



Somsen horizon

Volume 17 – number 28 – September 2014

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For DONATIONS we would like to encourage you to use the PAYPAL button on our website. If this is really a problem then forward a cheque to Stephen Somsen.

Colophon

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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

Somsen tree in IJzerloo

Preface



Johan Somsen

Instead of before the summer you receive this new issue of Somsen Horizon in the Indian summer. Big busyness in the private atmosphere was the cause of this delay but I am happy to invite you to read our family journal now. You can again find articles about the ups and downs in our wide-spread family. Here you will find the wonderful report of an eye-witness, Gus Somsen [97], about the exciting events in an

Amsterdam Somsen-family during the Second World War. During the same war many allied aircraft crashed over our country. Recently the wreck of a Lancaster was excavated in Zelhem in the Achterhoek. Our editor was closely involved and we did not want to withhold that story from you. More contemporary is the report of the visit that our American cousin Jeanie Somsen [773] paid to The Netherlands with her husband, Ken Fowler [5849]. And, of course, the section: "Family Announcements" is not missing either. We always appreciate it very much if you report new events to the editor.

We also offer another Somsen calendar with pictures that relate to our family history. The purchasing costs are low and it is of course very nice to present this calendar to your children or other family members as a gift.

Our next publication will be the Somsen Newsletter No. 11. You can expect it in February/March 2015.

In our Family Foundation we have been working to maintain our family-ties for 17 long years in a time in which our attention is claimed by countless incentives. More than humanity has ever got to digest. And it is therefore quite understandable that modern man has little time left over for a family newspaper that sometimes swirls into the mail box. Yet it seems to me a good thing to continue this tradition so that future Somsen generations have access to their origin and to the history of their family. This thought plays an important role among the people on the Board but we can't do it without your help and support. If you also believe that it is important that young Somsens of today and Somsens that are still to be born – your descendants - have easy access to their family history then it is a good thing to recruit new donors and, of course, it is also important that existing donors do not forget to make our Treasurer happy. Only with your support we can continue this work. We count on your help.

On behalf of the Board of our Foundation I wish you much reading pleasure.

Johan Somsen [1089]

A trip to "My People"

by Jeanie Somsen [773]

A year and a half ago, my husband, Ken, noticed a "two for the price of one" offer on Rhine cruises in a brochure from the Viking Longboats. "If we sign up and pay now, we can go next summer."

"But that's a year from now," I complained. We had just spent a fabulous four days with our Dutch relatives at the 2012 New Ulm, Somsen reunion, and I was already missing them. When the Viking agent told us that "two-for-one" also included half price air fare, and that if we waited until October, the cost of the trip would be even lower, we were hooked. "I guess I can wait a year," I thought. It will be nice break between the New Ulm reunion and the next one in the Netherlands."



*The Viking Forsetti our Rhine River home
October 5 to 13, 2013*

The cruise goes from Basel to Amsterdam. My Swiss grandmother Matti was born near the starting point, and my Dutch cousins would be waiting at the other end. We decided to extend the trip a week on either end, and make it a journey of learning more about my ancestral people and lands. When I was a high school French teacher, I had made several trips with students to French side of Switzerland, but had never visited the Swiss-German speaking Berner Oberland where my grandmother Matti was born.

For our Swiss week, we were armed only with a list of family names from an on-line genealogy site (Matti, Wyss, Stoller, Meuller, Weismuller, Meyer, Imobersteg) but no living contacts. Not only did we not know any living Swiss relatives, we were almost prevented from visiting the dead ones, because no one in the small hamlet's department of records spoke English. However, one young lady on duty that day spoke French, and after much negotiation, she was finally allowed to take us on a short tour of the adjacent cemetery. She was so knowledgeable about the people and the region and spent such a lot of time with us locating the graves with the family surnames that we offered to pay her for her time. She declined. "Well, at least, tell us your name," we implored. "It's Joelle," she said. "Joelle Matti." So, I guess we must have met one relative in Switzerland. The connection was beyond bizarre: polite but curiously haphazard.

I never knew much about either side of my father's family. My grandmother's thick Swiss-German accent



*Church cemetery in
Oberwill im Simmenthal,
Switzerland*

and the fact that my father was teased for speaking that language when he started school in Wyoming, made it pretty obvious that Grandma Matti was Swiss. My father only mentioned his grandfather as "The Judge," someone that was feared and respected in Wyoming territory. I knew that "The Judge" had been born near Sheboygan, Wisconsin. Since Wisconsin has a large Scandinavian population, and since my last name ends in "sen," I had always assumed I was Danish.

