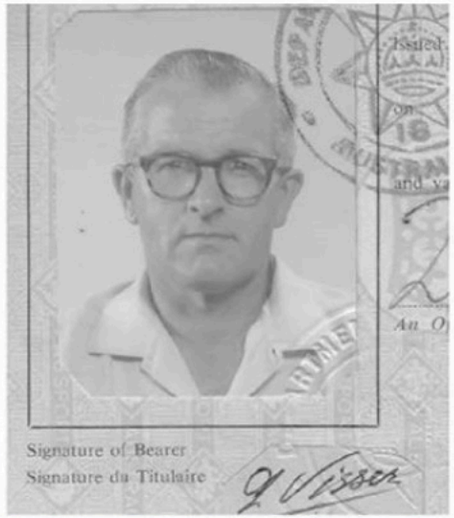
Dad too was generally in robust health. His heart faultered a few times but he always bounced back.

Dad often had back trouble and walked leaning forward from the hips after lifting himself out of a chair. Perhaps it is an hereditary condition, I see it with myself - apparently the 5th lumbar vertebrae is fused to resemble a sacral vertebrae. But we straighten up after a minute or two.

Dad had very simple and limited taste when it came to food. Lettuce was 'rabbit food', pumpkin was 'pig food and water was 'for the kickers', (frogs). Like all the Dutch, Dad was happiest with bread and cheese or a beschuit (rusk) spread with hagelslag (chocolate sprinkles), 'muisjes' (coloured sugar), or a piece of ontbijkoek (honey cake) with thick lashings of butter. Meat and potatoes were fine but only ate vegetables mashed through the potatoes to make a'prakie'. But despite such a limited diet, he always exuded good health.

However in 1969 at 57 years of age Dad had a heart attack. When Doc Fergie came, he had to give Dad two jabs of something that normally knocks people out with one. He said Dad had the hide of an elephant. Dad recovered fully, but it was a warning. Dad put the garage on the market and this time, they really did leave Yarragon.











1965. Top R: Mum & Dad's passport photos, Dad 53, Mum 55.

They sailed on the 'Flavia on 15 May to Rotterdam, arriving 27 June 1965. 14 years after leaving Holland.

It cost them £416 ($832) for the one-way trip for the 2 of them. ie. just to get there $416 each for a 6 week cruise! Sounds great value until you look at equivalent cost today. According to the Reserve Bank of Aust inflation calculator £416 in 1965 is equivalent to $11,570 in 2020 so it would have been alot of money for them.

At that time there were lots of ships & prices to choose from. I tried to find out what it would cost today, but I could find no passenger ships going from Aust to Europe. Only shorter cruises seem to be available. At an average cost today of $150/day, the 43 night trip could be $6,450/p/p. Thus for 2 = $12,900. We now have the cheaper, quicker option to fly.

Above: Dad with his sisters Trijntje & Brecht.

Above: Mum with her siblings Tinie & Adriaan.









1 Sunline Ave Noble Park. Dad bought the not fully completed house for $10,300 and they moved in, in May 1970 after Uncle John Hoed had completed finishing it off inside, as Dad, because of his heart attack, was unable to do it. They lived here until 1983 . R - Mum's geraniums. Lower L - All Mum's grandchildren (plus Kate) when she turned 70. R - All enjoying eating in Oma's lounge room, same day, April 1980.

# Retirement.

When Mum & Dad moved to Noble Park in May 1970 they were 60 and 58 years old, respectively. They now had more time for family and friends.
Many new grandchildren arrived in the 1970s and they journeyed frequently to visit them and also had the growing families come and stay.

So many other friends and neighbours called in on Mum & Dad, there were always others for a 'bakkie' ( cuppa & cookie) - Mrs Ligcht, Marietje, the Rademakers, the Pronks, the Van Dykes, Kathy & Andy, Evert & Nel and many others.

I always popped in when to'n fro'-ing to Melbourne, and loved the 'gezelligheid' - warm, cosy, friendly, chatter.

The Dutchies called in on them all the time, not just because of their warmth & hospitality but Dad was always the one they came to if they needed help in any way.

There were often people to stay. The Koopman's were regulars, the Zoon's from Tasie would come, the Swart's from Adelaide, and also old neighbours Kos Valk and Nel & Evert Barends after they moved.

There were also many relations and friends that journeyed from Holland.

Mum & Dad were 67 & 65 when our first son Adrian was born in 1977, but they really enjoyed their role as grandparents. He was their 9th grandchild, but earlier grandchildren had never lived close enough for them to be involved with or for babysitting.

Adrian spent a day a week, sometimes two, with his Oma & Opa in his early years as I would drop him off when I was doing post-graduate studies in Melbourne. They relished the closer involvement in a young one's life and Dad often lamented how he missed out on our growing up, as he had always been so busy working.

Mum & Dad would come down regularly to our place when the boys were growing up, sometimes just for a day visit, but often staying the night. Not wanting to create any extra work, they would bring their own bedding and unroll it onto the fold-out couch or came with their bed ready-made in their current campervan.
They also brought their own breakfast foods. Dad didnt like our selection, but our very young boys loved his.

Top - When Tante Trijnie & Oom Wim visited in 1977 plus Yonny with his first 3 sons.
Middle - 1980. We all go to Nel & Don's place at Falls Creek for Easter.
Adrian, Dad, Kate with Richard in front, David, Steven, Micael, Nellie, Lisa in front, Janie held by Yonny, Mum in front.
Bottom - Farewelling or greeting Tante Trijnie & Oom Wim at Essendon airport in 1977.
Aris, Dad, Tini, Mum, Tante Ttijnie, Oom Wim.
















# Retired but not tired!
# Dad & his Camper Vans.

After retiring in 1970 and moving to Noble Park, Dad soon got into buying old vans and building them into campervans, taking them on a trip and then sell them afterwards as he already had new ideas for the next one. He would have built over a dozen, perhaps 15 of these 'Visser specials' always with a big V at the front.

Nellie: "The vans were their pride and joy. They were totally independent and could travel anywhere and everywhere and they did and it never cost them anything. Wonderful cheap holidays, and the other good thing about them was that the vans were made to measure for Mum".

Dad always loved driving and never was it too far or too much for him to drive ANYWHERE anytime. He would drop everything and go and help anyone, anytime too. He always seemed to be able to fix or make anything.





# Lots of Travel, Lots of Adventures

With their friends the Koopmans, each with their own van, they travelled to Adelaide 1975, Tasmania 1976, The Barossa Valley in 1977, up the East Coast to Queensland, regular trips to Bateman's Bay and wherever friends of theirs lived.

They were always more interested in visiting friends than just sight seeing but they took in the sights along the way.

They would go to Swan Hill a couple of times each year to visit Nellie and the kids and journey to Mt Isa each year where Yonny & Kate lived from 1970-77.

These trips through the outback, some 3000kms each way, brought all sorts of adventures and anxiety as they encountered floods, dust storms, incredible road conditions, great pot holes, one of which nearly swallowed them, and of course numerous breakdowns in Dad's patched up 10th hand vehicles.

Dad was always able to get things going again. Amazing what can be achieved with a lacquer band, a bit of string and fingers crossed.





















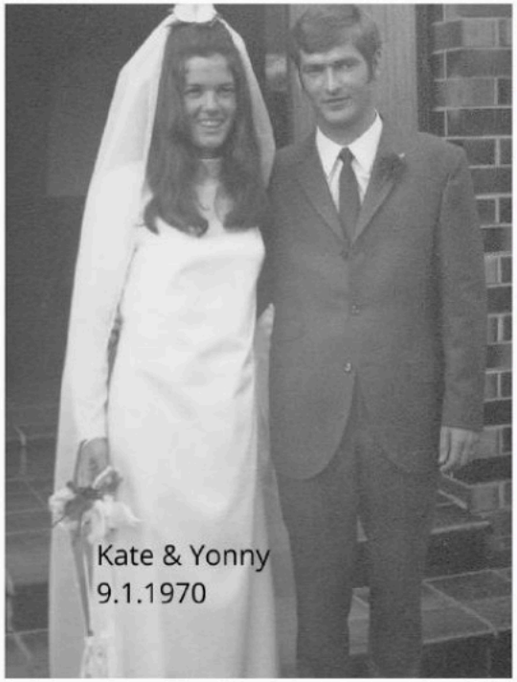







MUM& DAD'S TRAVELS:
Top L-R: 1. Ayer's Rock 1987 ; Wentworth Gaol 3. Wentworth Gaol; Venice with Tante let.
Middle: Sovereign Hill, Ballarat 1981; Government House, Canberra.
Lower: Looks like Zurich, Switzerland; Swan Hill ; The Big Pineapple; Cooper Pedy with the Rademakers
Below R: Tuckerbox, Gundagai; The 4 travelling companions outside Koopman's Dutch house at Torquay. For 50 years they shared so much together.

# We grow up and marry.


Kate & Yonny
9.1.1970





Aris & Yvonne 10.4.1964.

The family line up L-R:
Nellie, Oom Jan Hoed,
Tanta Bets, Dad, Mum,
Aris, Yvonne, Yonny, Tini
(bridesmaid) cousins Ina
& Eljo Hoed.


Nellie & Don
8.12. 1968



Tini & Murray
22. 9. 1984.

Mr & Mrs Logan, Larry Jones Best man, Tini Bridesmaid, Don, Nellie, Mum & Dad.

# Cousins that came to live in Australia too.

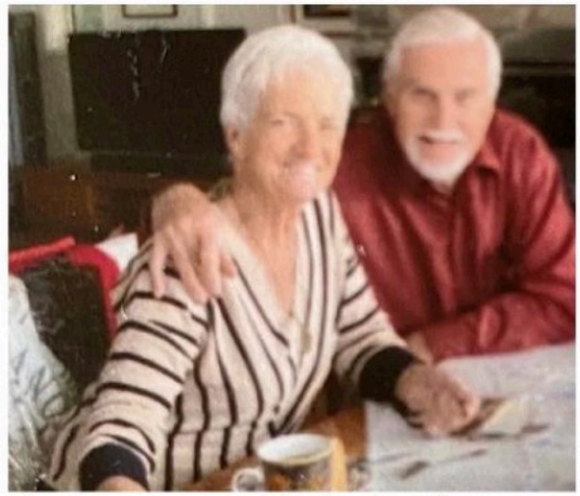








Mum's sister Bets married Jan Hoed at a double wedding with her sister Tinie during the war years.
The Hoeds came to live in Australia in 1954, first for a time beside us at Yarragon, then some years in Moe, then to Geelong & Leopold. Their daughters were Catharina, we called her Ina, and Elisabet, we called her Eljo. At school they became Cathy & Liz. Tante Bets was such a nice person & Oom Jan too and good fun.



Ina & new partner Bernie when they visited in 2020.



David, Eljo, Yonny, Nellie & Tini when they visited us in 2018.

Catharina Devera Hoed b. 6/11/1949. Cathy, but INA to us; m. Raymond Mark Hart.
Barbara Anne Hart b. 21/6/1970. m. Jon King, chn .Morgan King 2/11/2001 & Cooper King b. 20/10/ 20;
Shayne Mark Hart b. 20/8/1972. m. Robin, Chn Kyle Hart b. 4/11/2000; Jayden Hart 24/11/2002;
Deklyn Hart 12/10/2004; Brodie Hart 1/1/2006; Alex Hart 8/3/2011.
Ina latter married Hendricus Johanus Juffermans, also a Dutchman b. 24/8/1945. Called Henny, he died in 2009.
Ina has continued to live at Leopold. Their children:
Michael Andew Juffermans b. 11/7/ 1980.
Narelle Elise Juffermans b. 29/3/1982 m. Tony Cengic; chn - Chelsea b. 9/4/2013; Isabella b. 6/6/2015.

Elisabeth Johanna Hoed b.13/1/1951 called Liz, but ELJO to us; m. David William Manson b. 11/2/1951. They live in Queensland. They have 3 sons:
Dane Mason b. 11/5/1983.
Aaron Mason b. 1/1/1987.
Bryan Mason b. 19/2/ 1991.

# 1974 - A Timely Reunion for the 3 Sisters.

January 1974 saw Mum's sister Tinie with her husband Oom Jan Van Det come from Holland for a visit

Tante Tinie and Tante Bets, mum's other sister, had not seen each other for 20 years, not since Bets had emigrated to Australia.

Little would anyone have suspected that four months later Tante Bets would die suddenly at 59 years of age.

I remember her death on 13 May 1974 very well as I had only just arrived in Holland a few days before and was staying at Tante Tinie's.
I got up after a bad nights sleep through a stormy night. I was about to tell Tante Tinie about my dream. She was at the bottom of the stairs holding a telegram saying 'I've got bad news, Bets has died'.

I felt my strange dream was connected to Tante Bet's death.
"I had been walking along Campbell street in Yarragon, past the shop that is now a bric a brac shop. It was blowing a gale (as it was outside my bedroom at Tante Tinie's). I sheltered in the doorway of the shop and heard a voice screaming 'They've got me'.
I struggled to get to the person through the jumbled furniture that was being tossed about in the storm.
I got there and found a lady wearing a tiara on her head, lying on a bare wire bed with a cow horn in her heart. I tried to pull the horn out, I kept pulling but couldnt get it out."

