



# *Somsen* horizon

*Volume 14 – number 24 – June 2011*

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## Objective of the Foundation

*The aim of the foundation is:*

To preserve and promote the solidarity between people bearing the family name of Somsen, those who are/were related to them or those who are interested in them

*The foundation will try to achieve this object for example by:*

- ◆ doing historical research into the family history and the history of the region
- ◆ collecting documentation and genealogical data
- ◆ keeping and taking charge of a family archive and data bases
- ◆ publishing a periodical
- ◆ providing information to persons, institutions and official authorities
- ◆ organising activities so as to realise the object of the foundation



Cover photo

**Waterfall by Lesotho in South Africa**

## Preface

During the preparations for this issue we were faced with the bad news that our editor, Harry Somsen, was affected by a serious illness and initially it seemed that we had to relieve him of the editorial work as much as possible. But fortunately, to everyone's joyful surprise, we recently received the good news that Harry is improving. Last year he was still elected volunteer of the year in his municipality and at this moment he has virtually taken charge of some of his volunteer tasks again and I can assure you that there are many. You will understand that we, as a family foundation, are very happy for Harry himself in the first place but it's also a great relief that he is able to care for the publication of this issue again. Of course we assist him as much as possible but we're glad he's completely involved again.

This immediately makes a long-standing appeal alive: aren't there any people who want to put a little bit of energy into the work for our family foundation? We are all getting older and we are all vulnerable just like that so it is really necessary that there are people who are prepared to assist us. Really important for us is to find someone who, in the course of time, can take over the work of Dick Somsen from Zwolle: keeping the genealogical files up-to-date. It would be most ideal when this volunteer could spend some time with Dick as an apprentice. Fortunately, Dick still fulfills this task with fervor and we sincerely hope that he can continue to do so for a number of years but he is well over 80 now and there will be a time that it might be too much work for him. The summer of 2012 is approaching rapidly and that means that we are looking forward to a Somsen reunion in the United States. I am in touch with Stephen Somsen [2459] who, together with a large group of foreign Somsens, made the first steps in 2007. Of course a lot of work has to be done but chances are very great that something will be organized. If you are already planning a trip to America then it might be interesting to go there in 2012 so that you can combine your trip with the Somsen reunion. One of the possible locations could be New Ulm, Minnesota. Of course we will keep you informed of this event in our forthcoming publications.

Much closer is the summer of 2011. We will have our Somsen camping weekend from Friday 26-08-2011 to Sunday 28-08-2011. However, you can also come on Saturday, 27 August, only. We have an interesting day program that we conclude with the traditional barbecue. Elsewhere in this magazine you can read more about this weekend in the article by Wim Somsen. What remains for me is to wish you lots of reading-pleasure and of course you are welcome again to hand in your contributions for the next Somsen Newsletters and for Somsen Horizon 25 at the editor.

On behalf of the Board,  
Johan Somsen

## On the road with Dan and Sue Somsen

by Dan Somsen [2478]

The super bowl is an annual American Football Championship. The whole nation is involved. This year it was the 45th and Dan and Suzan Somsen [2485] from New Richmond show with their car whose fan they are. In 2002 Johan Somsen [1089] met them during the American Somsen reunion and Dan gave him the license plates of his car with SOMSEN on it for a present. This license plate and the one he got from Don Somsen [873] from Utah make it clear to visitors that his house is inhabited by a Somsen.

Here is Dan and Sue Somsen of New Richmond Wisconsin, in their Cadillac Packer Car. After the Green Bay Packer Superbowl Championship, it was necessary to add the Roman Numbers 45 to the side panel of our car. With this update, we can continue to cruise the roads receiving many thumbs up from fellow Packer fans and the many thumbs down from the rival Minnesota Viking fans.



Johan Somsen



license plates

The car was created in 1996 by Michael Somsen after Superbowl 31. The car has since been passed to us, and it certainly has been fun. It's a real Hoot cruising the Mississippi River towns of Wisconsin and Minnesota (enemy territory). People are always interested in the car and are eager to talk to us about it and football. Just maybe we can add number 46 next year. Go Pack Go!!!





*Packer car*

## Tour of South Africa in 17 days

*by Emma Somsen [1190]*

On Wednesday 16 March 2011 I embarked on a voyage of 17 days to South Africa. A Schiphol taxi picked me up at 5 o'clock in the morning and after a flight of approx. 11 hours we arrived at our hotel in Cape Town at 12 o'clock at night.

After a good night's sleep in a very luxurious hotel we started on our first day and we explored Cape Town and visited Table Mountain. A beautiful view, very nice to see the ocean far down and which is also very impressive is famous Robben Island.



*Welcome in South Africa*

Also places like Stellenbosch and Swellendam were quite nice, they reminded me of the Dutch facades, sometimes I felt like being somewhere in the Betuwe: the houses along the Linge dike look almost the same. Of course also a visit to a Township is a must. This was really very impressive, what a shabby slums, a car in The Netherlands is a better accommodation.

In the Townships there are daycare centers for children from approx. 2 to 6 years, and then they go to



*Cape of Good Hope*

school. The costs for the tour were 150 South African Rand (ca. € 15.00), part of it was for the local guide, the rest for education of the children. They were extremely happy with the pens and notebooks we brought. They share in each other's poverty. Hardly anything will grow there, sometimes a single banana tree. When someone has 10 bananas on a tree and the neighbor has nothing then they share them and the neighbor gets 5 bananas. The bananas they grow are all for home use and not for export, sometimes they have spots and that is not how we want them in Europe. There are thousands of shacks made of boards covered with corrugated iron and plastic against the rain. Some houses look better; they were built with the aid of the Nelson Mandela Fund. Entering a Township is at your own risk, you should have a declaration which you have to sign in advance. In the whole of South Africa



*Township*

the people were very friendly, they all wanted a picture taken, but of course you had to pay for this (comprehensible when you have hardly anything and these rich tourists visit your town - social facilities are still minimal).

I have also enjoyed beautiful nature, I had not imagined that there were such deep mountain passes, it's really a country with different landscapes and there are many eucalyptus trees for paper industry.



*Traditional dancers*

In Swaziland, we enjoyed a performance of what we would call a folklore group and we have learned something about the customs of past and present.

Swaziland is a Kingdom, the population lives in poverty, the King in luxury and opulence and he may still choose young females even at the age of 80 and it is still considered an honor to be asked for this!