In 1997, while working as the grant writer for one of California's largest school districts, I got a call from Theo Somsen inviting me to the first Great Worldwide Somsen Reunion in the Netherlands. I remember saying something like, "Thanks for the invitation. But you must have the wrong person. I'm Danish."

I recall very clearly Theo's laugh. "I'm sorry if it disappoints you, but you are most definitely Dutch. WE KNOW YOU." I thought to myself, "Wow! This is so cool. I'm DUTCH. I've been FOUND!"

Unlike our Dutch relatives who live in close proximity to one another and our American Mormon Somsens, who maintain strong family ties through the church, many of us American Somsens feel a little adrift in this large United States, busy with our work, friends, and children, but without a close extended family, which is why it was and has been very important for me to be FOUND by these most extraordinary Dutch and American people to whom (I now know) I am related.

In contrast to our week in Switzerland which was (almost) devoid of living relatives, for our week in The Netherlands, thanks to Oscar Somsen, we had a daily itinerary seeing the sites and, most importantly, being with the people. Ben and Corry Somsen picked us up at our hotel in Amsterdam and took us on a tour of De Rijp and the Zaanse Schans, the museum town where we took photos of other tourists, including a very stout Coptic priest, some historic working windmills and thousands of wooden shoes from all ages and in all colors and sizes.

That evening, Ben and Corry invited us to dinner at their beautiful home overlooking the water and a delicious meal of many kinds of MEAT !!! (beef and chicken in many forms), cooked by each of us personally



*Corry Somsen and Jeanie Jacobson at
the "Zaanse schans"*

on a long grill in the middle of a beautiful long table. After a week of nothing but cheese in Switzerland, the delicious variety of grilled meat preceded by Ben's pumpkin soup and followed by his homemade apple cake was the best meal of the trip so far. (We are hoping Ben might publish those two --soup and dessert-- recipes in the Somsen Horizon.) But the best part was getting to see Bente and Hedda again, and meet Bente's boyfriend, Jules, Ben's sister, Gesina, her son, Albert, and Albert's baby daughter, Amante.



a meal together

The next day, we picked up Oscar at his work, as a universitair docent (physics professor) at the Nederlandse Defensie Academie in Den Helder. We had lunch on the windy Afsluitdijk between two large bodies of water: the North Sea on the left and the Usselmeer on the right, and then over into Freisland for a visit to the Fries Scheepvaart Museum in Sneek.



*Jeanie Jacobson and Oscar Somsen
in Sneek*

We booked the perfect spot as our home base for our four days in Gelderland: a little cottage at the Golden Tulip Resort in Hoenderloo.

Hoenderloo is located adjacent to The Netherlands' largest national park, The Veluwe. We chose this place because it had a tennis court, an indoor swimming pool, and miles of hiking and biking trails, none of which we were able to use: the court because of the rain and the pool and trails because just couldn't find the time.

Theo was in charge of us the next day, one of two days with no rain, and we were delighted that the sun came out and we were able to play a match at the Vaassen Tennisclub, an amazing nearly new facility with a gymnasium, many fitness and meeting rooms and a huge indoor pool with a giant slide for the kids.



Vaassen Tennisclub

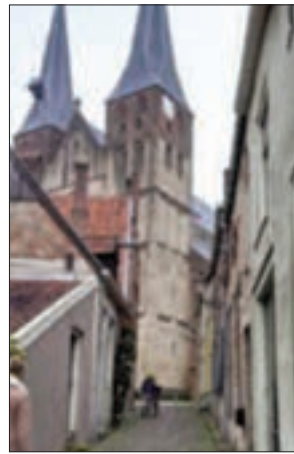
The score was close. I can't remember who won, but I'm pretty sure it was Theo and his partner. In case we DID lose, we were prepared to blame our loss on our lack of experience playing on artificial grass and gravel. We hope to schedule a rematch soon on our California "hard courts," where we hope to have the advantage and Theo can have the excuse.



double tennis game

After our morning of tennis, we spent the afternoon touring Deventer and visiting the Bergkerk (Mountainchurch) and the bridge that represented the one in Arnhem in the movie A Bridge Too Far. As we approached the river front, we passed a few display windows like those found in the "red light district" in Amsterdam, and then, along the river bank several pieces of artillery commemorating the WW II battles. Ken saw fit to connect those two sites by commenting that the lady in the one occupied window did look a little "battle weary."