I then woke up and felt very scared and didn't dare move. I heard the clock strike once. I lay awake feeling devastated for ages. I heard the clock strike again and then later again.

I finally fell asleep.

We later learned that Tante Bets was in hospital and had just finished a letter to her sister Tinie. She ended the letter with "I must finish, it is almost 12.30 lunch time" and then she had a massive heart attack and was gone.

We calculated that the first clock strike I heard when I woke was exactly 12.30pm in Australia, the time she died.

I believe her thoughts were still with her sister and they were sent to her but I picked them up rather than her sister in the room next to me.

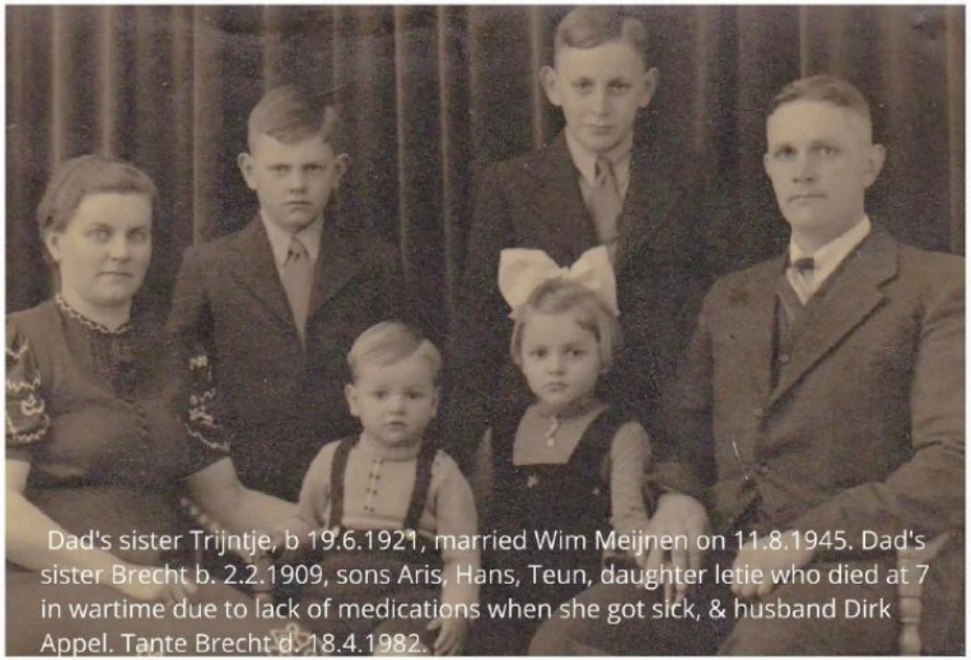
The cow horn? ..... Just before leaving to travel overseas I had called in on Tante Bets and Oom Jan Hoed in Leoplold. From when I was young I had always been fascinated by the pair of cows horns Tante Bets had mounted of her favourite Dutch cow, and had hanging above a door. I commented on them while there. It was something I always associated with her.







# Relations in Holland - Dad's sister's families.



Dad's sister Trijntje, b 19.6.1921, married Wim Meijnen on 11.8.1945. Dad's sister Brecht b. 2.2.1909, sons Aris, Hans, Teun, daughter letie who died at 7 in wartime due to lack of medications when she got sick, & husband Dirk Appel. Tante Brecht d. 18.4.1982.



Dad's sister Trijntje, b 19.6.1921, married Wim Meijnen on 11.8.1945.



Greet & Aris Appel, me, Tom, Aris's daughter Yvette & babe 2007.
Aris's brothers Teun and Hans have passed away.
Greet & Aris have 2 sons living in Canada, Dirk & Jan and 3 daughters, Marjan, Brenda & Yvette and numerous grandchildren & also now a Gr Grandchild.



Tante Trijnie & Oom Wim with children & grandchildren in 1985. Daughter Gre married Hans Ridder, had 2 sons, Stefan & Martijn; son Wim with wife Joyce had Laurence & Nordje and Trijntje's daughter Weiss, never married.

# Relations in Holland -
# Mum's brother & sister's families.

Top L: Mum's brother Adriaan Kok and his wife Renske.
Top R: Their two daughters, Catharina called Tinie who married Jaap van Splunter and had three children, Renske, Anja & Ard.
The second daughter, Renske, married Fred Witte and had a son Herald and daughter Denise.

Middle L: Mum's sister Catharina, called Tinie, married Jan van Det and had two sons Jan-Frits & Rob.

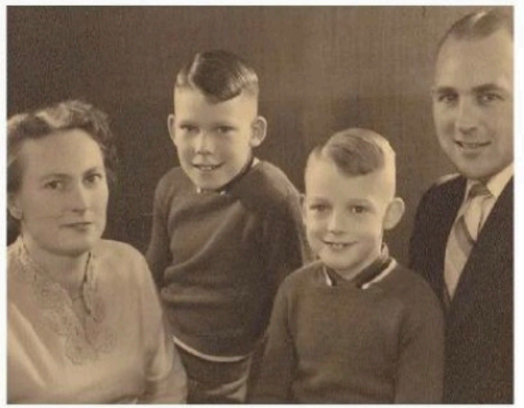
Below- Jan Frits' family : Wife Karin ( Sikkink), Minke, friend, Feike, Jan-Frits & Yonny when he & I visited in 1999.

Tante Tinie was great. She and I had a lot of fun together when I stayed with them in 1974. It was a shock for all when she died soon after cancer diagnosis at 67 years in 1987. Her husband Oom Jan van Det died at 72 in 1992.







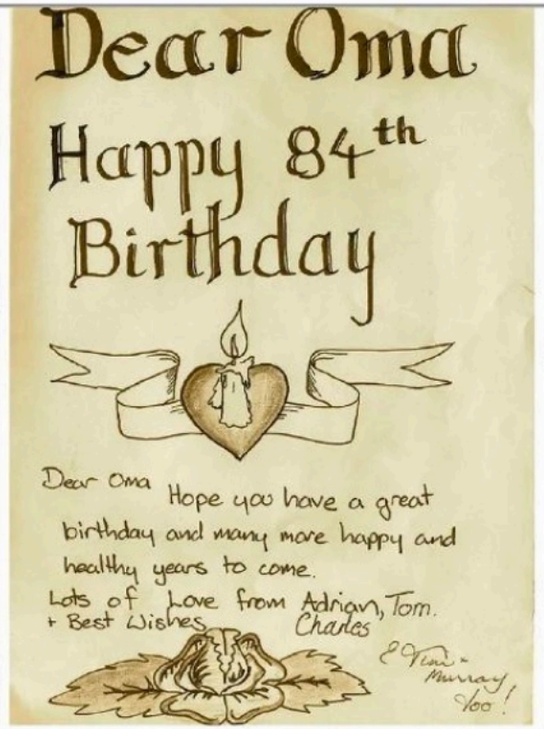


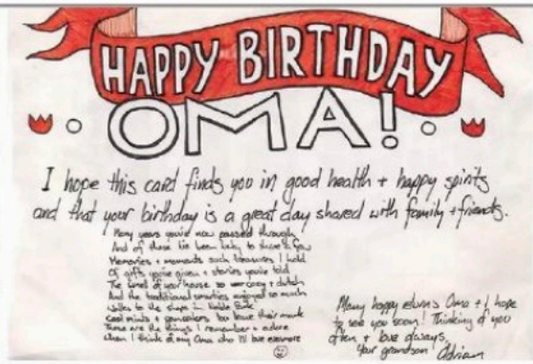


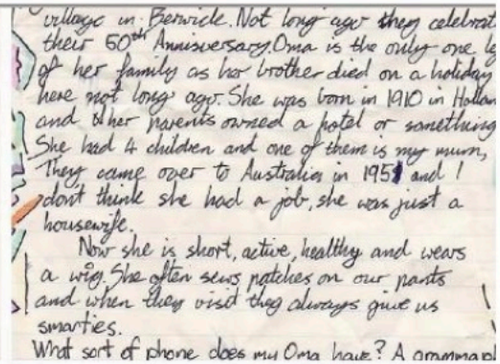


Cousin Rob van Det's family: Eric, friend, Marc, wife Hilda (de Jager), Rob, Bart when Yonny & I visited in 1999.



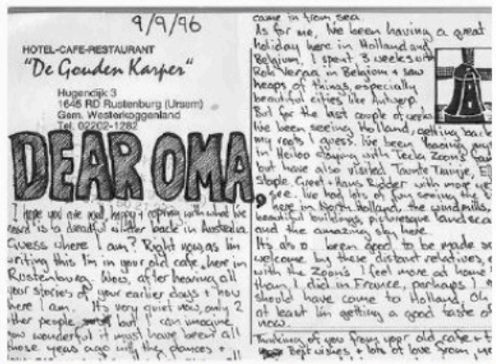















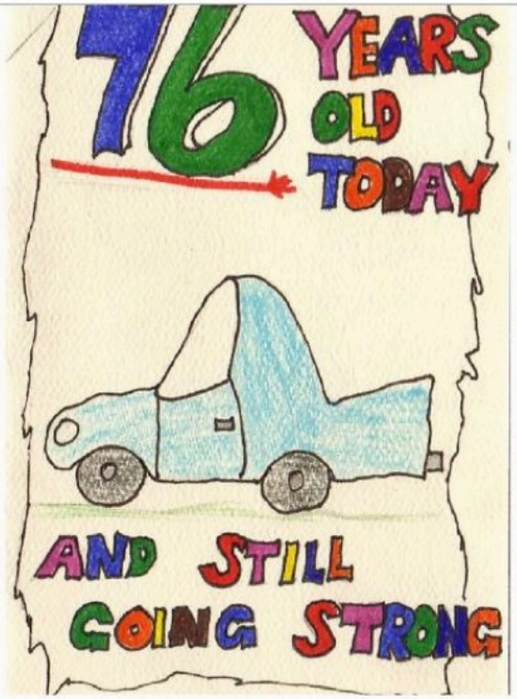


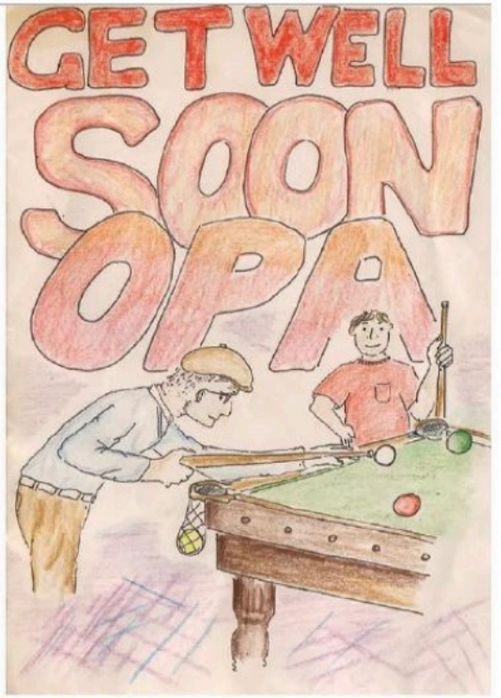





Some of the cards Adrian made for Oma & Opa. Sorry cousins, didn't find any of yours in Oma's stash.
Snaps of Oma & Opa - playing with grandchildren, dolling out smarties, making pancakes, attending Deb Balls ( Lisa's 1988).
















As more grandchildren arrived, Mum & Dad were kept busy visiting them all regularly.
The milestone for each grandchild was when they were taller than Oma. Here Robbie the first to make it.

# Memories of Oma & Opa.

## David:

"Opa only told me two very memorable stories to a young teenage boy. The first was in 1988, visiting him and Oma prior to heading up to Expo '88 in Brisbane as part of a school trip. I was all excited about it and was telling him all about the upcoming trip. I asked him if he was planning to go. He replied that he wasn't as he had already been to one in Brussels in Belgium in 1935. He had saved his money and rode his motorbike down to see it. There he saw a brand new vending machine. You put in your coin and a glass would be produced and it would pour you a perfectly cold glass of beer. This he believed was mankind's crowning mechanical achievement, and he doubted that after half a century technology would produce anything to top it. A cold glass of beer anytime you wanted it. But I was encouraged to and let him know if I saw anything that could beat it and let him know. I didn't.

The second was after I joined the army, he opened up a little and told me some of his war experiences. Please those of you who knew him better and remember more details please feel free to expand/edit/fact correct. But I know how many veterans of war often shield their loved ones from the full story of those times and do not know how much you all know. As most of us know Opa drove a truck during the war years.

As food production in the war was a protected industry he was protected from being sent to the labour camps etc. He even had a petrol ration to do his job. This put him in a very fortunate position. Rationing during the war had meant a great deal of shortages for everyone. Movement was restricted and the Black Market thrived. Opa, a canny businessman, was able to use his position to move freely between town and country and trade some of the extra produce from the country with those in the city who had access to other goods unavailable to the farmers, and make a little extra for his young family. All was good until the winter of 1944/45. War was going badly for the Germans but they had stopped the Allies at the Rhine at the battle of Arnhem.

