

GARDENER WITH HEART AND HAND

by Michel Stadler [174]

During the great Somsen Reunion in 1997 a lime-tree was planted at the Japikshuis in IJzerlo to commemorate the Somsens who decided to emigrate to America from that house, well over 150 years ago. Every year we go out camping in IJzerlo with the board of the Somsen Foundation with as many as possible other guests. Then we always pay a visit to the Somsen lime-tree and wish it a very favourable year. The tree is still flourishing. The two Somsen horticulturists, who donated the tree at the time, prepared and planted it with great skill.

*The horticulturists **Michel and Tineke Stadler-Somsen** from Didam give us a view of the inside of their business.*

The other day the telephone rang: 'Good morning, this is Gree van Daatselaar-Somsen of the Somsen Foundation. Would you like to write an article about your business for 'Somsen Horizon'? About how you work, about what motivates you and what ideals you have. An interesting story with a few pictures maybe?'

Now I am here, armed with pen and a writing-pad. For my work I write and design a lot, but writing an article about our business is something quite different.

It is in the year 1985 when my wife Tineke Somsen [135] and I, Michel Stadler [174], move from Groningen to Didam, since I have found a new job there as landscape gardener and manager of a gardening centre.

In the course of the years I gradually become responsible for the horticulturist department. With a permanent staff of four horticulturists and a number of staff members on call we form a very pleasant team within the company.

In July 1995 my boss, the owner of the company, asks me if I feel like taking over the horticulturist department. Quite a surprising proposition!

First I have to deliberate and think about it very carefully at home, since it means that we have to take over machines, tools, goodwill and the care for a staff of six people. And it also means that there will be many administrative matters to be taken care of.

But still it remains a splendid offer. When do you get another chance to take over a company for which you have done your best for more than ten years?

In September Tineke immediately starts with all kind of computer courses to master bookkeeping.

Thus we start all the preparations.

January 1, 1996 is the great day. We start 'Our Own Company' on a piece of land we rent from the gardening centre. We buy a site hut which we change into an office and a canteen. Three containers serve to store materials and tools. We certainly have to pioneer and improvise at the beginning, but soon everybody gets used to the new situation. But since we are located behind the gardening centre we do not get enough publicity as an independent company. Therefore we soon start



looking for a different location where we can possibly live ourselves as well.

Lime tree

In August 1997, during the Great Family Reunion, we are invited, to our great pleasure, together with another Somsen horticulturist company, to supply and plant (with some ceremony) the Somsen lime tree (*Tilia Europaea Euchlora*) at the Japikshuis in IJzerlo.

An event that has been very clearly written down in the annals of our company!

In September 1998 we move with our family with three kids: Evelien [175], Maarten [176] and Frederiek [1000] to a farmhouse on the border of Didam. Here we have found a beautiful place to live and also sufficient buildings for our company to store machines and materials.

Here again, we need quite some dedication and energy so as to rebuild a former pig-farm into a horticulturist company with charisma!

Now after three years we have not yet completed all the changes that we had in mind at the time. Step by step we are trying to realise our ideal.

As a company we concentrate on designing and maintaining gardens and green areas for private people, companies and institutions. This may vary from a simple pruning service, a garden design to the design and laying-out of a complete new housing estate of the local government. We set a

high value on proper workmanship. This already begins at the first meeting with our clients when we make an inventory of the desires. With these data I start making a garden design geared to the wishes of the client. At the same time I make an estimate of the laying-out or the renovation. If I get the job, which happens very often, our gardeners set to work.

We do all possible activities ourselves, like staking out, digging, carpentry, digging and planting ponds. Essentially we do not contract out any activities. We mostly contract machines for earth moving but we remain fully responsible for the work done. This is a great advantage since we are not dependent on a third party and the client only needs to address one party.

We try to be different from other companies by offering creative designs, lucid offers, friendly and polite staff members in recognizable industrial clothing and good follow-up care. After all, a satisfied client is the best publicity for our company. A client can promote and propagate our company, but will only do so when he or she is one hundred percent satisfied with our performance. Therefore a good relationship with a client is very often a lasting one.



Visiting card

After the laying-out or renovation very often there will be an annual pruning or maintenance service. In this way we have already built up a considerable number of clients and there is no need for us to sit still in autumn. Over the past five years we have grown from a one-man business into a co-partnership in which also Tineke plays an important role.

She is in charge of all the accounting and financial administration and that is certainly quite different from her former job as a theatre nurse. Together we are still in the process of developing our company. The dressing of the business ground, the front garden, all this works like a visiting card. We are building a new canteen for the staff at the moment, for just like the clients, the staff members also need care and attention. And in addition we

have to reckon with ever changing developments in the field of legislation and occupational health and safety matters. So we have already purchased a number of machines that lighten labour.



Stadler-Somsen family before their company in Didam

A company of your own has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand it keeps you always busy, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. But on the other hand we have complete freedom to act and decide the way we think best.

We try to keep our balance between our horticulturist company and our family with our three children. Sometimes the scales dip the wrong direction, but you also realise that all the work you do is really for yourself in the end.

Digital

Now we are also in the process of digitizing. Very soon there will be a film about our company on our site (www.stadler.nl). A horticulturist company we have thrown our soul and heart into, in which and on which we work with the greatest pleasure. ■

AGAIN ANOTHER SOMSEN CD



The Irish male choir Doetmaes, of which Johan Somsen is an enthusiastic member and secretary, has released its first CD with **Irish songs**. Further information: Johan Somsen. Phone: 31-578-629 893
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