As a reward for our day on our feet, Theo treated us to a meal to remember in a castle! ----Restaurant Koetshuis of Castle Cannenburch, billed by Trip Advisor as the #1 attraction in Vaassen.



Deventer Bergkerk



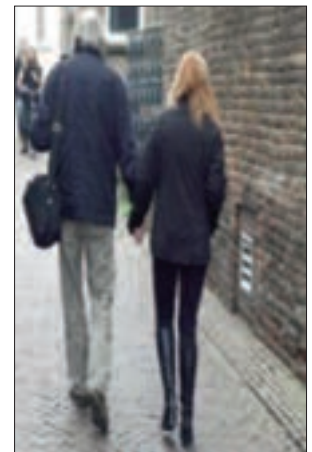
workshop at the bridge in Deventer Theo and Ken



Interior Bergkerk



The bridge of Deventer



Theo and Jeanie in Deventer



Castle Cannenburch with restaurant.

Day four and Oscar was once again our tour guide, escorting us on a rainy slog through botanical gardens on the banks of the IJssel and then to the Airborne Museum 'Hartenstein' in Oosterbeek. The

Airborne Museum Hartenstein was formerly the Hotel Hartenstein and the headquarters of 1st Airborne Division during the Battle of Arnhem.



Monument with Hartenstein in Oosterbeek

Our day ended with a delicious dinner at Oscar's. Yeng, after working all day, serve up a feast of home-made soup, lumpia, a famous Filipino dish, and an incredible desert. We got to meet Jasper, his Italian friend Ketty, and his mom, Greet. And Jeanie got to try to play Oscar's new trumpet.

Our last day in Gelderland found us touring the Palace Het Lo and the Kroller-Muller Museum, with Johan and Yvonne, preceded by a gourmet lunch at Yvonne's "mini ranch," and culminating with another gourmet dinner and piano concert at Johan's.

Yeng and Oscar sent us back home with clean laundry!



Monument with flowers



Looking over the Rijn



Yvonne, Jeanie and Johan



Ken and Jeanie



Together drinking with Johan and Theo

How good does it GET????!!!!!!

Looking forward to the next World Wide Somsen reunion in The Netherlands in 2017 and another visit to "My People."

Downed Lancaster WW2 bomber ED 470 recovered in Zelhem, The Netherlands

by Harry Somsen [146]

Saturday evening September 23rd 1944, 136 Lancaster bombers took off from eastern England on a raid to bomb the Dordtmund-Ems Canal near Gravenhorst, Germany.

Several of those Lancasters never made it to the target. They ran into strong resistance by German fighters and anti-aircraft guns near the Dutch-German border.

Damaged and burning, some had to turn back for England, but most of those wouldn't make it.

As was the case with Lancaster ED 470: she was hit badly in the middle of the fuselage and was burning up fast, which left tail gunner John Miller only one option: jump out of the Lancaster, which is what he did with his parachute bag already on fire..

John safely reached the ground somewhere between the Dutch towns of Borculo and Ruurlo.



Lancaster bomber

He survived the war with the help he received from the Dutch.

The rest of the crew unfortunately never made it; the plane flew on for three minutes, lost its tail section and

crashed near the Dutch town of Zelhem, with her full bomb load still on board.

Shortly after the crash the gun munition started to burn and exploded and the bomb load of 14 1000lbs bombs exploded with an enormous bang. This explosion caused a massive crater beneath the crash site and parts of the aircraft were flung on the surrounding fields.

During the time that followed, the crater filled with water and covered what remained of the crew and bomber.

All the metal parts that remained above ground were recovered by the Germans, transported and subsequently melted down for re-use.



Aerial photo of the Lancaster crash site in 1944

Relatives of the crew were informed at the time, that the bomber had most likely crashed in the river Waal and had possibly drifted towards the North Sea.

From historical research, conducted by the Dutch AVOG Crash Museum in the town of Lievelede, the Lancaster ED 470 was finally conclusively linked to a crash site in Zelhem and could therefore not have crashed in the river Waal. In the years following the end of the war, the crater had eventually been filled in and the location was in use as a farming field.