The Germans were short of everything and were taking everything they could to support their army.

Food was scarce, petrol non existent and starvation threatened the Dutch population still living under occupation. Opa along with many of his fellow Dutchmen who could drive trucks from his area were rounded up by the Germans and told they were to drive a convoy of trucks back to Germany. A prospect that they all feared as the Allied ruled the skies and destroyed any vehicles found in daylight.

Opa had a very bad feeling, they all did, but they had no choice. They set off for Germany.At the first opportunity Opa and another man he knew peeled off the convoy and hid. They drove to a forest. They were now wanted men. If found they could expect to have been executed by the Nazis. They unloaded their truck. They striped it down and disambled the vehicle and buried the pieces in the forest. Removing any evidence of their crime. They then hid and remained on the run from the Nazis until the end of the war.

After the war was over he returned to the forest. Dug up the pieces and rebuilt the truck. He then was one of the only people to have a vehicle in the post war period and was able to use it once again as a source of income to provide for his family. Opa gave credit to the Germans, though although they were not good people, they did know how to build good trucks.

The vehicle served him well for a long time after the war. He was one of the lucky ones, none of the other Dutchmen that left from that convoy were ever heard from again. As I sit here today writing this on military operations in another part of the world, and I reflect on my family, I am immensely proud of my Opa, the black marketer who pulled one over the Nazis. I have shared this story with my fellow soldiers in all different parts of the world over many years, much to their enjoyment and warm affection.

Now I am very happy to share this story with you.

# Memories of Oma & Opa.

## Lisa:

"I am in Holland ( 22.10.2010) so thinking of them" .
Oma ,Opa
Mother, Father
Wife ,Husband
Hostess, Builder
Housekeeper, Mechanic
Aprons, Overalls
Handkerchiefs, Vans
Coffee, Advocaat
Speculaas, Smarties
Potatoes, Appelmoes
Cooking, Building
Cleaning, Driving
Embroidery, Music
Dancing, Singing
Laughing, Crying
Rustenburg, Yarragon
Noble Park, Berwick Brae
Dutch, Australian
Family ,Proud
Love, Loved.

## Aris:

"I see myself like dad in what I do and say ie. getting out of the chair, my driving, not talking on the phone and sitting on top of the heater to get warm!!!!!"

## Yvonne:

"Aged 3, Rob loved going to Pop's garage /servo to help out with pouring petrol into the customers cars (with Pops help!!) and tinkering with the old cars Pop had.

The girls and Rob looked forward to our Xmases in Heathmont waiting in anticipation for Pop to call out their names to receive their envelopes. They remember Oma for the never ending packets of smarties on their visits to Yarragon. I remember many times of learning to cook Dutch meals with Oma - I could never make pancakes as good as your Mums.



# Memories of Oma & Opa:

## Richard:

-The way Opa would sit in his chair with his pants pulled up to his chest.

- Watching Opa and Dad tinker under the bonnet of this or that car, thinking that one day I wanted to be ableto do that and "talk about adult things" with them.

- Oma's pancakes with lemon and sugar! - Oma's chocolate sprinkles on white bread! Such a treat.

- The way Oma would come to our house, clean and then "Tut Tut" me for not helping Mum and Dad enough.They were lovely thoughts to nod off to sleep to. I even have a smile on my face now as I write them.

## Steve:

I'll always remember sitting at the table in Noble Park with Oma cooking pancakes or Opa getting the chocolate sprinkles out of the side board to put on white bread.

## Charles:

- Fish and chips when Oma and Opa looked after us - with mayonnaise.
- Playing 'hide the peg' in Oma and Opas backyard in Berwick.
- Towing Opa around the house with the ride on mower to jump start one of his 'special' camper vans.
- Having to give back the empty boxes that our 'smarties' came in each time Oma and Opa visited.
- Measuring up to Oma when I was about 12 years old...and passing her!
- Cross country skiing with the Visser cousins using garbage bags as water protection.
- And of course Opas stories from the war and beyond.

## Tom:

I think you've nailed it Charles. Can't think of anything to add.

## Jane:

• When Oma and Opa kissed me they always seemed to miss my cheek and get me in the ear, the big smack of their lips would make my ears ring... I eventually just called this type of kiss "Oma and Opa kisses".

• Most of my childhood memories of Oma revolve around treats. Pancakes with lemon and sugar in Berwick and little packets of smarties at Noble Park. One of my cousins once told me (should I name names Adrian?) that these smarties were actually no-name 'beanies' re-packed into smarties packets in true Visser style! I loved them

.• Growing taller than Oma was the first height milestone in my childhood. I can remember feeling so big that I was taller than an adult at about 9 years old, I'm not sure I realised how little Oma really was.

• My memories of Opa are mainly him out in the shed, under a camper van or some sort of old vehicle, with his pants pulled up a little higher than most people. Opa's high pants have been the subject of many humorous impersonations at family gatherings.

- I also used to love his stories about the old days with his mates in Holland. The one that sticks in my mind is when he and a friend rode their motorbikes to the World Expo (maybe in Paris?) and could buy a meal with a beer for twenty five cents

- I loved growing up hearing stories of Holland and when I flew into Amsterdam as a 22 year old, I saw the canals from the air and felt like I was coming home, like I'd been there before.



# Memories of Oma & Opa:

## Tini:

My first memories of MUM are of her back. I used to sit behind her, over the panniers on the back of her big Dutch bike, as we cycled everywhere. The ride would be punctuated by a sudden stop at the sight of a hanky on the ground.She was very pleased after one ride to Trafalgar - what a bounty - 6 hankies in one trip! Mum would gather these up, boil them vigorously in an old double-eared Dutch pot and then when beautifully ironed & folded were added to the 'sadoek laar' - the hanky drawer. Her 'linen-kast' was immaculate, everything neatly folded & stacked.

The perfume she wore - '4711 Eau de Cologne' - but in winter time this would be overtaken by the smell of mothballs! as all her woollen garments were well preserved in her mothball riddled cupboard.

Mum never wore any make up but always looked nice and fresh. She was always neat & clean and everything was beautifully ironed.

She always wore an apron at home, singing while working, always busy, always energetic.

After dinner sitting peeling apples and cutting into 'schijfjes' for everyone.

At night sitting darning socks & stockings over a wooden mushroom. Later when darning was less necessary, she would be knitting for children & grandchildren, cross-stitching or working on tapestries.

Waving goodbye, the white hanky still seen waving way down the road.

Geraniums - not at all into gardening but Mum always had a row of geraniums ( cuttings from Mrs Koopman) along the house and at Noble Park she had a glorious wall of climbing geraniums.

There was always a tablecloth on the table. Morning coffee and afternoon coffee each day with either 'morning coffee' biscuits, neopolitan wafer biscuits or speculaas. One biscuit each and then the lid went back on the tin. On special occasions, home made apple tart or 'boter koek'.

I always called her "mijn lieve kleine moedertje" - my dear little mother, because that is what she was. I am not tall, but she only came to my shoulders. I always liked to slip my right arm under her left one whenever out walking, which usually meant shopping.

I don't ever recall her yelling at us or telling us off - obviously we were so good! If she didn't like something, she just made no comment but you knew she wasn't impressed.

Some of Mum's sayings:-

"Van dit & van dat en alles wat" - a bit of this, that and everything.

"Beter me velegen als onvelegen" - Better to take it with you (eg. coat) and not need it, than to need it and not have it.

"Je beleeft wat als je niet doed gaat' - You experience a lot if you don't die - like, 'Wow, that's really something!

"Het schijt uit zachtjes regenen" - The gentle rain has stopped, meaning it's pelting with rain.

"Dat heb je niet van en vremde" - you didnt get that from a stranger ie. a family trait.

"Stel je niet zo an" - Dont carry on so, or dont worry about it.

Of DAD:

Whistling as he worked.

His pile of books by the fireplace that always seemed to feature a sultry looking man wearing a hat, a gun and a buxom, sultry woman on the cover.

Overalls, carpenter's pencil & ruler in narrow side pocket.

Short back & sides haircuts ( at bargain rates).

Arriving at our place and as soon as he walked in "Is the coffee ready?"

When asked to do something, he would say, "Zecht het Visser, kompt het klaar!" - Ask a Visser and it gets done!

'Oom-pa-pa' music and whenever I hear the Dutch driorigel (street organ) music, I think of Dad.

He loved the ladies, was cheeky and loved to flirt with female friends but was very reserved with us.

He used to say 'you can never ruin anything with butter and cream - except to your Sunday best!'

His shiny, wrinkle free face and a glint in his eye.

Always working and fixing things. One cousin in Holland said to me: "Your Dad had two right hands" - meaning he could turn his hand to anything. Ironically, even though Dad did write with his right hand, as everyone was forced to at that time, he was naturally left handed.

# Mum & Dad's 40th Anniversary celebrated in Holland.





In 1979 Mum and Dad made their 3rd trip back to Holland.
There they celebrated their 40th anniversary on 12 Sept with all their family and friends who had been to their wedding in 1939. Everyone one of them was there, to celebrate with them except for their parents and Mum's sister Bets, who had passed away in Australia in 1974, but her husband Jan Hoed was there.

It was a wonderful occasion with Mum's brother Adriaan,sister Tinie, Dad's sisters Breght & Trijntje, plus old friends the Bolten's who also used to live in Rollo St Yarragon and returned to Holland in 1964, and all of Mum's old girlfriends and their partners. There were many special poems and speeches made to honour them.

Top R- Dad with sister Trijntje. L- dancing with sister-in-law Tinie.
Middle L-Mr & Mrs Bolten at end of table. R - Uncle John Van Det giving speech
Below: Mum & Dad 69, Dad 67.
BelowR R: Dad with both his sisters Trijntje & Brecht.
There are many other photos of the wonderful celebration.









# Back to Holland - again and again.

Mum and Dad made trips back to Holland in 1965, 1973, 1979,1982, was there a 5th?

Mum had always kept in touch with her girlfriends, writing many letters over the years.

When returning to Holland in 1965, the 10 old school friends as per photo taken in the late 1920s had their first reunion because of Mum. From then on they continued the annual get together and Mum made it for four.

Middle L: Dad with 'driorigel', his favourite music.











# And Holland visits Mum & Dad.

Two girlfriends came for Mum's 65th birthday in 1975, as seen in photo below, 'Tante'let, Mum, Ka Vet.

Summer 1973-4 Tante Tinie & Oom Jan Van Det.

1977 & 1987 - Tante Trijnie & Oom Wim Meijnen.

1978 & 1987 - Uncle Adrian.

1983 Dad's cousin Nel Mooy.

1988 Oom Jan Van Det again after Tante Tinie had passed away.

1989. Aris & Greet Appel.







Top L& R - Mum & Tante let had the greatest of fun when they came to help clean out the first house Murray & I bought at Launching Place in 1975. Opa, Aris & Yvonne helped too.
Bottom L - Looks like Mum must have been expecting another grandchild, knitting at Noble Park. R - Dad in his usual spot - under the bonnet.

# Dutch gatherings.

Birthdays were always celebrated with their Dutch friends the way it is done in Holland.
NELLIE: "When Mum and Dad were having a party, that was the place to be – these parties were great!
Laughing, singing, dancing, eating, drinking, but I don't remember anyone ever getting drunk. Everyone in together, young and old, men & women all singing their heads off.

In the early years the music was usually provided by Oom Bop - the accordion, the guitar, you name it, he played it. We can still sing the old Dutch songs we learned from those parties".

Dutch gatherings do it a bit differently to the Aussies.

First coffee and cake then savoury food with perhaps some wine or beer - usually diluted with lemonade for the ladies, and later a 'boreltje' of thick advocaat, served in a small glass with whipped cream on top, and eaten with a tiny spoon.

Neither Mum and Dad or their friends drank much alcohol.

Here one such gathering in Noble Park in 1977.













# Uncle Adriaan visits Australia - twice.

Mum and her brother had always been close. As they got older the physical resemblance really showed too - you could see they came from the same stable.

He was such a lovely man, kind and caring, with such enthusiasm for family, work, vegetable gardening and probably more I dont know about.

After meeting him when I first went back to Holland in 1974 and we'd cycled around Heiloo, with him eagerly introducing me to people, he showed me the house where I was born, and proudly showed me where he worked and was a mechanic, but he was the general Mr Fix-it. It was obvious he was much loved at his work place in Alkmaar and I sensed his life there was a welcome escape from his life at home as his wife was not what you would call easy or sociable.

When I left Heiloo to visit Tante Brecht, with him waving me goodbye and running along the platform, I sat back on the train with tears and thought, "If ever I have a son I will name him Adrian". And that's what happened.

Not only does our Adrian have Uncle Adrian's first name, but as it turns out his last name Cook, is the Dutch equivalent of Kok.

Tante Tinie, in Holland, was the first to hear of our Adrian's arrival and she immediately rang Uncle Adrian and said, "Tini has a boy and what do you think she called him?"
He immediately answered "Adrian!"

He soon made plans to come out and see his name sake.
Uncle Adriaan came out in March 1978 when Adrian was 3 months old and he and Mum and Dad had a great time together.