It is a clean country, sometimes our accommodation was a hotel, sometimes a lodge, one time more luxurious than another, but there were always showers or a bath and running hot water. Sometimes the men made the women do the hard work (carrying suitcases while they were looking on, SHAME!).



*Rhinoceros*

Of course the reserves for wild animals were very nice. Addoo's Elephant Park and of course the Krügerpark. You had to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning but if you want to see something interesting you have to do something for it. And having breakfast on the shore of a lake in the Krügerpark at 8 in the morning is something very special. The ride there was great. Everywhere along the roads there were stalls with home-grown products for sale: beads, earrings, wooden bowls, bags, fruit etc.



*Baboons*

In the park we saw monkeys, rhinos, giraffes, elephants in the bushes and even a leopard crossing the path. We got the warning not to feed the monkeys, they are really brazen, and baboons can kill a cheetah.



*Deer*

A visit to the monument of the bloody fight between the Boors and the English was quite impressive and so was the history we heard there.

The trip to Lesotho was a trip to an altitude of 3000m which had to be bridged in a distance of 25 km with great views. This used to be a smuggling route and it was also the scene where the Bushmen and the early settlers waged war. Lesotho is a Kingdom, the population is monogamous. The whole area of the Drakensberg, which also includes Lesotho, is on the World Heritage list of UNESCO. In Lesotho they know communication with flags with various colors to indicate what is offered: white = beer, yellow = bread, red = fresh meat, green = fresh vegetables, blue = a marriageable girl or woman.

After travelling through South Africa for 17 days we went back home having seen and learned a lot, in short, exactly as the travel agency had predicted: a trip I NIE VINNIG SAL VERGEET NIE! (I will not easily forget).



## Johan Somsen finished walk to Monaco in 2010

*Article copied from 'De Stentor' on august 5th 2010 by Jan Visser*

**EPE – At an average speed of 30 kilometres a day, former English-teacher Johan Somsen (66) from Epe (The Netherlands), walked from Maastricht to Monaco in 67 days.**

**French people were astounded when the dusty Dutchman sat down on their side walk café and told them he had walked the distance of over 2000 kilometres (1250 miles).**



*Camp at 9200 feet*

Like a mountain goat Johan Somsen walked the mountain ridges with his cane and backpack. Going through the Swiss and French Alps on foot should not be undertaken lightly, it requires experience. Being an enthusiastic member of the men's choir 'Doetmaes' in his home town, he regularly sang this English children's song: 'The bear went over the mountain, to see what he could see. But all that he could see, was the other side of the mountain'. And again he wondered what had made him climb this impossibly steep slope.

But Somsen is one of the few men and women who fearlessly walk for days, spending the nights in a shelter, sometimes surviving on just a crust of bread and some fresh glacier water. For days on end Johan walked in absolute loneliness through hostile environment, once and again meeting up with fellow wanderers who would join him for a meal in a nearby tavern.

The internet kept him in touch with his home-front. And also in contact with the German surgeon who, two months before this hiking tour, had relieved him of a kidney with a tumour in it. 'Sehr gut (very good)' he answered when asked whether this hiking-tour would be safe, 'but please keep me informed of your well-being'. So Johan happily obliged, and in one of his first

messages he wrote: "With one kidney I'm walking a lot lighter than with two".

During the journey he lost twelve kilos (26.5 lbs) in bodyweight, just as much as the weight of the luggage he carried on his back. After over two months he could see the Mediterranean and Nice from the French Alps and he began his long descent to finally be able to sit down in a side walk café and quench his thirst. Astounded Frenchmen could not believe their ears when they realised he had walked all the way from the Netherlands, and they offered him chilled French wine and fresh baguettes.

One day later he could finally embrace grandson Timo (1.5 years of age). When he heard him stammering "Grandpa, grandpa" he realised the tour was really finished and 'the almost ultimate feeling of freedom that lonely hikers know like no-one else' was replaced by ordinary everyday life. However, there was a difference.



*Mountains during the walk*

In the meantime Somsen has returned to his home in Epe, where he is working on a book about his experiences as a long-distance hiker. A book full of practical tips, experiences and thoughts about his thousands of miles of walking.

### What happens next?

A life without hiking is beyond his imagination, so he hopes to travel to Japan in 2011 for a Buddhist pilgrimage of about 1400 kilometres (almost 1000 miles) along many Buddhist temples. Somsen: "If I can walk 2000 kilometres, I should also be able to do 1400, even if I don't speak a word of Japanese".

*Note from the editor: Sadly, due to the earthquakes in Japan, the Japanese pilgrimage has been cancelled. Instead Somsen hiked through Portugal in 2011, from Lisbon to Santiago de Compostela.*

## Small church - great painter

by Henk C. Reijnen [2897] Zwitserland



*Smallest church 'De Rietstap'*

In this article Henk Reijnen, the proudson-in-law of Johan Somsen [1085], remembers a passion of his father-in-law's youth. A passion Johan could only materialize at a much older age.

The Rietstap is the smallest church in The Netherlands. It was built in Dinxperlo in 1912 as a Roman Catholic chapel.

Originally it stood in the garden of a mansion but in 1983 it was broken down stone by stone and rebuilt at its current location not far away from the original site.

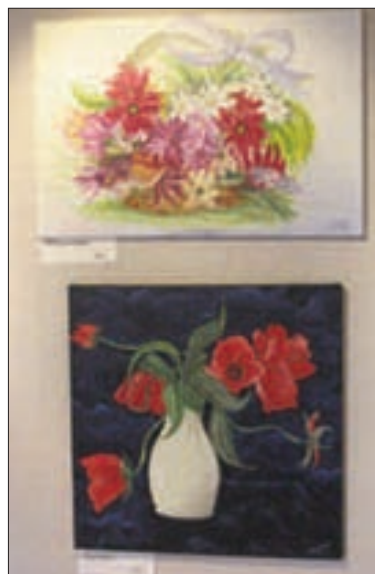
Since 1984 the daily management has been conducted by the Working Group "Church The Rietstap", part of the Foundation "Save the Old". There are regularly exhibitions with works by amateur or professional artists in many fields of visual art. Last year the great moment was there. Johan D. Somsen [1085] exhibited through-



*Visitors at the exhibition*

out the month of August with a wonderful selection of his paintings. There were portraits, landscapes, animals, flowers, still lives and abstract works. Really something to enjoy. And to think that Johan D. Somsen was born in De Heurne near Dinxperlo, not far from this site, in 1926.