It was only after 69 years and after further investigati-

ons and requests by relatives and other parties that the authorities decided on recovering the remains of the crew and the Lancaster. This eventually took place in October 2013.

A big tent was erected near the recovery location, where pupils of the local schools were given information about the history of the crew and plane and the progress of the ongoing recovery. Also several briefings were given in the city hall to inform those interested in the proceedings and history.

Last but not least: during 2 days the recovery location was opened to the public and this attracted over 5000 visitors.

Mayor Henk Aalderink wanted more than just a recovery. Although too young to have actually witnessed the war himself, his father had told him many stories. "Many veterans have died and that leaves no one to tell the story" he knows.

"In the municipality of Bronckhorst alone, more than 40 planes crashed in the war period from 1940 to 1945." A taskforce was created with members from the Oud Zelhem Foundation, Museum Smedekinck and others. "We didn't just want to recover the crew and plane, we also wanted it to be an educational project, an exposition and make a documentary and possibly even a book for 2015, for a 70 year commemoration.

With this we can digitally show the children of today the momentous events that happened so many years ago. We live in a time of peace and it is important to be fully aware of that every year on May 4th".

Harry Somsen [146], volunteer of the year 2010, was appointed chairman of the taskforce "History and Education", director of the lesson plans and was responsible for producing a special teaching briefcase. In the past year several members of the Oud Zelhem Foundation had been working on investigating and collecting information about airplane crashes during the war years in the municipality of Bronckhorst. The teaching briefcase was made in cooperation with the students of the "Iselinge Hogeschool" in Doetinchem.

In this briefcase, 11 crash sites scattered throughout the municipality of Bronckhorst are mentioned. Furthermore it informs students about the air war over the Achterhoek and the Netherlands in general. Each contains a total of 13 printed and digital lessons, a video documentary made by Radio Ideaal, a piece of parachute cloth and a little box containing a bomb fragment and a small piece of the recovered Lancaster ED 470 aircraft.

These and other lessons can be viewed on the website www.oudzelhem.nl under the header: WO 2 Bronckhorst.

The first of these briefcases about the air war over Bronckhorst



Handing over of the first teaching briefcase by Harry Somsen to Sander Regeling

during the 2nd World War was handed over to Sander Regelink by Mayor Henk Aalderink and Harry Somsen on behalf of the Oud Zelhem Foundation. Sander, a grade 8 pupil from the "CBS Het Loo" school in Zelhem, was chosen because he had been able to follow the progress of the recovery of ED470 from his bedroom window. With a "congratulations" from Harry Somsen and a standing ovation by his classmates and visitors, Sander accepted the briefcase. Soon after, the video documentary was shown.



Relatives visiting museum Smedekinck in the village of Zelhem

On May 4th 2014, 15 relatives of the perished crewmembers from the USA, Australia and England visited Zelhem. They were welcomed by officials and guests. Part of the documentary was shown, visits were made to the crash site and museum Smedekinck, where an exposition about the crash and the recovery of ED 470 was on show. All relatives were given the opportunity to select and hold on to a piece of the aircraft. After a meal, a special commemorative service was held by the 4th May Committee, followed by a visit to the monument and also to the last resting place of the crewmembers.

The relatives of the crewmembers expressed their sincere thanks to everyone who had aided in the search and recovery of the crew and airplane of ED 470 and were deeply impressed by the amount of work and effort involved.

In the meantime, the documentary "Geen weg terug" ("No way back") has been finished and sent to all relatives involved. It shows the recovery of the ED 470 and everything involved up until May 4th.

And then his eyes opened again...

by Bettine Winters and Harry Somsen [146]

AALTEN- In May 2014 the municipality of Aalten was rewarded, because it is a safe "heart town". It is illustrated by the story of André Vrieselaar [1287] who owes his life to an AED (heart defibrillator) and the rapid action of Martin Hüning. Last year in February Vrieselaar got a heart attack when bowling in party centre Het Noorden in Aalten. Hüning saw him sitting

dead in a chair and took quick action. Hüning and Vrieselaar tell their story in the Gelderlander.

The signal for Martin Hüning that something is wrong is a glass that falls. When he takes a look he sees André Vrieselaar sitting askew in his chair. Grey. Dead. The worst thing possible seemed to have happened in February last year during the weekly bowling evening in Het Noorden, Hüning's party centre. On Friday evenings there are two bowling clubs: Val Umme and Het Noorden. There are four bowling alleys in the basement and there are long tables at which the bowlers sit talking.