He returned again in 1989 after his wife had died two years previous. Our Adrian was then 11 years old and although they could not speak the same language, each was pleased to see their name sake.

This time however, he did not return to Holland alive.
He celebrated his 77th birthday, the day before on 21 September 1989 with all the Dutchies at Mum & Dad's.

The following scenario ( see opposite ), was a dreadful shock to us all.
No-one quite knew what to do in such circumstances. It took two weeks of red-tape before the body was flown back to Holland, as his daughters wished.

With no proper farewell here, it left us all sad and in limbo.







# Uncle Adriaan - 22 Sept 1989.
# Photo taken 10 mins before he died

I called in to Mum & Dad's at Berwick Brae for a cuppa as always when going to Melbourne. Oom Adriaan was there and had had had a few days at Geelong with Ali, whom he had gone to school with. We think he was hoping she might be interested in taking up with him.

Marietje was also at Mum & Dad's and as always it was very gezallig as we had morning tea.

Uncle Adrian said "You know, it wouldn't worry me if I never saw my house in Holland again".

When I left to go to Melbourne, I suggested he might like to come along. He said, no, Aris was picking him up at 2pm and taking him flying.

He gave me an especially long goodbye hug, longer and more meaningful than one would expect when I would be seeing him again later that evening.

I could not believe it when, at my friend Heather's, her phone rang (pre mobiles); it was Murray, who bluntly said "Uncle Adrian is dead".

I immediately thought Aris's plane had crashed, but no it didn't even get off the ground.

Back to Mum & Dad's, and such a different atmosphere from the morning, as all in sadness & shock.

What had happened: Dad had driven Unc. Adriaan to Berwick airport at 2pm. On the way he said to Dad, "Why don't you come too?".
Dad said "You wont get me in one of those things - I may not come out of it alive".

Dad stayed in his car waiting for the take-off. It took a long time. Suddenly he saw people running to the plane and he knew something was wrong. Aris had attended to all the preparation for take off and when he got the all clear he said to Uncle Adrian "We're right now - You ready Uncle Adrian"?

He got no reply, looked across and could see he was gone. There had not been a kick or a whimper, he had gone flying without him.

They all tried for a long time to get his heart going again, but he was probably already back in Holland .



# 'BERWICK-BRAE' Retirement Village

In 1983 Mum& Dad moved into the Retirement Village at Berwick. Mum was then 73 and Dad was 71. They had Unit #1 - the closest to the Highway, just as they always liked it. They liked to see life and movement around them.

They were the first 'New Australians' in the establishment and it took a while for the others to embrace them as part of the community, but once they experienced Dad's cheeky sense of humour, the ladies loved him and the men enjoyed having someone they could play billiards with.

Discovering Mum could join the knitted squares of the craft ladies better than anyone else with her very neat crotcheting, they were IN. UNO card nights with several other couples became the highlight of the week as Dad regaled them with his tales.

They lived there for 12 years.

Top: Nephew Aris Appel from Holland with Mum &Dad and other snaps outside Berwick Brae.
Below R -First callers on Dad's 80th birthday, Koopmans, Marietje & Ade who'd taken a day off school for the occasion.







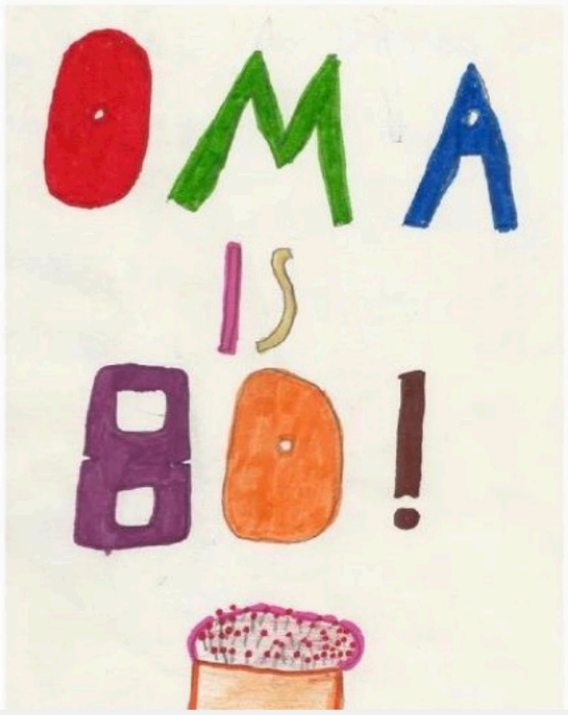











OMA
IS
80!






The VISSER Clan at Aris & Yvonne's, Heathmont. All except David who was overseas on a Lions Exchange program.
This was before any of the grandchildren brought along girlfriends & boyfriends. The Visser extended family now reached 23.

Back: Richard, Adrian, Don, Tom, Charles, Liam, Jane, Yonny, Steven.
Middle: Lisa, Kate, Shellie, Yvonne, Nellie, Tini, Murray, Kerrie.
Front: Aris, Opa, Oma, Robbie, Michael.











Above - ca. 1983. Top row: Richard, Michael, Steven, Adrian, David.
Bottom row: Lisa, Shellie, Kerrie holding Tom, Jane, Charles in front in beanbag.

At Left ca. 1985 - Back: Richard, Steven, Robbie, Shellie,Shellie's boyfriend, Michael.
Front: Liam, Adrian, Charles, Tom, Jane.






Mum & Dad's 45th Wedding Anniversary 30/8/1984 held at Able Tasman Dutch Club.
All family and friends were there including, the Koopmans, Uncle John Hoed with new partner Ali, our cousin Ina & Henny Juffermans, Marietje, Kathy & Andy Van de Zijp, Jessie & Hank (Andy's sister), Miep Snel, all the Houttuins, Nel & Evert, Mr & Mrs Van Dyke, Fred & Inge Van de Tuin, the Bakkers, the Scrievers, the Pronks, plus all of us & grandchildren.

# More Celebrations.

Mum and Dad could always be counted on to come and give you a hand. I remember being moved to see them drive up early in the day for Murray's 40th birthday party in 1987. They arrived with platters, glasses, tablecloths and other party paraphernalia, all unasked for, and set to, to help get everything ready.

That night they got into the spirit of things, dancing (photo Top L) and mingling with the others, all half their age.

At my 40th they did the same. Dad went off to sleep in their camper van early, but Mum was still swinging to 'Daddy Cool' at 1am! (photos Top R & Middle L).

Another celebration - Sept 1989 - (Photo Middle R) - Uncle Adrian there, must have been Mum & Dad's 50th anniversary.

Below L&R - Oom Jan Van Det came out again from Holland and we had another big family night at 'The Cuckoo' to farewell him in 1988.













# HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY DAD

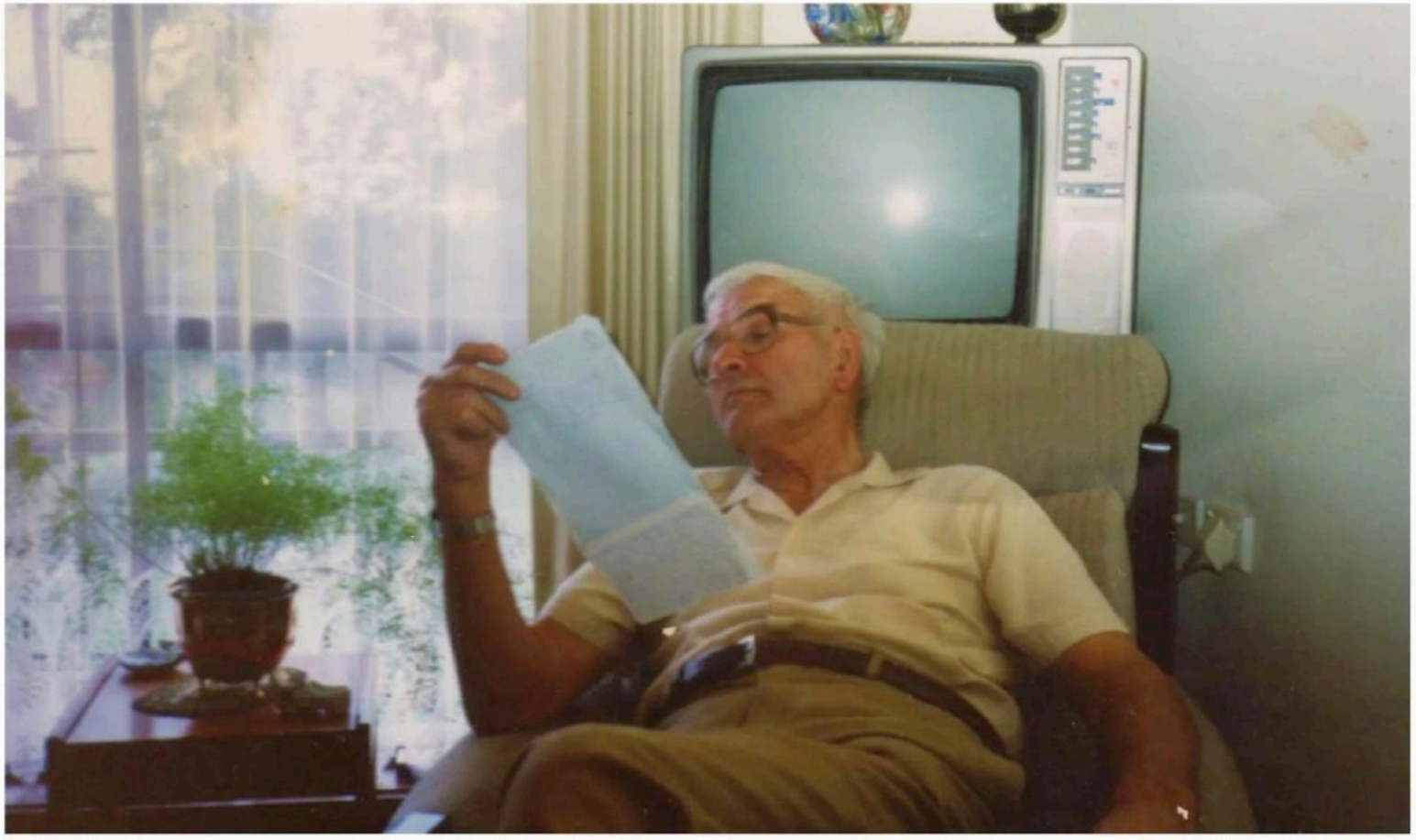
Happy Birthday Dad.....and this is what comes to me:

H - is for HAPPY and that's what we are,
to be here with you today to mark where you are.
A - is for ABILITIES of which you have so many,
always able to make or save a penny.
P -is for POSITIVE and that's how you have dealt with life.
P - is also for PROUD - that's how we feel about you and your wife.
Y - is just YOU - a total individual and a good one it's true.

B - is for BILLIARDS, a game often played,
with Thomas and Charles and also with Ade.
I - is for IDEAS in so many things,
- chooks, motorbikes, cars, campervans and buildings.
R - is for RELIABILITY and RESPONSIBILITY too,
two qualities always given to us by you.
T - is for TRAVEL - your wanderlust brought us here
- something which we hold very dear.
H - is for HONESTY - it's spoken and shown,
- another example to us you own.
D - is for DARING - your adventures have been many.
A - is for ACTIVE - the Uno ladies, love their Lenny.
Y - is for YOUTH and though 4 score years,
this poem is sung
- You're only EIGHTY YEARS YOUNG!

With love, Tini 15 /7 /1992









Top - Dad reading a letter from his sister Trijntje,.
Lower - L. Mum& Dad at Berwick Brae.

Lower R - Adrian had made another special card for his Opa's 80th birthday.


OUD WEST-FRIESLAND
Die zijn voorgeslacht niet eert, is zijn eigen naam niet weerd

# Farewell Dad.

Mum & Dad had been a great team.
In their last year together, married for just over 55 years, there had to be a reversal of roles, and Dad became the carer. Mum was loosing her way.

From a traditional chauvinistic Dutchman who had never so much as lifted a tea towel inside the home, he became a totally domesticated house-husband - another example of his flexibility and being able to rise above and cope with any situation.

Mum had become totally dependent, so Dad organised the meals, did the shopping and was proud of his new culinary skills - very simple and we wondered about them, but he managed.

About 4:45 on Friday March 10 1995 I got a phone call at the gallery from the manager at 'Berwick Brae' to say Dad had had a fall and to come immediately.
I just knew it was serious. I closed up shop, packed a quick suitcase and was there within an hour.

Lovely Pete Thomas, brother of sister-in-law Kate, was the ambulance man attending. How serendipitous and how lucky we were. Because he knew our family he got special permission to stay with Mum until I arrived.

When I saw the ambulance vehicle still there I felt it a hopeful sign but Pete came to me with the words: "Sorry Tin, Pop's gone."

I was able to go and say goodbye to Dad before he was taken away.
What had happened:

Dad had just finished his latest campervan and was cleaning the windscreen when he had a massive heart attack and was gone.

Mum had made a cuppa and called out to him. When he didnt come in, she went out and found him lying on the ground.....