In a review in a local paper "Aalten Vooruit" we read that painting and drawing have always been his hobbies. This may be true when the great master says so but as a son-in-law of the cold side I know only too well, that there were many decades that he could not pay attention to these hobbies at all since he used to be very busy with a much thicker brush. But it is unique that he has been able to pick up his childhood dream against this old age - as if time has stood still. The broad interests of John D. Somsen and his sensitivity to beauty in a facial expression, a blaze of a horse or a



*Exhibition*

budding flower are striking as are his qualities to project these on canvas. An abstract image is done equally well as an old farmstead in a snowy landscape.

Color for him is much more than just a name with number on a tube. Through the art of mixing he can achieve innumerable nuances and shades of color and intensity. You can notice that he has

learned this trade. On the one hand, his compositions are a free interplay of colours and structures, on the other hand they are almost geometrical shapes in soft colors. His paintings radiate both freshness and warmth. In weekly classes he is guided individually and so he can develop his style.

And ... the next exhibition is coming.



*Free colors and structures*

## Neighborhood

Contribution by Oscar Somsen [2040]

Actually it is surprising that we have never published anything about this important concept in Somsen Horizon. In our family book "Somsen Omnes Generations" this subject is discussed in chapter 9. The article below is based on Wikipedia, thanks to the unknown authors, and on the Bachelor essay by Laura Fox at the University of Twente.

Traditionally the "noaberschap" (neighborship) was a group of neighbors (noabers) in a rural environment, usually a village or a hamlet. Often the neighborhood consisted of the residents of the houses that one could see from one's own house. Within the neighborhood-neighbor-duty applied. This is the obligation to assist the neighbors (in the broad sense of the word) with advice and if necessary deeds. In the past this was essential for the residents of farms and also in villages that could not count on good public services. There was a fixed task distribution. Neighborhood is primarily



a concept in the Achterhoek, Twente and other parts of Overijssel, in Drenthe, but is also in the West of Germany (County of Bentheim and surroundings).

The nearest neighbor was marked as nearest neighbor. This is usually the one whose front door is facing your house.



*Current bread at the birth of Gerrit Jan Garretsen [148] son of Lammert Garretsen [147] and Johanna Margaretha Somsen [142]*

For this neighbor-neighbor-duty is stronger than for the other neighbors in the neighborhood.

This neighbor takes care of plants, post and sometimes even pets when one is on holiday. He or she also supports in small cases and when there is a disease he orders a

fruit basket on behalf of all the other neighbors and a wedding arch or a maypole. The nearest neighbor also takes the initiative to arrange things at major events such as weddings, deaths and births.

Traditionally it is the custom that in the event of death the relatives of the deceased inform the neighbor of the demise. It is the nearest neighbor's duty then to inform the other neighbors officially of the demise. It is the joint neighbor's



*Neighbor with coffin on wagon on his way to the cemetery*

neighbor-duty to take care of mourning cards and the like and carrying the coffin. It was also customary that in the event of death the neighbors closed the shutters of the house of the deceased halfway.



*Wedding procession*

It was often decided which of the neighbors were supposed to deliver mourning cards to particular addresses by drawing lots. In former days delivering these mourning cards (by bike or on horseback) could be quite a challenge if, for example, relatives who lived far away had to be notified of the decease. The coffin is still often carried by the neighbors. The other obligations in the event of death have expired. Sometimes there is still a symbolic contribution of a few euros per neighbor for the cost of the funeral.

Formerly wedding cards were also often delivered by the neighbors. Neighbors who delivered the wedding cards used to wear a hat with a rose. Often the invitation went hand in hand with a poem for the invited guests. All in all it was a cheerful happening because the deliverers often had had a few drinks. After a birth the women among the neighbors often assisted the woman in childbed.

It is customary that all who are invited to the house of a new neighbor are supposed to belong to the neighborhood.

You have to invite them once you are settled and for them neighborhood-duty applies (from both sides). Mostly this is unspoken. The newcomer has to



*Putting up maypole at a new house*

ask the neighbors to become a neighbor. So it is not self-evident that the neighbors are automatically "noabers". The neighbors can accept neighborhood but they can also refuse, for example, when they have already many neighbors. It is also possible to ask someone after years to become a neighbor. Neighborhood does not automatically end by departure. Neighborhood with the duties involved had to be cancelled. When this was not done one kept being a neighbor even if one had moved far away. It goes without saying that neighbor duties in such a case had little practical significance.

Because of modern developments such as the decrease in the number of farmers, increasing mechanization, the possibility to hire farm aid, the possibility to insure against the cost of a funeral etc. the practical significance of neighborhood has decreased. The rules relating to the rights and obligations with respect to neighborhood pass into oblivion. However, withdrawal from the neighborhood without a good reason or any failure to meet neighbor-duties, as far as they still exist, are still seen as a very serious matter within the neighborhood.



## Jan Somsen rolls out of bed: in Baldwin

by Theo Somsen [247]

In 1949 Jan and Anna Somsen-Kemink [352+353] from Amsterdam visited their cousins in Baldwin, Wisconsin. They kept a detailed diary in which we find this entry.

Monday July 25, 1949

Laundry day. Cleaned up everything. Evening in the park in Baldwin for a picnic with the Somsen family. Home by 23.20. Flashes of lightning everywhere, a heavy thunderstorm.

Home by twelve o'clock at night and to bed. It is very warm in the bed and I kept turning and turning.

As a result I roll out of the bed which rouses heavy giggling in the bedrooms.

Anna and the cousins have a lot of fun because of this. Fortunately not hurt but nobody pitied me.

It is like everywhere else: a man who achieves something gets all the interest but when he falls he is laughed at and ridiculed.

Jan will undergo all this patiently at the home of his cousins Jenny, Dina and Elly [335+337+339] in Baldwin, Wisconsin, USA. It is a restless night; I did not sleep well because of the heat.



