

Somsens from far away travelling to other Somsens

AMSTERDAM, THE CITY OF SUNSHINE*By Paula Christ [816]*

With a teaching friend living in Brussels for the year and a fabulously low-priced airfare ticket in my possession, I took off from Minnesota for a four day visit to Holland and Brussels.

I learned that Amsterdam must be the city of sunshine, because the sun only shone while I was in Amsterdam. It missed Brussels completely!

I remembered a few landmarks in Amsterdam from our trip in 1997 for the World Wide Somsen Reunion, so Theo, Yvonne, Johan and I agreed to meet at the Renaissance Hotel not far from the Central Train Station.

As I rode the Thalys nearer and nearer towards Amsterdam, the sun shone brighter, and by the time I was strolling across the streets to our meeting place, it was a beautiful Sunday morning.

The instructions I had given to my Holland cousins were to plan whatever they thought would fit nicely into a day's visit.

They did a wonderful job!

Theo lead the way to the oldest "brown pub" in Amsterdam, where we (Theo, Johan, Yvonne and I) shared a traditional apple pie with whipped cream and coffee. We took a canal tour of the city, but I am sure we enjoyed simply being together more than anything we could have seen along the waterways. I give credit to my family travelling partners of 1997, my sisters Cindy and Mary, brother-in-law Ron, cousins Kathy, Sal and her husband Dave, but they didn't know the fascinating history of Amsterdam like Theo and Johan. There is the home dated 1602 which is completely surrounded by the Victoria Hotel because the home owner refused to sell his property. We walked near the Vondelpark between the Rijksmuseum with the famous paintings of Rembrandt and Van Goghmu-

seum where I was surprised to see green grass and an ice skating rink.

We sadly had to bid farewell to Theo as he was due to meet his daughter Hester.

Our choices for the remainder of the day were narrowed down to visiting the Anne Frank Museum, which has been almost completely redone since our visit of 1997. Although it is still very interesting, it has become quite high-tech and in my opinion has lost some of the heart of what that hiding place and others like it symbolize to many Jewish families and their experiences during the War.

*Rembrandt
zelfportret*

The three of us shared a delicious '*Rijsttafel*' at a recommended Indonesian restaurant near the Anne Frank Museum, and we spent the remainder of the evening walking through the streets of Amsterdam, sometimes all three of us arm in arm. Although the time together was short and passed quickly, I was happy we were able to meet.

*Johan [1089] taking care of both, Paula and
Yvonne*

*Paula behind the Rijksmuseum with
the ice skating rink*

As we mentioned often, the family friendships that began with that first family reunion have enriched all our lives. ☺