PHOTOS: Top - The van Dad was working on and where he left it.
Middle - Dad's 'Pat' - Dutch for Cap, which he always wore, and carpenter's ruler and pencil which he always carried in his overall pockets. The 'schuif' is one from the Visser workshop in Veenhuizen, given to me, when I visited in 1974.
Lower - Dad's plaque at Yarragon cemetery.

Opposite page: The beautiful embroidery Nellie cross-stitched for Dad, showing landmarks from his part of Holland. The saying at the bottom reads:

"He who does not honour his forebears, is not worthy of his name."

Remember this, all you who read this.















Top L - Lisa, Nellie, Tini & Aris at 'BerwickBrae', when Mum moved into 'AVONDRUST'. Yvonne, Kate & Yonny also helped and it was a trip down memory lane for us all as we uncovered their lives in all the cupboards and drawers.
Top R - Tini, Tom, Charles & Ade visiting Mum at 'Avondrust'.
Bottom L - Nellie, Mum, Lisa, another guest & Tom at 'Avondrust'.
Bottom R - Adrian calls in on Oma before leaving for a year in France.

# The Last Home - Mum's last years without Dad.

After Dad passed away, Mum at 85, moved into 'Avondrust (Evening Rest ), the Dutch Retirement Village.
This was her home for 6 more years. While at Avondrust we would visit and take her out.
She loved the outings - usually to Dandenong or Mornington.
Nellie: "She loved having coffee and cake at the Dandenong shopping plaza - wandering around and being in amongst all the people and the activity, but the thing that impressed her most was the beautiful shiny floors. She always commented on how lovely they were, probably because she was so low to the ground they really did stand out so much more for her. But, oh! she was also so, so glad that she did not have to clean them. They were sooo big and it would be sooo much work to keep them sooo clean that she felt sorry for the poor people who did have to do it."

Mum slowly lost her memory but always stayed sweet and polite, not like some of the others in the hostel. She told all who visited and attended to her, they were a 'schat' - a darling, and when given her tablets, after swallowing, would say, 'heerlijk' - delicious!

After a time, it was sad to arrive and find stains down the front of her jumpers, the clothing and buttoning mismatched and the wig covering her thinned hair all skewif - she no longer noticed these things. However the standard of care at the Dutch-run facility was very good. The staff were lovely.

When I would ask Mum if she had had any visitors, she would either say no-one, which really meant she had already forgotten, or she would tell me that her mother, or others long dead, had been. I soon learned to accept these other visitors that we could not see, as when I once said that her mother had long passed away, Mum looked shocked and confused and said why had no-one told her.

Towards the end, there were many visits from those who had departed, and I like to think they were there to help her for when she would be joining them.





Tom & Ade join Nellie & I when we take Mum for an outing.




Photos when we all went to Avondrust to celebrate her 90th birthday.



# Farewell Mum

I got a phone call from 'Avondrust' to say they thought Mum was fading.
I had asked them to let me know when they thought her time was coming, as I hated the thought of her leaving this earth without family around.

I got there early on the Friday morning with a bag of basics to stay with her to the end. I found it very emotional. She was sleeping soundly, breathing deeply, no longer speaking when she opened her eyes a few times, but they did't seem to focus. I stayed beside her, holding her hand, stroking her now almost bald head, kissing her constantly and talking about all the different things in her life.

It was a grey, rainy day and I said to Mum the day cries for her too.
At about 2:30 her breathing became very shallow. I wanted to ring the others, but did not want to leave her (no mobiles, I would have to go to the office). At 3;30 Murray rang and I asked him to let the others know.

Aris & Yvonne arrived at about 6 and Nellie with Frank and then Yonny came.
It was very emotional for all, but then we settled down and shared a few happy hours reminiscing.

Mum slept soundly and the nurse said her heart was still so strong, that until that fails, she would keep going.

The others said their goodbyes and I stayed the night on a mattress on the floor beside her bed, always listening for the incoming breath. I must have had some sleep as I had some dreams that seemed to reflect the exhaustion and loss I was experiencing.

Next day, Saturday, there was blue sky and sunshine was streaming into the room. The atmosphere too was different, a calmer acceptance, we'd all said what we wanted to.

I stayed with Mum to the end. Her strong heart heart kept her going until mid Sunday afternoon 29 April 2001. It had ticked away for 91 years, 1 week & 1 day.

As at Dad's funeral, at Mum's too, there were tears and laughter as family and friends presented eulogies. Never being religious, we felt a church setting and a minister who did not know them, was inappropriate.
Both services were held at the Springvale Crematorium with so many coming to pay their last respects.

Their ashes are buried together at the Yarragon cemetery - close to the main road, just like where they always liked to live.








# Memories of Mum by Nellie.
# Taken from the eulogy Nellie presented at Mum's funeral.

Mum was not the frail, anxious little lady she has been over the last couple of years. The person that I loved and enjoyed being with was always so happy and fun loving - laughing and singing about the house.

We loved the stories of the early days in Australia when Mum went shopping and had to resort to pantomime to make her self understood, such things as buying beef steak, expressed with a slap on the rump. The butcher had no trouble understanding that but how do you express 'Oil' in which to cook fish? You come home with something that looks like oil, smells a bit strange when you open it, but the proof is in the cooking and so it was – it cooked up well - but then it also helps with the digestion and its ultimate elimination - when you cook with castor oil!

"Ladies, bring a plate please". This was totally foreign to the Dutch culture. What sort of plate do you take for an evening out? Anyway, they decided that as the whole family had been invited they had better take enough for us all, as they were obviously short of plates, and better make it the best dutch plates as well. It never occurred to them to put anything on the plate, but as the night progressed and they received nothing to eat or drink, unlike the Dutch custom which kept you eating and drinking the whole night through, they did wonder what it was all about. That was when they were first introduced to the great Australian suppers - you have to wait all night for them, but it is worth it!

When it was cold and wet Mum would ride her big Dutch bike to school and bring us our rain coats so that we would not get soaked walking home. She was always there to welcome us home after school, our slippers in front of the fire and a hot drink waiting for us. Evenings I remember the family listening to the radio, sewing, reading, talking, a biscuit with coffee, that was home.

Mum always prided herself on her cleanliness and proudly said that she could find everything in the cupboards, even in the dark.

Mum & Dad were very liberal and always encouraged us to go out -"You are only young once". Mum was very sociable and loved having people around and going out and visiting friends.

Mum and Dad were not very strict or even very encouraging about school. We all did very well considering that if anything, they thought most of it was a bit of a waste of time, and we should get out in the real world and earn some money, and there we would learn everything we needed to know.

When we were trying to study, Mum would keep coming in with a drink or a biscuit or making sure we were warm enough, and in the end as it got a bit later, she would tell us to stop now and go and watch TV for a while.

I have always loved sewing, Tini too, and Mum taught and encouraged us in this even though she said she herself did not like sewing. But when I see the photos of the clothes that she made for Tini and I, they were VERY well made and had a lot of complex detail in them.

We always had a new "good" dress each summer and winter, and they were usually identical.

Mum did not like cooking. She made very heavy work of it; made it seem that it took an enormous effort to get a meal ready for the family, every single night of the week.

She developed a menu for seven days and I think that she repeated those seven days forever.

'Eigen Haard is Gouden Waard' - 'Own Hearth is Worth Gold' - Home & Family is precious.








Some of Mum's treasures that I saved from being tossed out. Surprisingly Mum was not greatly sentimental over things - she was always ready to replace them with the new.

The wooden sewing box Dad made and carved for her before they were married with some of her original Dutch sewing threads and tins.

A vase from the old Cafe; the faded purple biscuit tin later used by Dad to store documents.

Remnants of their dinner set, a wedding gift from Oma& Opa Kok.

'De tafel blat' - the tea tray.

Mum's parents photo, still in its original frame, that always sat on the mantlepiece. and some pieces of jewellery and of course one of her hankies. She always carried a hanky,

Let me know who in the family will treasure these pieces as it will soon be time for me to pass them on. There are a few other things too.

# Vismas - Boxing Day 2008



Back: Adrian, Yoland ( partially hidden), Jane, Richard & friend Sally, Charles, Shellie's partner ....., Tom, Ruth (peeking), Murray, Kate ( Liam's partner), Liam, Kerrie's partner's son Tom, Michael ( partially hidden), Steve.

Middle: Shellie, Kerrie, Jessica, Tini, Cil - Mike's partner, Alison- Steve's partner, Kate, Yonny. Centre: Aris with Stephanie & Hayley.

Front: David holding Charlotte & Alex, Yvonne, Lisa's dog Blossom, Nellie with Evan infront of her, Rebecca, Samantha, son of Shellie's partner ..... Andy, Kerrie's partner was there too. Our dog Lily shaking hands with Samantha. On this day we numbered 38.

# Vismas - Boxing Day 2012



Standing L-R: Jane holding Emelyn, Kate Snr, Robbie, Yvonne, Aris, Liam, Kate Jnr infront, Steve, Alison infront, Lindy, Richard, Joyce Meijnen infront, Wim Meijnen visiting from Holland, Tom, Charles, Yonny, Murray, Adrian.

Middle: Cil holding Harry, Michael, Tom ( Andy's son), Yolanda, Jessica, Ruth, Shellie, Tini, Kerrie, Andy, Alex on Nellie's lap, Evan, David holding Charlotte, Al (Lisa's friend), Lisa holding Blossom.

Front: Rebecca, Samantha, Stephanie, Hayley. 41 Present.

# Vismas - Boxing Day 2018



At Jane & Ivor's, Yinnar.

Standing L-R: Michael, Richard, Cil, Alison, Adrian, Steve, Jane, Kate Jnr, Liam with Tilley on shoulders, Tom, Ruth, Charles holding Alby, David, Yolanda, Lisa, Evan, Alex in front.

Middle - 'The Olds' - Murray, Kate Snr, Nellie, Tini, Yonny.

Front: Jude (head down), Will in orange shirt, Charlie, Toby, Harry, Sophia, Eve, Jude, Ethan, Emelyn, Aliah, Bonnie, Charlotte. 36 present.

Absent - Aris & Yvonne & their families. Carolyn & Faith missed the photo shoot.

# Just a few snaps of Visser Boxing Day gatherings. Ade coined the name 'Vismas.'

At Aris & Yvonne's for many years.





At Tini & Murray's. many years




























At Nellie's



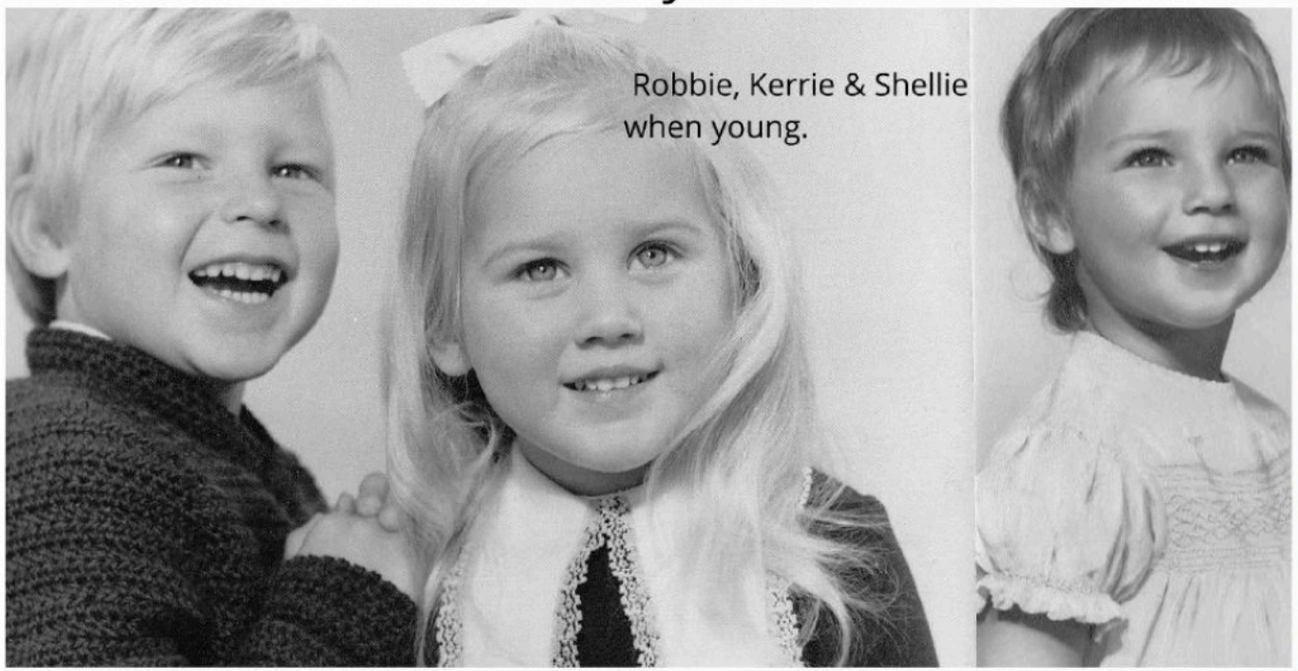
Hayley, Rebecca, Stephanie, Sammi, Jess, Tom (Andy's son).








# Aris & Yvonne's family - from 2010 version of this book.



Robbie, Kerrie & Shellie when young.