Standing l-r:

Ella Somsen [339], Mina (Minnie) Somsen-Kappers [334], Geertruida (Gertrude) Somsen-Snoeijbosch [327], Sally Somsen-Forman + William (Billy) [811-815], Lelas Wernlund [5899], Wilhelmina Somsen-Muyskens [341], Garlie, Harmina (Minnie) Wernlund-Somsen [320], Laverne Somsen-Voskuil [2785], Cornelia (Nell) Somsen-Tellman [323], Anna Somsen-Kemink [353], Gezina (Celia) Wernlund (Berkseth) [801], Dina (Dena) Somsen [337] en Johanna (Jenny) Somsen [335]. Sitting: Jan Somsen [352]

Underneath there is another picture with the following persons on it.

standing l-r: Barbara Berkseth (Delander) [3851], Grace Berkseth (Emmert) [3855], Ann Berkseth (Kerr) [3853], Louise Berkseth (Rice) [3842].  
sitting: Jan Somsen [352], Charles (Skip) Rasmussen [2770] en Anna Somsen-Kemink [353].



## A Retrospect of Gerda Johanna Somsen's life

by Wil van der Vinne [236]

October 11, 2010 would have been the 100th birthday of Gerda Johanna Somsen.

As homage to her, Wil van der Vinne [236], her daughter-in-law, put a book together from all the material she had left for her children.

And it was a lot of material: photographs; a letter from her father to his beloved asking her to give him her hand and her heart; newspaper-cuttings with engagement announcements, weddings and funerals; memorial cards; letters from her husband Jenne van der Vinne to his sister and brother-in-law Christien and Willem Somsen; coupons from the second world war; poetry albums of 1886 etc.

Gerda Johanna Somsen [166] was born in Aalten in 1910, at no. 44 in the Hogestraat where her father, Gerhardus Arnoldus Somsen [21] married to Dora Willemina Gerharda Lammers [162], ran a forge and hardware store.



In his cash book of 1901 we read that he for example "stretched buttocks" (literal translation) at 10 cent each.

*Candles vader en moeder*

When we enquired in a blacksmiths and windmill-museum we found out this referred to a so called 'bil-hamer' or 'bil-iron' (buttock-hammer) that was used to cut grooves into millstones. The blacksmith heated and sharpened this tool, aka "stretching the buttock".



*Forge and hardware store at Hogestraat 44 in Aalten*

Gerda always had a funny story or two about the time when she worked with Dr. Der Weduwen in the Landstraat in Aalten. How he needed her to help in surgery when a farmer's tooth needed pulling. There was no dentist in those days. Or about the doctor being the first to ride a motorcycle in the village and she had to polish his boots because he wanted to look good for the patients. And when another doctor came to stand in she went along to give directions.



*foto 1932; above from left to right:  
Willem - Gerhardus - Derk - Gerda.  
below, father Gerhardus, Christien and mother Dora*

In the 'Westerchurch' she was spotted by Jenne van der Vinne from 2e Exloërmond (a village in Drente). He had outgrown "the peat moors" and had worked his way up to become a clerk and worked for the tax office in Aalten.

They got married May 18th in 1932 and they moved, because Jenne got transferred several times, to Venlo, Holterhoek, Rotterdam and Zwolle. Four sons were born, Jitze, [232] Gerhardus, [233] Sietze [234] and Jenne [235], and one daughter, Willy [236].

Gerda wrote down many things and remembered how they refurbished the house in Venlo: the wallpaper cost 14 cent per roll!

She also told us about the grocer in Holterhoek who came by once a week to pick up the shopping list, then rode his bicycle back to the store and would come

back later that day to make the delivery, thus cycling the distance from Eibergen to Holterhoek (about 5 miles) four times a day for the shopping of just one family.

During the war they lived in Kralingsche Veer, near Rotterdam, and Gerda brought her two eldest sons, Jitze (aged 11) and Gerhardus (8) on her bicycle from Rotterdam to Aalten to her sister Christien and brother Willem who still lived in their parental home. It was much safer there and they had enough to eat.



*above from left to right: Gerhardus - Jenne - Jitze.  
Sitting: Sietze - Willy - Gerda and Jenne Jr.*

In 1954 Jenne got transferred to Zwolle. Unfortunately there was no house available for them at the time, so he went to a boarding-house weekdays and came home for the weekend.

February 1956 was the great moment: the family moved to Zwolle and Jenne enjoyed the reunion with his family. Alas this joy was short-lived, because he died on July 20th 1956. So now Gerda was left a single mother with five children.

Jitze, the eldest, had already left home and was engaged to Nel Overvoorde from Kralingsche Veer. And Gerhardus served in the army. The three 'small ones', Sietze, Jenne and Willy were still at school.

But children do grow up. So when they had all flown from their nest, married or not, Gerda moved to Berkum, a small village just north of Zwolle. Here a new home for the elderly was being built, the Switch (de Wissel), with adjacent houses for assisted living.

She enjoyed living there for 25 years. All her life she meant to serve. She would be there whenever you needed her. She did what she could, both in church and in the community.

September 26th 1999 her eldest son Jitze died. This was a heavy blow for her.

On November 20, 2000 she suffered from a stroke that put her in hospital. After a year in Zandhove, a nursing home and rehabilitation centre, she was granted two more years in the nursing home of 'de Wissel'. A tough period in which she declined both mentally and physically.

On the 14th of January 2004 she passed away, aged 93, in the nursing home Zandhove where she had been admitted after deteriorating.



*"Generations will go, generations will come  
We are all under Thy mercy"*

Gerda had written these lines in her notebook. The day after she died, on January 15th 2004, her ninth grandchild was born: Tess, daughter of Marjan van der Vinne and Carlo van der Weij.



*Zwolle: from left to right: daughter-in-law Nel- Gerda- Will- daughter-in-law Els- daughter-in-law Ammy and Sietze. Behind Jitze- Jenne- daughter-in-law Bep and Gerard.*

## The Baldwin reunion keeps bringing back memories

*by Emma Somsen [1190]*

In the summer of 2002 the second worldwide Somsen Reunion was held in Baldwin, WI, in the United States. Together with eight other Dutch Somsens Emma was present. She still regularly thinks back to the visit to the Baldwin reunion in 2002. And soon it will be 2012, time for the next American reunion?

On Wednesday 31 July I arrived at the airport of St. Paul/Minneapolis where Marilyn [3850] and Ward Olson-Lear [3858] were waiting for me. It was a warm welcome, not only because of the temperature and the welcome of Marilyn and Ward, but also the reception in Baldwin with its Dutch mill and tulips. The first picture was taken at the tourist office in the mill. The mill and the farmer and his



*The mill with farmer and farmer's wife in the garden of Marilyn and Ward Olsen*

wife in Marilyn's garden looked also very Dutch.