*Martin Hüning (left) saved André Vrieselaar's life.
Photo Theo Kock*

The clubs are separated by a wall. Hüning is a member of Het Noorden and Vrieselaar of Val Umme, but just before the glass fell the two had been talking together. Hüning immediately takes action when he sees that something is wrong with Vrieselaar. "I pulled away the chair and started cardiac massage and artificial respiration together with Gerard Weijers. I seem to have said to people to go away so as to keep as much oxygen as possible in the room, but I do not remember".

An assistant calls 112 and the chef gets the AED (heart defibrillator) that is outside on the wall. The device is attached to the body of Vrieselaar and Hüning operates it. "It all happened in a haze. Because of the adrenaline I was very bright. Perhaps also because it happened in my own business." After the shock Hüning wants to switch over to mouth-to-mouth respiration but the defibrillator indicates that it is not necessary. The heart is working again. "And then his eyes opened again. That moment... It is inconceivable because you don't expect it. Only a brief moment ago André was dead in that chair."

It was a heart attack. Vrieselaar: "On Saturday angioplasty was applied and when that failed I got five bypasses on Sunday." He remembers only flashes of the evening. As late as Monday I woke up. I don't know what happened".

A week later Vrieselaar was at Hüning's front door with flowers. Hüning; "That bunch was so big that I couldn't see who was behind it".

Vrieselaar recovered so fast and so well due to the quick actions of Hüning. "The longer nothing happens the worse the damage after a heart attack". Mentally he has changed. I have become more emotional. I am having trouble with funerals and therefore I don't go there yet. But for the rest I think that I have to seize new opportunities.

The network of aid workers in the municipality of Aalten consists of 465 people. The fact that this group is so large is partly due to André Vrieselaar and Martin Hüning who told their story about "heart safe living" on three information evenings. "Actually this happened coincidentally", Vrieselaar says. "I was only out of the hospital for a month when I was asked to come to the information evening in Romienendal in Dale. I thought I had to answer some questions but they asked me if I wanted to tell my story. That was an emotional story, because it was all still quite hot.

"The effect was enormous", Vrieselaar and Hüning say. "It was very emotional. Everyone knows us and when they hear what happened, the eyes open".

The two told their story on meetings in Barlo/Dale, Haart and Heurne. "Immediately after the sessions ten or fifteen people signed up every time. Thanks to our road show there are hundreds of volunteers now", Vrieselaar observes.

Still they encourage people to also offer themselves as a volunteer. They have noticed themselves how well it worked when Vrieselaar got a cardiac arrest. Then the network consisted of about 260 aid workers. "Five, six minutes after 112 was called, Wilm Bultink from Aalten was there with an AED that he collected at the market," Hüning says. "André had already regained consciousness because we have an AED in HetNoorden but Bultink was very fast. Much faster than the ambulance that took about fifteen minutes to get to Het Noorden according to Hüning. But at that time the police was also there and they have an AED in their cars. At some point there were seven AED's.

There are 55 AED's in Aalten. Now the survival rate after cardiac arrest is 25% in Aalten. Before the start of the "heart safe" project it was 5 to 10%. Since the introduction of the project there have been eight resuscitations in Aalten and the average age of the victims was 63. A number of people owe their lives to the availability of the AED.

Derk Jan André Vrieselaar [1287] is the son of Jan Vrieselaar [1010] and Roelina Willemina Somsen [977]. Roelina is the daughter of Roelof Somsen and Willemina Winkelhorst. They lived at Haart 23 at the "De Kleuver" farm in Aalten.

André lives at the rebuilt farmhouse Pakkebier at the Pakkebierweg but he has a problem. The street signs are regularly stolen. In March 2012 news signs were hung but in April 2012 they were all gone again. Soon there will be new street signs at the Pakkebierweg; it is only the question for how long they will stay there. For many young people it is a trophy but it is difficult for

emergency services and visitors. At the back of Somsen Horizon 27 there is a picture of the Pakkebier farm of Andre Vrieselaarin Dale.

Antique fireplace tiles from Pakkebier

by Johan Somsen [1089]

Recently we were approached by André Vrieselaar [1287] from Aalten whose mother was a Somsen: Roelina Willemina Somsen [977]. André is the current owner of the Pakkebier farm that has played a special role in our family.