Robbie & his wife Simone.



Back: Sammantha, Stephanie, Hayley, Jessica.
Front: Kerry, Yvonne, Rebecca, Shellie.



Yvonne & Aris.

# Aris & Yvonne's family. 2021 Updates.



Rebecca, Sammi, Steph, Shellie, Kerrie, Yvonne, Aris, Andy.



Hayley who plays WAFL football.




Stephanie, mother Shellie & husband Paul, Rebecca.



Simone & Rob with son Jack Aris.



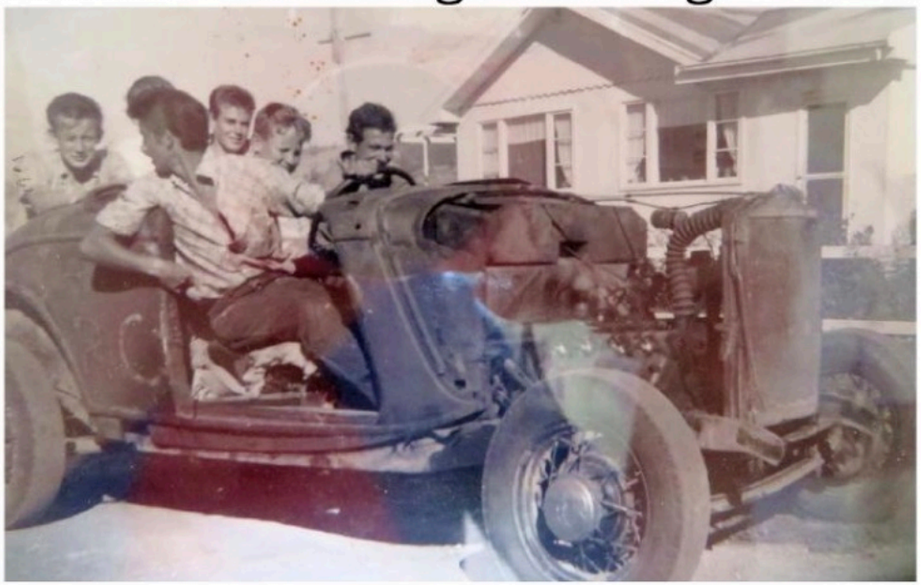
Latest arrival.
Brooks Whelan b.18 Oct 2021 to Jessica & Sam.
A grandson for Kerrie and great grandson to Aris & Yvonne.



Sam, Jess & baby Brooks

# Remembering Aris who is no longer with us.

## Aris & his mates go cruising.



Now the above photo holds a bit of a story.
This 'paddock bomb' with no windows, no doors, no roof, no bonnet and of course no seatbelts was for the boys to hone their driving skills in the paddock. But one Saturday morning when the rest of the family were at Torquay, Aris decided to take his mates to Warragul. Can you imagine the disbelief of the policeman and no doubt the Saturday morning shoppers seeing this jalopy loaded with young lads - and an unlicenced driver - come over the railway crossing and cruise down Smith St. ! They turned at the top and did a repeat performance, but then realised the Cops were after them. They ditched the vehicle near the Showgrounds and RAN. The police soon found Aris out.

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Aris, was the 'James Dean' of Warragul High School in the 1950s and a bit of a Lad!
He was very good looking and when I started High School I remember the older girls wanting to befriend me because I was Aris's younger sister. Both Aris and Yonny were the heart throbs of the time.



But it was Yvonne King who won his heart. They met on the beach at Torquay when he was 12 and she 10 and were 'pen pals', writing to each other for a time, but then lost touch. When Yvonne started work, one of Aris's mates worked there too. Yvonne wrote to Aris and he wasted no time in looking her up again and a teenage romance (he 18, she 16) developed. They married in 1964 at 22 & 20 and had just short of 57 great years together.



# Farewell Aris
# 4.4.1941 - 19.2.2021

Aris loved fast cars, boats and aeroplanes. In his time he owned many of them and was very competent as a driver and pilot. Flying was his passion and he regularly won awards in the flying club of which he was a member at Lilydale.

Aris & Yvonne, in their own plane, flew in competitions and events all over Australia.

He also loved Mustangs. He made several trips to the U.S. where he would buy them, have them shipped back to Australia and then he would strip and fully restore them for sale.

Aris & Yvonne really enjoyed the sun & sea and after retirement as a plumber, caravanned around Australia in 2003 and each winter to a caravan park on the Gold Coast, Queensland where they had many friends.

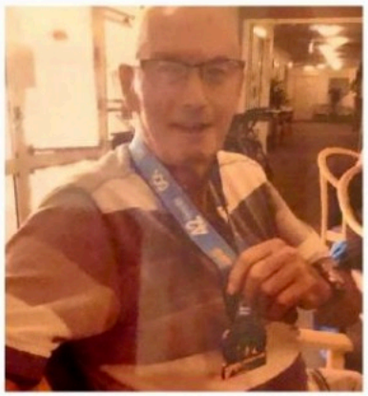
In 2012 Aris was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

Late 2015 they found a 2nd storey unit overlooking the water near son Robbie and the Qld caravan park and decided to make it their permanent home as they hoped the better weather would help his condition.

The disease slowly affected all parts of his body and for the last 4 years he had to go into a nursing home as Yvonne could no longer manage his falls and the Lewey Body Dementia that came with the disease.

He adjusted to his different way of life, with Yvonne visiting daily and felt he'd lived a full and happy life.

He passed away peacefully with Yvonne and son Robbie by his side, just short of his 80th birthday.



Aris proudly displaying his Care Home 'Commonwealth Games' medal for ten pin bowling.

JOIN US IN

*Celebrating*

THE LIFE OF

ARIS VISSER

4TH APRIL 1941 - 19TH FEBRUARY 2021

.....

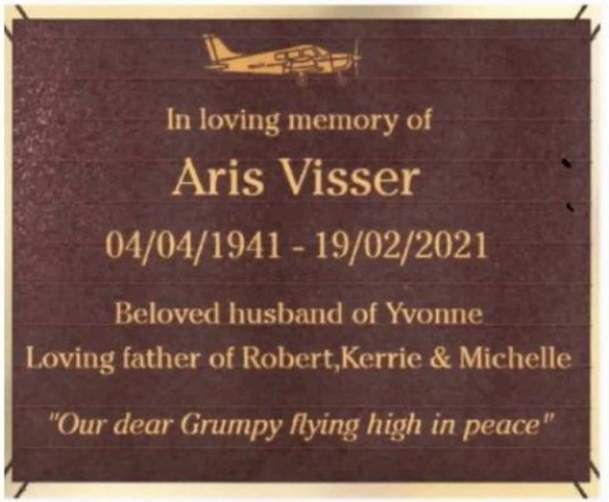
*Thursday 30th December 2021 at 1pm to 3 pm*
*Immerse Winery*
*Melba Highway, Dixons Creek*



The Covid pandemic in 2021 had state borders closed and restrictions placed on numbers attending funerals to just 10, a service commemerating Aris's life was put off until after Christmas this year, 2021.

There will probably be tears, but also laughter as Aris was a bit of a Lad!
All the extended Visser family are looking forward to this get together. No doubt we will learn more of his life.

His ashes are to be buried with Mum & Dad's at the Yarragon cemetery.



Yonny & Kate's family in 2010 version of this book.









Top L: Before marriages & grandkids.
L-R: Michael, Jane, Richard, Kate, Liam, Yonny, Steve.
Lower L: Steve & Alison's wedding.

Top R: Michael & Cil with baby Harry.
Lower R: Janey & Ivor with baby Emelyn.

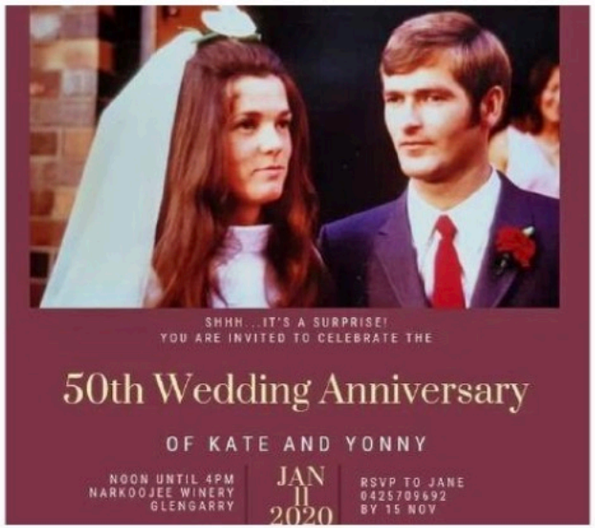
# Oh how Yonny & Kate's family has grown!



At Yonny & Kate's 50th wedding anniversary in July 2020.
Standing back: Faith Xerri ( Richard's step-daughter), Carolyn, Alison, Will Xerri ( Richard's step-son), Richard, Jane, Steve, Ivor (partly obscured), Michael, Liam, Kate, Cil.
Middle: Lachlan, Charlie, Toby, Kate holding baby Gaia, Yonny, Ethan, Gabriel.
Frint: Sophia, Harry, Aliah, Jude, Bonnie, Tilly, Emelyn & Eve Xerri (Richard's step-daughter).
Total 28.

The J V clan 2015.





# Kate & Yonny's growing family.



Michael & Cil Visser with
Harry, Toby & Bonnie.



Alison & Steve Visser with
Sophia, Gabriel & Jude.



Carolyn & Richard Visser
with L-R Faith, Will, baby
Gaia, Eve and Lachie
infront.

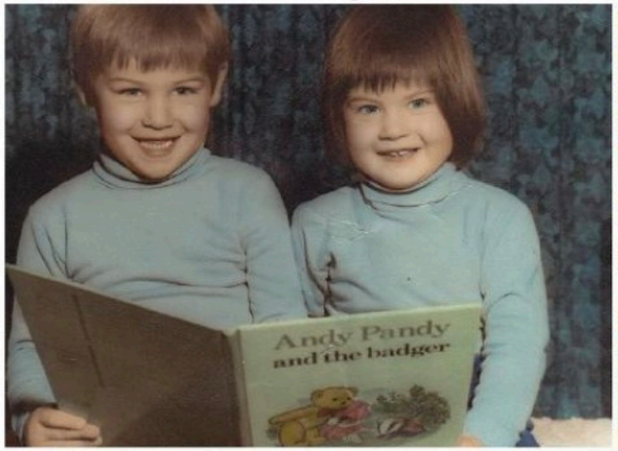
Ivor & Jane Smith with Ethan inbetween
and Emmy & Aliah infront.



Kate & Liam Visser
with Tilley & Charlie.



Nellie's family in 2010 version of this book.














David's family.

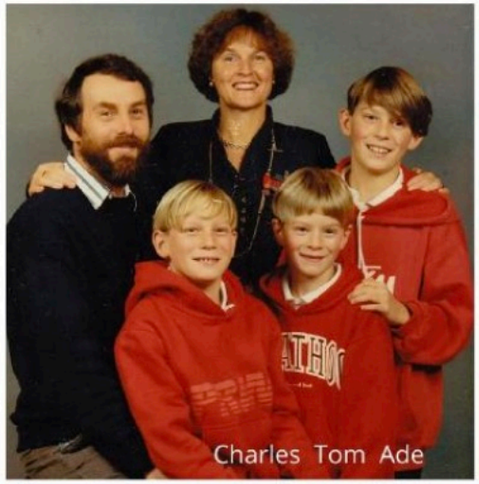


Yolanda & David Logan with
Alex, Evan (at back) & Charlotte.

## The Mountain Girls 2020.

Nellie, Lisa & Skye on top of the world.
Nellie spends winter's helping Lisa at her ski lodge, 'Diana Lodge' Falls Creek, where she accomodates and caters for up to 44 guests.

Tini & Murray's family in the 2010 version of this book.












2021 update
and our family has
grown 2 more!



Charles & Ruth with Stella & Alby









December 2010 we have 2 lots of Visser cousins come to visit.
Above: Aris Appel, Tini, Wim & Joyce Meijnen, Yonny, Nellie, Gre Appel, Aris.

## 3 cousins each named after their Grandfather Aris Visser.



L-R : Aris Appel, son of Dad's sister Brecht.
Willem Aris Meijnen, son of Dad's sister Trijnie.
Aris Visser, Dad's son & our brother.




# Keeping in touch with the relos in Holland.

Our generation have been so lucky to be able to visit our cousins in Holland and that many of them have been able to come and visit us in Australia.

Aris & Gre Appel have visited twice 1987 & 2010. It was so special when one Sunday morning in 2010 they just drove up the driveway as though it was a regular thing.

Wim & Joyce came for several weeks over the summer of 2010-11. It was so great that their visits overlapped, unplanned. I wonder if Leen, Breg and Trijnie pulled strings and organised this. I certainly hope they were watching from above. I know they would be so proud to find the strong threads of family they always felt, stretching a long, thin line to the other side of the world.

Wim & Joyce's son Laurens & daughter Noordje came in 1996 when teenagers and had a great time with our teenagers here.

Rob van Det (son of Tante Tinie, Mum's sister ) with his son Mark also visited when they were in Australia for a medical conference.