On Thursday I helped Marilyn with the preparations for the reunion (we made buttons). On Friday afternoon I explored Baldwin on my own and bumped into Theo Somsen! Together we then explored the suburbs, the new housing estate, Dutch Village, with street names such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Friesland Drive. On the other side of Baldwin was the Somsen Farm where Jan Hendrik Somsen and Janna Hendrika Somsen- Rauwerdink started their American life. In the evening we met the other Dutch Somsens and part of the American guests for the reunion, it was a very cosy atmosphere right from the start.

On Saturday at the opening of the reunion Marilyn bade us all a warm welcome. There was a big exhibition of old pictures. Donald Somsen [831], a son of Albert Somsen [333] and Minnie Kappers [334], still had all the clog-making tools of his Grandpa Jan Hendrik Somsen from the Netherlands. There were funny sketches about Dutch thrift and cleanliness; we paid a visit to the dairy-farm of John and Johanna Vriesen and to a Buffalo farm. In the evening burst there was a short but fierce thunderstorm but the next day the weather was brilliant again.



*The clog-making tools of Jan Hendrik Somsen*

On Sunday in church there was also a special welcome for the Dutch, we sang the Wilhelmus, the Dutch national anthem, and the Americans their anthem. After the end of the service we admired the embroidery, partly created by the Somsen sisters, daughters of Jan Hendrik Somsen and Janna Hendrika Rauwerdink: Ella [339], Jennie [335] and Dena [337]. A lady came up to me and she told me that her father was called Rumer te Grootenhuis and that he had come from Dinxperlo (my home-town in The Netherlands). Other people told me about their acquaintances from Dinxperlo (Dianne and Stef Schreur); the world is sometimes small indeed. In the evening we had to take leave of the reunion guests but I stayed well over a week with Marilyn and Ward who showed me a lot of the surroundings. Very beautiful was the trip along the Mississippi River, splendid views, nice little towns like the town of

Stockholm with its antique museum and shop with quilts. (Ward waited very patiently until the women had finished).



*Marilyn and Emma in the library looking for ancestors*

We also paid a visit to River Falls, where a Farm City Day was organized with demonstrations of old agricultural machinery, a tour over the grounds and a lunch with local cuisine. This was all sponsored by the farmers and other companies of the region.

The city tour of Saint Paul and Minneapolis was very worthwhile too.

The final days I stayed with Marilyn's sister and brother-in-law Barbara [3851] and Alan Delander [3870]. I visited Lake Superior with them and the exhibition of the wrecked ship, The Phoenix, which had also Dutch people on board.

A visit to Two Harbors with its huge ships was also quite interesting and impressive.

In the conversations with Marilyn many memories of Marilyn of her great-grandmother Janna Somsen-Rauwerdink and of her grandmother Harmina Somsen [320] popped up.

Marilyn remembers an expression of her grandmother, Grandma Minnie Harmina: when they had done something which was not allowed: "Du ôndoch!" (You naughty girl). Grandma Minnie emigrated to America as a child, so she had not entirely forgotten the 'Achterhoeks' vernacular. Other phrases: "Pas op" (beware) with raised finger and: "Du dômmen ezel" (you stupid ass).



*Marilyn and Emma watching souvenirs*

After school Marilyn used to have lunch with her great-grandmother, Janna, who lived opposite the school then.

Grandmother Minnie, Harmina Hendrika Somsen [320], used to cook "karnemelks pap" (buttermilk-porridge – popular in the Achterhoek). She was also strict with her grandchildren. If you wanted to go out on Saturday evenings and come home late it was all right but also then you were expected to rise early on Sunday for church.

During a day out Emma treats on peppermint. Marilyn remembers that they got two peppermints from Grandmother Minnie on Sundays during the sermon. So another continuation of the Dutch tradition. The service certainly lasted an hour and a half.

Grandmother Minnie had cooked a meal. When the grandchildren complained that it was so hot grandmother said: "Can't cook it cold".

Members of the First Reformed Church organized a fair for a good cause. Ella, Jennie and Dena Somsen also were in that committee. They suggested to buy air-conditioning for the church of the proceeds. Others rather spent everything on a project in Africa. Comment of the Somsen sisters: "What is the use of helping in Africa when in your own town the people stay away from church because it is so hot? Result: they purchased air-conditioning!"

These were 14 days in which I saw very much and I enjoyed it a lot. Everywhere very friendly and hospitable welcomes. It was quite an experience which I can look back on with pleasure!

## Camping weekend 26 –28 August 2011

For the fourteenth time we organize the "Somsen camping weekend" in IJzerlo again. The atmosphere has always been good and relaxed. You are totally free but joining our fixed program components can be fun.

Traditionally a visit to our lime-tree at the "Jaopikshuus" is on the program for Saturday afternoon.



*Offering flowers*



The barbecue is again on Saturday night from about a quarter past seven p.m. The costs are € 17.50 per person. For this you will get high-quality food and free drinks.



*Brunsveld, our caterer at the barbecue*

We can go on as long as we like. We also received a number of tips from Emma Somsen (Dinxperlo) about possible activities for this weekend. We can spontaneously decide to participate.



*Borderland Museum*

I will mention a few: on Friday afternoon a visit to the market in Dinxperlo combined with a visit to the Borderland Museum; a bike ride to Little Switzerland in Anholt (Germany).

Guided tours to a clog factory or to an exposition of old farmer's tools are also possible but only by appointment. If there are any participants I would like to hear that from them.



*Anholt: Little Switzerland*

But maybe you want to organize your time yourself without having obligations. You are welcome all the same! We expect a lot of family members from far and near. The number of participants for the barbecue in particular will be a gauge for the board if it is worthwhile to continue this activity. So join us!

If you want to participate in the barbecue sign up no later than August 19 by phone or e-mail at Wim Somsen.

Wim Somsen  
Hoge Heurnseweg 8  
7095 CJ De Heurne  
phone: 0315 – 652115  
e-mail: jwsomsen01@hetnet.nl

## A Visit to Ad Somsen in Portugal

*by Johan Somsen [1089]*

In Somsen Horizon number 12 in May 2000 Ad Somsen [98] published the story of his life. Ad left for Portugal in 1956 by reason of love and became the ancestor of the Portuguese branch of our family.