Herald, son of Uncle Adriaan's daughter Tinie, came and stayed for several months in his late teens.

As well, our cousins once removed, Ellen Stapel (who was the daughter of Mum's cousin, also a Nely Kok who married Jan Blauw) visited in 2004 with her daughter Lineke and Lineke visited again in 2009.

# Keeping in touch was so different in Mum& Dad's time.

When Mum & Dad moved to Australia they realised they would probably never see their parents again.
Even to speak over the phone was an impossibility, so it was through regular letter writing they kept in touch, not only with their parents, but with each of their siblings and many friends.

Aerograms - very thin blue A4 paper folded in 3 to make a self-sealing envelope was the only way people kept in touch. One had to allow about 10 days for delivery and then another 10 days if they wrote back straight away meant news was never current.

Today I am in easy and immediate touch with my cousins Wim Meijnen & Jan Frits van Det. I get messages & videos instantaneously from them and every now & again we'll do facetime. It is all quite amazing, we can see and speak to each other on the other side of the world whenever we want and it is free! In fact Wim is my go-to person for Mac-computer help.

So different in Mum & Dad's time. It was unheard of to ring. Firstly we didn't have a telephone until about 1961 and Mum's parents would probably never had one, and secondly it was very expensive to ring, and thirdly you had to book the call well ahead and it took a long time to get connected. Decades later when the odd call was made, both parties were crying on hearing each other's voices so that it was pointless anyway.

Even when I spent a year travelling overseas in 1974 I never once rang home... but I sent regular letters and postcards, probably every week or two.

Family friend Rijn Dyt told me that to ring Holland in 1963 you had to book the call 24 hours in advance and it took 20 minutes to connect. First you were connected to an exchange in Indonesia somewhere, then to another further in Asia somewhere, then to another in Europe somewhere and finally in Holland, "putting you through". Each time the operator had a different accent and would ask how the weather was in Australia.

When I was talking about this with Yonny he said that throughout his & Kate's 10 years in Mt Isa to 1977, they never had a telephone in the house and would have to go to a local telephone booth to make a call.
You needed a fistfull of coins to keep feeding the slot otherwise your call abruptly ended.

# Cousins in Holland still always in touch with.

## Wim & Joyce with their family 2021



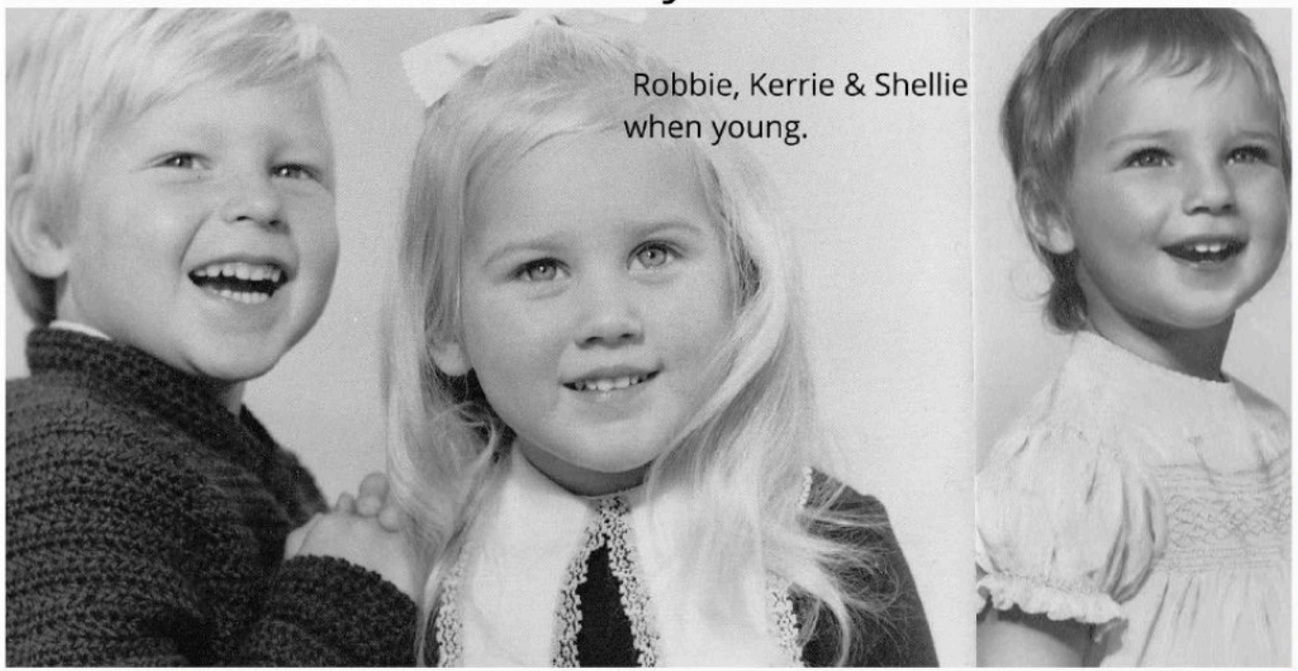
L-R: Son Laurens & his wife Rebecca (Nauta), Joyce, granddaughters, Wende, Olivia, Floor, Carlijn, Sophie, Guusje, Wim, daughter Noordtje & her husband Ralph Houthuizen.

## Jan Frits & Karin with their family 2021



L-R: Grandson Kylo, son Feike & wife Jessica holding Yaiza (stepgranddaughter), Karin, Jan Frits, Stijn & Merlijn (twin step grandchildren) Eelco husband to daughter Minke.

# Aris & Yvonne's family - from 2010 version of this book.



Robbie, Kerrie & Shellie when young.



Robbie & his wife Simone.



Back: Sammantha, Stephanie, Hayley, Jessica.
Front: Kerry, Yvonne, Rebecca, Shellie.



Yvonne & Aris.

# Aris & Yvonne's family. 2021 Updates.



Rebecca, Sammi, Steph, Shellie, Kerrie, Yvonne, Aris, Andy.



Hayley who plays WAFL football.




Stephanie, mother Shellie & husband Paul, Rebecca.



Simone & Rob with son Jack Aris.



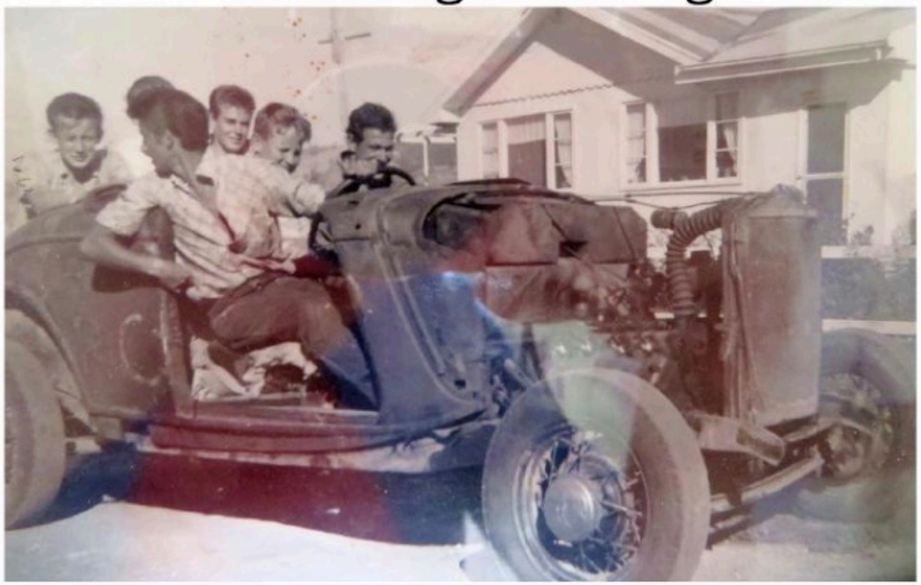
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He was very good looking and when I started High School I remember the older girls wanting to befriend me because I was Aris's younger sister. Both Aris and Yonny were the heart throbs of the time.



But it was Yvonne King who won his heart. They met on the beach at Torquay when he was 12 and she 10 and were 'pen pals', writing to each other for a time, but then lost touch. When Yvonne started work, one of Aris's mates worked there too. Yvonne wrote to Aris and he wasted no time in looking her up again and a teenage romance (he 18, she 16) developed. They married in 1964 at 22 & 20 and had just short of 57 great years together.



# Farewell Aris
# 4.4.1941 - 19.2.2021

Aris loved fast cars, boats and aeroplanes. In his time he owned many of them and was very competent as a driver and pilot. Flying was his passion and he regularly won awards in the flying club of which he was a member at Lilydale.

Aris & Yvonne, in their own plane, flew in competitions and events all over Australia.

He also loved Mustangs. He made several trips to the U.S. where he would buy them, have them shipped back to Australia and then he would strip and fully restore them for sale.

Aris & Yvonne really enjoyed the sun & sea and after retirement as a plumber, caravanned around Australia in 2003 and each winter to a caravan park on the Gold Coast, Queensland where they had many friends.

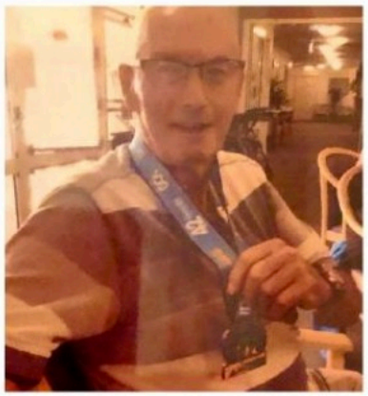
In 2012 Aris was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease.

Late 2015 they found a 2nd storey unit overlooking the water near son Robbie and the Qld caravan park and decided to make it their permanent home as they hoped the better weather would help his condition.

The disease slowly affected all parts of his body and for the last 4 years he had to go into a nursing home as Yvonne could no longer manage his falls and the Lewey Body Dementia that came with the disease.

He adjusted to his different way of life, with Yvonne visiting daily and felt he'd lived a full and happy life.

He passed away peacefully with Yvonne and son Robbie by his side, just short of his 80th birthday.



Aris proudly displaying his Care Home 'Commonwealth Games' medal for ten pin bowling.

JOIN US IN

*Celebrating*

THE LIFE OF

ARIS VISSER

4TH APRIL 1941 - 19TH FEBRUARY 2021

.....

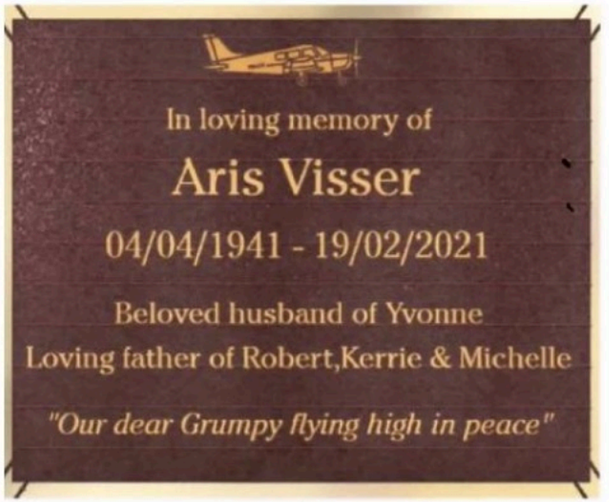
*Thursday 30th December 2021 at 1pm to 3 pm*
*Immerse Winery*
*Melba Highway, Dixons Creek*



The Covid pandemic in 2021 had state borders closed and restrictions placed on numbers attending funerals to just 10, a service commemerating Aris's life was put off until after Christmas this year, 2021.

There will probably be tears, but also laughter as Aris was a bit of a Lad!
All the extended Visser family are looking forward to this get together. No doubt we will learn more of his life.

His ashes are to be buried with Mum & Dad's at the Yarragon cemetery.



Yonny & Kate's family in 2010 version of this book.









Top L: Before marriages & grandkids.
L-R: Michael, Jane, Richard, Kate, Liam, Yonny, Steve.
Lower L: Steve & Alison's wedding.

Top R: Michael & Cil with baby Harry.
Lower R: Janey & Ivor with baby Emelyn.

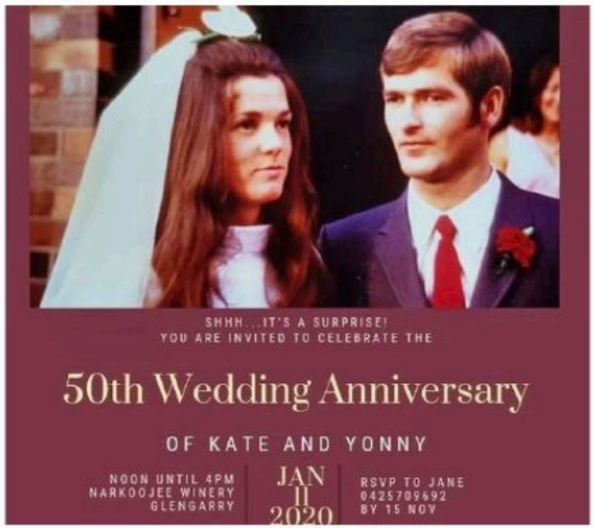
# Oh how Yonny & Kate's family has grown!



At Yonny & Kate's 50th wedding anniversary in July 2020.
Standing back: Faith Xerri ( Richard's step-daughter), Carolyn, Alison, Will Xerri ( Richard's step-son), Richard, Jane, Steve, Ivor (partly obscured), Michael, Liam, Kate, Cil.
Middle: Lachlan, Charlie, Toby, Kate holding baby Gaia, Yonny, Ethan, Gabriel.
Frint: Sophia, Harry, Aliah, Jude, Bonnie, Tilly, Emelyn & Eve Xerri (Richard's step-daughter).
Total 28.

The J V clan 2015.





# Kate & Yonny's growing family.



Michael & Cil Visser with
Harry, Toby & Bonnie.



Alison & Steve Visser with
Sophia, Gabriel & Jude.



Carolyn & Richard Visser
with L-R Faith, Will, baby
Gaia, Eve and Lachie
infront.

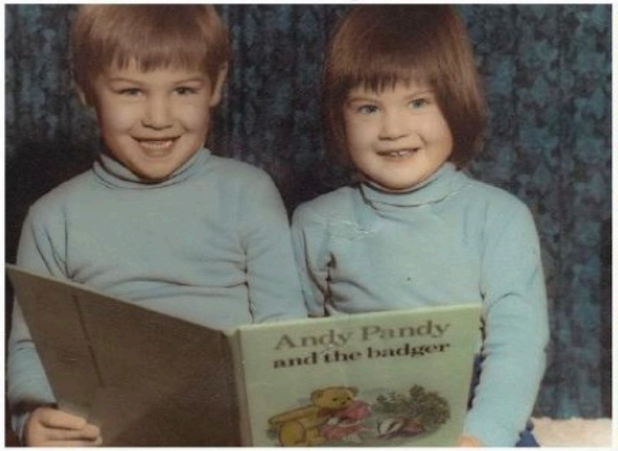
Ivor & Jane Smith with Ethan inbetween
and Emmy & Aliah infront.



Kate & Liam Visser
with Tilley & Charlie.



Nellie's family in 2010 version of this book.














David's family.

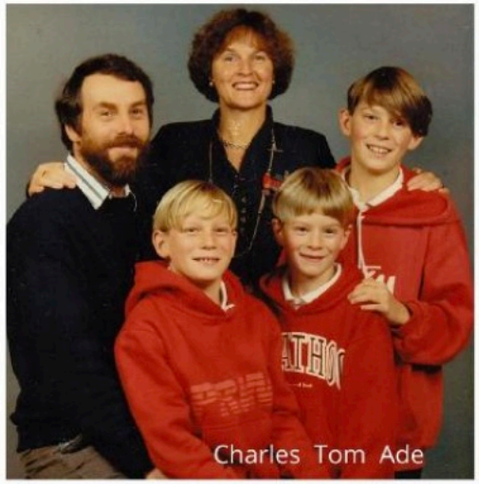


Yolanda & David Logan with
Alex, Evan (at back) & Charlotte.

## The Mountain Girls 2020.

Nellie, Lisa & Skye on top of the world.
Nellie spends winter's helping Lisa at her ski lodge, 'Diana Lodge' Falls Creek, where she accomodates and caters for up to 44 guests.

Tini & Murray's family in the 2010 version of this book.












2021 update
and our family has
grown 2 more!



Charles & Ruth with Stella & Alby









December 2010 we have 2 lots of Visser cousins come to visit.
Above: Aris Appel, Tini, Wim & Joyce Meijnen, Yonny, Nellie, Gre Appel, Aris.

## 3 cousins each named after their Grandfather Aris Visser.



L-R : Aris Appel, son of Dad's sister Brecht.
Willem Aris Meijnen, son of Dad's sister Trijnie.
Aris Visser, Dad's son & our brother.




# Keeping in touch with the relos in Holland.

Our generation have been so lucky to be able to visit our cousins in Holland and that many of them have been able to come and visit us in Australia.

Aris & Gre Appel have visited twice 1987 & 2010. It was so special when one Sunday morning in 2010 they just drove up the driveway as though it was a regular thing.

Wim & Joyce came for several weeks over the summer of 2010-11. It was so great that their visits overlapped, unplanned. I wonder if Leen, Breg and Trijnie pulled strings and organised this. I certainly hope they were watching from above. I know they would be so proud to find the strong threads of family they always felt, stretching a long, thin line to the other side of the world.

Wim & Joyce's son Laurens & daughter Noordje came in 1996 when teenagers and had a great time with our teenagers here.

Rob van Det (son of Tante Tinie, Mum's sister ) with his son Mark also visited when they were in Australia for a medical conference.

Herald, son of Uncle Adriaan's daughter Tinie, came and stayed for several months in his late teens.

As well, our cousins once removed, Ellen Stapel (who was the daughter of Mum's cousin, also a Nely Kok who married Jan Blauw) visited in 2004 with her daughter Lineke and Lineke visited again in 2009.

# Keeping in touch was so different in Mum& Dad's time.

When Mum & Dad moved to Australia they realised they would probably never see their parents again.
Even to speak over the phone was an impossibility, so it was through regular letter writing they kept in touch, not only with their parents, but with each of their siblings and many friends.

Aerograms - very thin blue A4 paper folded in 3 to make a self-sealing envelope was the only way people kept in touch. One had to allow about 10 days for delivery and then another 10 days if they wrote back straight away meant news was never current.

Today I am in easy and immediate touch with my cousins Wim Meijnen & Jan Frits van Det. I get messages & videos instantaneously from them and every now & again we'll do facetime. It is all quite amazing, we can see and speak to each other on the other side of the world whenever we want and it is free! In fact Wim is my go-to person for Mac-computer help.

So different in Mum & Dad's time. It was unheard of to ring. Firstly we didn't have a telephone until about 1961 and Mum's parents would probably never had one, and secondly it was very expensive to ring, and thirdly you had to book the call well ahead and it took a long time to get connected. Decades later when the odd call was made, both parties were crying on hearing each other's voices so that it was pointless anyway.

Even when I spent a year travelling overseas in 1974 I never once rang home... but I sent regular letters and postcards, probably every week or two.

Family friend Rijn Dyt told me that to ring Holland in 1963 you had to book the call 24 hours in advance and it took 20 minutes to connect. First you were connected to an exchange in Indonesia somewhere, then to another further in Asia somewhere, then to another in Europe somewhere and finally in Holland, "putting you through". Each time the operator had a different accent and would ask how the weather was in Australia.

When I was talking about this with Yonny he said that throughout his & Kate's 10 years in Mt Isa to 1977, they never had a telephone in the house and would have to go to a local telephone booth to make a call.
You needed a fistfull of coins to keep feeding the slot otherwise your call abruptly ended.

# Cousins in Holland still always in touch with.

## Wim & Joyce with their family 2021



L-R: Son Laurens & his wife Rebecca (Nauta), Joyce, granddaughters, Wende, Olivia, Floor, Carlijn, Sophie, Guusje, Wim, daughter Noordtje & her husband Ralph Houthuizen.

## Jan Frits & Karin with their family 2021



L-R: Grandson Kylo, son Feike & wife Jessica holding Yaiza (stepgranddaughter), Karin, Jan Frits, Stijn & Merlijn (twin step grandchildren) Eelco husband to daughter Minke.

# Birthdates:

1st generation in Australia.

Leendert Visser b. 15 / 7 / 1912 - d. 10/ 3 /1995 (aged 82). m. Neeltje Adrianna Kok b. 21/ 4 /1910 - d. 29/ 4 /2001 (aged 91).

2nd generation 3rd generation 4th generation 5th generation

Aris Visser b. 4.4.1941 - d. 19.2. 2021 (aged 79) m. Yvonne Macarthur King b. 7.7.1943.

Robert John Visser b. 31.10.1965 m. Simone Therese Phillips b. 16.10.1974.

Jack Aris Visser b. 9.3.2016.

Kerrie Visser b.14.11.1967 & ex husband, Gavan Bullas. Remarried Andrew (Andy) Goodwin.

Jessica Jayde Bullas b.10.10.1993 p. Sam Whelan.

Brooks Benson Whelan b. 18.10 2021.

Hayley Jayne Bullas b. 23.9.1996.

Sammantha Jo Bullas changed to Goodwin. b. 2.10.1998.

Michelle (Shellie) Visser b. 22.2.1974 & ex husband Steve Hughes. Remarried Paul Radcliffe.

Rebecca Hughes b. 2.8.1998.

Stephanie Hughes b. 22.6.2001.

Jan ( =John =Yonny) Visser b. 7.11.1943 m. Kate Ward Thomas b. 21.1.1946.

Michael John Visser b. 17.3.1972 m. Maree Pricille (Cil) Ho-pive b. 20.11.1984.

Harrison (Harry) Louis Visser b. 4.7. 2010.

Bonnie Katherine Marie Visser b. 4.8.2012.

Toby Michael Joel Visser b. 27.3.2014.

Steven Leendert Visser b. 2. 2.1974 m. Alison Victoria Marchesi b. 12.5.1978.

Sofia Tecla Visser b. 5.4.2011.

Jude Daniel Leendert Visser b. 1.10.2013.

Gabriel Steven Visser b. 2.9. 2015.

Richard Ward Visser b. 22.12.1975 m. Lindy Hay

Lachlan John Visser b. 29.1.2014.

Richard Ward Visser b. 22.12.1975 m. Carolyn Jane Hewat b. 25.9.1979.

Gaia Katherine Visser b. 1.12.2019.

2nd generation 3rd generation 4th generation

Jane Heather Visser b. 25. 6.1978 p. Ivor Wendell Smith b. 14.9.1974
Emelyn Katherine Claire Smith b.19.5.2010
Aliah Heather Neeltje Smith b. 30.10.2012
Ethan Ivor Johann Smith b. 5.9.2016.

Liam Neale Visser b.18.12.1980 m. Kate Elizabeth Harwood b. 12.4.1978
Charlie Thomas Visser b. 28.5.2014
Matilda (Tilly) Lilian Visser b. 23.5.2016.

Nellie Visser b. 25.7.1946 & ex husband Don Alexander Logan b. 7.9.1939 - d. 5.7. 2018 (aged 78).
David John Logan b. 5.3.1971 m. Yolanda Millar b. 2.8.1973
Evan Devenney Logan b. 3.5.2003
Alexander James Logan b. 29.6.2005
Charlotte Rose Marie Logan b. 10.11.2007

Lisa Jane Logan b. 29.5.1972

Catharina Margaretha (Tini) Visser b. 18.8.1949 m. Murray Charles Cook b. 14.5.1947
Adrian Visser Cook b. 25.12.1977

Charles Visser Cook b. 13.5 .1981 p. Ruth Louise Osborne b. 27.7.1981
Stella Bruce Cook b. 24.5.2016
Alby Osborne Cook b. 27.5.2018

Thomas Davies Cook b. 12.1.1983

# The Story doesn't end here.....

The Visser family of 4 children that arrived in Australia in 1951 has grown to 13 grandchildren and 24 great, grandchildren and 1 great, great grandchild at this stage, with the total extended family now 56, even more when new partners' children are included.

The Visser name looks like it will continue to grow here in Australia.

This family tree is already spreading many new branches, and although the Visser name may not be on them, the Visser blood will be in them.

To subsequent generations, may you be proud of your heritage and inspired by Mum & Dad's can-do attitude and optimism and may you too, lead happy and fulfilling lives.

It is now 110 years since Mum & Dad were born - what a different world now.

We know so little about the generations before Mum & Dad but literacy and photography were not widely available then so not the means, let alone time to leave a record of their life.

What will life be like for your descendants in the next 100 years?

I hope each generation will pass this book onto the next and perhaps be inspired to record their own lives and times. What seems so normal in our own time, is usually so different in the next.

We are so lucky that we have the technology at our fingertips to prepare a book such as this - even with my limited computer skills.

10 years ago we would not have believed that everyone would carry a palm sized device that has replaced telephones, alarm clocks, wrist watches, telegrams, letters, cameras, newspapers, magazines, television, radio, record players, calculators, torches, dictionaries, encyclopedias, maps, bank books, books to read, notepads, games, cards, timers, photo albums, voice recorders, calendars, tickets, compasses, computers, typewriters, pens and paper, scanners, copiers, and apps offering so much more. Science fiction became reality in my generation, imagine how Mum & Dad and earlier generations would see it - unimaginable!

There may be omissions and mistakes, my apologies. I would be pleased to have any errors corrected.

Trawling through Mum's many albums and all the other records over the last 2 months in putting this together has been quite a meditative experience. I felt I was there, living it, re-connecting with them and their good and loving lives.

Tini Visser Cook, 7 December 2021.




A favourite Dutch saying, one Mum cross-stitched, was:
'VAN HET CONCERT DES LEVENS
KRIJGT NIEMAND EEN PROGRAM'

Of the concert of life, no-one gets a program.
ie. No-one knows what their life will be like and what role they will play.

Mum & Dad played their role well. Wholeheartedly.









Mum's family Hotel at Rustenburg, North Holland built by Dad and his father - where so many of our family history stories revolve.






The hotel (seen in background) looks out to these windmills.