Prior to a hike from Lisbon to Santiago de Compostela Johan Somsen and Yvonne Reijs [3926] had an encounter with Ad Somsen in his hometown Oeiras, not far from Lisbon.



*Manuela, Ad Somsen and Yvonne Reijs in front of Ad's home in Oeiras, Portugal*

Before I started my walk from Lisbon to Santiago de Compostela I intended to spend a short holiday in Lisbon together with Yvonne. Sometime before my departure to Lisbon I had called Ad Somsen to ask him if I could come along to say hello. We knew each other only through our family magazine and so we were no total strangers. In 2000 I had read and translated Ad's life history for our magazine and Ad had also read about me. Furthermore we share the same last name and then there should be a link because anyone with the name Somsen originates from our common ances-

tor Geert Sumps of the Sumpssteden in IJzerlo. We had agreed that I would call him when we were in Lisbon and so it happened. When I got Ad on the phone we agreed that he would pick us up on Praça do Rossio, one of the main squares of Lisbon, at a particular time. I told him I was recognizable because of a white wig. Exactly at the appointed time a car arrived with a vital man in his early seventies behind the wheel and it was immediately clear that this was Ad. Because it is a very busy square is we had to board immediately and so began our first acquaintance. Actually from the beginning our conversation went smoothly although it must have been difficult for Ad to maneuver through the busy traffic and talk simultaneously. His hometown Oeiras is located not far from Lisbon and soon we turned into a quiet square where his attractive house was situated. There we were also welcomed by his new partner, Manuela, a former college friend of his wife Tereza who died in 1999.



*Ad Somsen with his family pictures*

In the spacious hall Ad had an extensive photo gallery of his ancestors with also several pictures of ancestors from The Achterhoek in traditional costume.

Proudly Ad also showed us a brochure published on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of his company in



*Fa. Somsen portugal*

2009: Somsen Poole da Costa. A company that produces cork products. Initially Ad produced many corks for wine bottles but nowadays they are mainly moving in a niche market and concentrate on all sorts of cork products such as handles for fishing rods and the like. The company is now run by a son of Ad but Ad is still weekly involved.

After an aperitif in his cosy house, which offered a splendid view of the Tagus River, we drove to a restaurant on the banks of the Tagus River where we had a delicious and cosy meal on a warm April evening. Ad let slip that he liked speaking Dutch again and it was striking how well he controlled his mother tongue. No trace of a Portuguese accent whereas he has lived in Portugal for 55 years. If there was any accent in his Dutch at all it was a trace of the Amsterdam accent. Amsterdam is the place where he lived in his youth. After a splendid evening Ad and Manuela drove us back to Lisbon and we expressed the hopes to welcome them in The Netherlands someday.



*Ad and Johan Somsen*

A very special encounter with the doyen of the Portuguese Somsen-branch.

## Butter rationing cards

*by Gree van Daatselaar – Somsen [53]*

**It must have been in the summer of 1943 for my eldest brother Freek [47] was still at large. Freek was to travel to Utrecht by train and my sister, eleven, and I, thirteen, were allowed to join him. My sister Tineke [54] and I [53] were not supposed to know why Freek went there. During the war there were things that you had better not ask questions about.**

Freek was to bring us to aunt Leida, a sister of my mother's [46], in Utrecht and we brought food and rationing cards for her.

Tineke and I were very happy that we were allowed to stay with her for a few days. And travelling there by train was thrilling! And so was the big city!

Before we left I had to do an errand for my mother. I had to go to Zwiers, a small grocer's nearby, where I had to buy some butter. Mother gave me the money and also the rationing cards that were absolutely necessary for without them you would not get any butter at all. Actually the rationing cards – not bigger than



a postage stamp – were more important than the money. Especially butter rationing cards were only handed out in dribs and drabs. You could even barter very scarce goods with them like shoes, cigarettes or bicycle tires.



*The housen at Karel Doormanstraat*

I hurried out of the garden wearing a short jacket and in the left pocket the money and in the right pocket the valuable butter rationing cards.

Cheerfully I skipped around because of the prospect of the exciting journey and arrived at the well-known shop where I ordered what I needed. The lady in the shop, Mrs. Zwiers, was a very kind woman and we all liked her very much. When you left the shop she used to greet very kindly with the words: "Thank you very much indeed". We often had to laugh a bit about it.

"How many rationing cards have you got?"

"Four", was my answer.

She put the butter on the counter. I took the money from my left pocket and wanted to get the rationing cards from my right pocket...but, what a fright, nothing! A nervous search, helpless looks, trembling with fear. Without butter I slowly went home with leaden feet. Had I left them on the table? Had they fallen out of my pocket? What would my mother say?

I was severely reprimanded and together we searched the kitchen. Consequently I was sent out to look for them. Again and again. It was quite a tragedy.

In addition to all this misery I had to pee and in the toilet-room with the door locked I knelt down on the cold granite floor to pray. I begged God to let me find the rationing cards. (God sees everything, that's how we had been raised).

"Oh, please, let me find those rationing cards, without them no butter, please let me find them, then...then...I will drop the trip to Utrecht!" I promised at my wit's end.

Again I walked outside looking for the rationing cards with tears in my eyes and at the end of the municipal public garden, quite close to our house, I found them, all four of them. They must have been blown away from my coat-pocket into the shrubs.

Unbelievable! I could not believe my eyes. I rushed to my mother, quite relieved and happy.

"Gree, hurry to Zwiers", mother, also happy now, said,

"For Freek wants to go now".

Dawdling I returned to the shop...not sticking to one's word...that was really bad! But then aunt Leida would not get her things...then Tineke would have to go all alone and would be very sad. Thus I was haggling.

Dressed in nice coats with a small case the two sisters tried to keep pace with their eldest brother.

No, I do not remember much of the train journey nor of the visit but that promise kept gnawing at me. For a very long time.

## Raasch: Aunt's death offers vivid lesson

*by Chuck Raasch [2622]*

**WASHINGTON - My Aunt Violet Elisabeth Somsen [2598] died 24 March 2011 at age 89 and her passing marks the first time in almost 120 years that someone named Somsen is not living in Hamlin County.**

This is a common passage in an era when families are smaller and more dispersed, and when the farm communities that settled the Upper Plains continue to draw down in population. Many South Dakota families undoubtedly have gone through the same changes that have come to my mother's side of our family.



*Violet Elisabeth Somsen*

Dutch by heritage but Americans by choice, the first Somsens settled north of the tiny town of Dempster in 1894. It was the year after Frederick Jackson Turner had declared the end of the American frontier, but what the Somsens and other Hamlin County families faced in the decades that followed hardly seemed settled. Ours is a familiar South Dakota story: boom and bust, drought and floods, the Great Depression. A war to end all wars that took the brothers Harvey and John Somsen to France in 1917 and another one that took Earl Somsen to the seas a generation later.

Through the decades, Somsens spread about Hamlin County and beyond. And as my mother rightly points out, she and my remaining Aunt Gladys were born Somsens and they live in Hamlin County. So even if the name no longer is in the phone book, the family blood still flows. In a way, it always will. It struck me that in mourning the death of Violet, her legacy is not in what is lost, but what she has left behind.

What embraced Violet in her final hours on this Earth - a loving family braving a March snowstorm to keep constant vigil at her bedside, the social network com-

munications about her declining health among extended family across the continent - was a vivid lesson in how modern life has changed community and family but not broken them.

Auntie Vi, as she was known to a herd of nieces and nephews, was a spark plug of a woman with a presence that belied her diminutive stature. Never married, she was a dedicated teacher and a devout sister with the no-nonsense style of someone who came of age in the Depression and who spent her young adulthood in the Women's Air Corps amid the devastation of post-war Japan.

The only time I ever saw her get agitated was when the Twins or Cubs lost, or when she got a lousy pinochle hand.

Vi loved to fish with Uncle Floyd and Aunt Gladys, even when the fish weren't biting. If they came home with supper or a good story, all was right with the world. They never came home without one or the other.

While it's lamentable that the name Somsen is fading from Hamlin County, the greater South Dakota community is full of them. Somsens are rooted in De Smet, Yankton, Webster, Pierre. One of the joys of the modern social networks has been the ability to reacquaint with Somsen relatives who settled in Florida decades ago.

We have not left Hamlin County as much as we have made it part of our larger community.

In the end, family is not defined by geography, anyway. And memory is not the sole province of any place on Earth.

Chuck Raasch writes from Washington for Gannett. Contact him at [craasch@gannett.com](mailto:craasch@gannett.com), follow him at <http://twitter.com/craasch> or join in the conversation at [www.facebook.com/raaschcolumn](http://www.facebook.com/raaschcolumn).

### ***Textile goods claim by fake Germans in Zelhem***

*by Harry Somsen [146]*

**In the Second World War there were many people in hiding in the Achterhoek: Jews who had to flee for their lives, men who refused slave labor for the Germans and people of the resistance. In this article you'll read about a special event which took place in the house of Gerrit Jan Somsen [124] in Zelhem**

Many inhabitants of Zelhem, both in the village and in the outside area, offered shelter to people in hiding during the Second World War. So did the Oosterink family at the farmstead The Hanehoek. In ever-changing compositions people travelled from other parts of the country to fairly safe Zelhem hoping for a few months rest, shelter and employment. They came without luggage with only the clothes they were wearing.

To occasionally put on clean underwear and outerwear they had to rely on hiding addresses. As the months passed there was a pressing shortage of underwear and outerwear.

Among these people in hiding at the farmstead The Hanehoek were a.o. Joop den Uyl, later PvdA politician and Prime Minister of The Netherlands, and Guus Gussinklo, son of a manufacturer in Aalten who also owned a factory in Germany. He had completed his business studies in Germany and therefore he spoke and wrote German fluently. They devised a plan which they thought they could afford in times of war but certainly not under normal conditions. For their fellow-people in hiding, who of course got no rationing cards, they had to find new underwear and also food quite regularly.

Guus Gussinklo drew up a command to claim underwear from the Germans that was stored with the Somsen family in the Smidsstraat. In German officer's uniforms Guus Gussinklo and Joop den Uyl went to the village of Zelhem with horse and carriage.



*Textile store Somsen in Zelhem*

At the draper's shop of Somsen in the Smidsstraat they stopped. In the last year of the war a room next to the shop was claimed for German officers who had an office there which was always staffed. In Somsen's shed they stored many goods: clothes, food and coal. The Germans present clacked their heels after reading the command and did not put the slightest obstacle in the "officers'" way. Without any problem the German undergarments were loaded on the wagon. Gerrit Jan Somsen gave the horse a bucket of water while they were loading the wagon and told the children to stay inside. Joop den Uyl and Guus Gussinklo, dressed as German officers, departed with horse and wagon and their stolen loot.

From Joke Garretsen-Somsen [142] I heard that the Germans also stored vegetables in the neighbor's shed and that she sometimes raised a few tiles of the low roof of the shed in the evening to borrow red cab-



bage or other vegetables. Nor did she know exactly which coal shed was theirs or which one belonged to the Germans and so quite often coal intended for the Germans burned in the stove of the Somsens.

Guus Gussinklo (whose pseudonym was Freek) more frequently put on that uniform to claim a cow or a pig as food for people in hiding. The farmer concerned was paid but this was the safest way to transport a cow to another place.

Textile trade at Somsen had practically come to a standstill because of the war so that the owner, Gerrit Jan Somsen, was forced to accept a job at the municipal office for the distribution of rationing cards so as to maintain his family. It sometimes happened that rationing cards “disappeared”: they were also used for people in hiding.

Chiel Oosterink told me this story and he remarked that the Germans who were billeted at Somsen probably had realized afterwards that they were fake Germans because they had worn officer's uniforms of a German army unit that had been cancelled.

### Green Slinge Project Aalten

*Story copied from  
<http://www.achterhoek-nieuws.nl/>  
 (Saturday May 14 2011.  
 Text and photo: Karin Stronks)  
 Adapted by Oscar Somsen [2040]*

**AALTEN – A brook called the Slinge used to be the life-line for the city of Aalten, providing for its drinking water. In the eighth century, when Charlemagne conquered most of Europe, on the boards of the Slinge the first lasting dwelling was built in the area where today Aalten is situated, and probably the first church was built there too.**

The name Slinge is supposedly referring to its winding progress. The stream that used to enter the Netherlands near Winterswijk and ran into the Oude IJssel near Doetinchem was moved several times in its history by digging canals. But until late in the twentieth century the brook would cause flooding. On August 27th 2010 the camping-site Marveld was evacuated because the Slinge flooded its banks due to excessive rain.

Nowadays the Slinge winds its way right through the heart of Aalten. There are a number of bridges where you can cross the stream either by bike or on foot, and the overwhelming nature combined with the brook provides a magnificent view. The local authorities of Aalten presented the 'Green Slinge Project' in 2004. Its goal is to recreate the area in three steps. The estima-

ted costs for this project are around five million Euros. These costs will be provided for by the local authorities and governmental contributions. The first step was taken in 2006. A winding cycle track and footpath were laid out, surrounded by lawns and trees, landings were put in the water and a pond-like bay was created. After assessing the situation the local authorities made suggestions for a few changes. At least one bank of the Slinge will remain green. Several animals, like squirrels, live here. No extra bridges or quays will be put up. There will be ample space for bicycling or walking along the brook. The goal is to finish the Green Slinge Project in 2015. That will be well in time for the Somsen reunion in 2017. On your next visit to the Achterhoek do please take a look at this beautiful brook.



*De Slinge*



<h3>Word finder</h3> <p>             N G R R A N E L T J              K E O H R E T H C A              N L L D O K F S A P              O D R A E E O K T I              Z E E T L D G N N K              I R Z A O E E C O S              R L J B F T N A C H              O A I A R S E M D U              H N N S S S R P N I              E D S E T P A I A S              E M A I L M T N L P              W S E N M O I G R M              N E S M O S O L E U              B A L D W I N E D S              N T A A L T E N E A              W I S C O N S I N C           </p>	<p>Find the following words:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>aalten</li> <li>achterhoek</li> <li>baldwin</li> <li>camping</li> <li>contact</li> <li>database</li> <li>email</li> <li> gelderland</li> <li>generations</li> <li>horizon</li> <li>ijzerlo</li> <li>japikshuis</li> <li>omnes</li> <li>nederland</li> <li>roelof</li> <li>sompstedeken</li> <li>somsen</li> <li>sumps</li> <li>usa</li> <li>wisconsin</li> </ul>
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## A PHOTO OF JOHAN SOMSEN'S WALK



*Above: Briançon in the depth.*

### Somsen-Genealogy

*by Dick Somsen [130]*

If you have seen the last update (Edition 2010) of our Somsen-Genealogy on our website [www.somsen.org](http://www.somsen.org) it must have struck you that this edition has become much more attractive because of the addition of pictures connected with the people and families who are mentioned. Should your picture be lacking or would you like to replace your picture by a better one, please send it by email to [somseogenealogie@kpnplanet.nl](mailto:somseogenealogie@kpnplanet.nl) or post it to my home address:

**Monteverdilaan 175, 8031 DL, Zwolle, The Netherlands.**

Of course the picture will be returned to you.

I wish you pleasure visiting our website and I hope to get a lot of response.



*Dick Somsen  
from Zwolle*



## Family Announcements

In this column we would like to draw your attention to the family announcements that have reached us. We are very much pleased to present them to you and are grateful to everybody who took the trouble to inform us about the merry and sad events in their and our family.

This also enables our advisor Dick Somsen from Zwolle to keep our genealogical files up-to-date, so that we, in turn, can inform you in Somsen Horizon.

We really appreciate it very much that you send in your family announcements (**together with pictures please!**) to our secretariat: Somsen Foundation, Jan Tooropstraat 2, 3817 PZ Amersfoort, The Netherlands.

### Born:

- 11-09-2007:** Michael Ormond [7292], s.o. Michael Chase Lavery [7289] and Marcy Lea Adamson [3627]  
**13-08-2009:** Robert Miles [7293], s.o. Michael Chase Lavery [7289] and Marcy Lea Adamson [3627]  
**05-06-2010:** Dina Maria (Jelina) [7288], d.o. Jeroen Erik (Jeroen) Ontijt [7285] and Johanna Hendrika (Marjan) de Graaf [1387]  
**04-12-2010:** Vincentius Bernard Martinus (Vincent) [7284], s.o. Martijn Eduardus Martinus (Martijn) de Silva [5850] and Hennie Wies (Heleen) de Graaf [1386]

### Married:

- 08-04-2006:** Michael Chase Lavery [7289] and Marcy Lea Adamson [3627]

### Deceased:

- 13-02-2010:** Eleanor Minerva Menzie-Behm [2760], 86 jaar, Endover, MA. USA  
**24-03-2011:** Violet Elizabeth Somsen [2598], 89, Estelline, SD. USA  
**29-05-2011:** Grada Hendrika (Riek) Somsen [1844], 82, Neede



*Violet Elizabeth  
Somsen*

*Zwolle, 13 juni 2011*

## Fourth issue of Somsen Family Foundation stamps

by Lia Vieveen



On 3 December 2009 an article was published on the internet ([www.postzegelblog.nl](http://www.postzegelblog.nl)) about the stamps of our family foundation. There is a group of philatelists who are interested in personalized stamps, they are even traded. The article below was placed on this site.

The Somsen family has run a family foundation since 1998. This is a beautiful initiative to keep the hundreds of Somsens together and to stay in touch. Within the family the personalized stamps with the family logo find a sale. Meanwhile, however, they have issued the 4th version. How is that possible?

By now the Somsen Foundation has placed 4 orders of 1000 stamps. A nice number ... but TNT Post thinks otherwise. 1000 stamps cannot be ordered via the site of TNT Post. After many detours, though, they managed to get the stamps. The first sheet had the family logo and in the margin of each sheet of 10 stamps the inscription "Somsen Foundation". At the second order of 1000 stamps there were problems again. When eventually the order could be delivered, unfortunately, there was no text in the margin. At the third order of 1000 a new design had to be handed in, since TNT Post could no longer find the reference number the previous orders. In this new design of the stamps they placed the address of the website. Now, with the fourth order of 1000, they had to hand in a new design again. Because the family found it more convenient to use self-adhesive stamps they were forced to make use of the template for the business stamps. In this way there are already four versions of this family stamp. If the first order could have been repeated there would only have been one version.

**Photo back:** collage of the trip in South Africa by Emma Somsen



# South Africa trip Emma Somsen



Photos: Garden of the lodge near the Drakensberg, Liberty Monument in Pretoria and Zebras