An old tile

Somsen [308] and his wife Janna Rauwerdink [309] emigrated to America from this farm in 1881. They are the ancestors of the American branch of which many lived in Baldwin, WI. initially.

During our third Worldwide Somsen Reunion in IJzerlo in 2007 a large group of Somsens, including many Americans, visited Pakkebier and we could all admire the antique tiles that had embellished the fireplace from 1878, when the farm was built. They were the only remnant from the early days of the farm. Everyone will most likely remember that we took a family photo on a nearby bridge at the end of our visit. This picture was on the homepage of our website for a long time.



André Vrieselaar with tiles

In Somsen Horizon 23, May 2010, an article was dedicated to the sale of Pakkebier to André Vrieselaar. We learn that he wanted to have a completely new house built at this site.

When the old farm was pulled down he ordered the demolition firm to remove the old tiles carefully and recently André contacted us about these tiles.

In September 2014 I made an appointment with him and I got the tiles as a gift for the Somsen Foundation and he expressed the hope that we would find a good destination for them.

We have already some ideas which we will share with you in future publications but if someone has a nice suggestion we are always open to it.

Our family in the war years in Amsterdam

*Memories of an eventful period recorded
by Gezinus (Gus) Somsen [97],
shortened by the editors*

Our children asked me to write down the many stories they had heard about the war years. How did our family react to the occupation of the Netherlands in 1940, what happened after the arrest of my father, Govert Somsen [83], in 1941 and how did we come through the war years until the liberation in 1945? For the most part my story is based on my own memories and on the letters of my Dad that have been preserved. The letters of my mother (Geraldine van Drimmelen [96]) to him are unfortunately lost. I also made gratefully use of the memory of the events of that time of my brother Ad [98], my sister Diny [99] and Nine Troost. Here and there I have supplemented the story with data that can be found in literature.



Gus Somsen



*Wedding picture
Govert Somsen
and Klazina van
Drimmelen in 1931*

For most Dutch people and even for most of our Government the German invasion in 1940 came as a shock. When we heard about it in the early hours of Friday May 10, 1940 I started to cry. Because of the many photos in a book by the historian Brugmans about the First World War for me war meant misery, death and destruction. Still, there was apparently an irresistible tendency to continue normal life, because father, Ad and I went to school as usual that Friday before Pentecost. It was Ad's



*Arend Jan
Somsen [18]*

birthday that day and he would treat the children in kindergarten. With a cake tin full of candies he went along with a group of children that walked to kindergarten in Wakkerstreet every day under the watchful eye of Miss Thea. There they were met by a military policeman and Miss Willers, the headmistress. They had to go home because there was no school. So Ad came back home very fast. With a cake tin. I also came

home because the lessons at the Hogewegschool were cancelled. Later also father came back from his school in the Indian District. The radio constantly gave reports and advice but Ad, Diny and I completely missed it. We were much more interested in the cake tin with candies. Occasionally there were air-raid warnings but nothing happened and when this happens five, six times then you do not pay much attention anymore.

Like in every holiday we went to Bolnes that summer with the whole family. Mother, Ad and Diny went by train. Father, with me on the back, went by bike. We spent the night at Aunt Mina and Aunt Jo van Driel (two sisters of Grandma Somsen [79]) who lived together in Hoofddorp and the next day we visited my father's uncle Jan Somsen [17] and Aunt Pietje [76] (no married couple, see "Somsen, Omnes Generationes") in Hillegom.



*Aunt Jo van
Driel [7844]*

As there was a very strong southwest wind we took the train from Wassenaar to the Rotterdam Hofplein Station. This station was right in the centre that had been bombed and my father and I

cycled right through the ruins to Bolnes. Rotterdam looked just like the devastated Belgian cities in the book by Brugmans. Both my grannies and nearly all the brothers and sisters of father and mother lived in Bolnes, Ridderkerk, Hendrik Ido Ambacht and Rotterdam. They told us exciting stories about the German attacks on Dordrecht and Rotterdam to get hold of the bridges over the Old and New river Meuse. From Moerdijk until beyond Rotterdam airborne landings took place both with paratroopers and with transport aircraft.



*Petronella
Beukers, Aunt
Pietje [76]*

Although in my view life seemed to continue in a normal way for us in the autumn of 1940, everything seemed just normal, it was not normal at all. The Germans had the power and that was getting more and more noticeable. That autumn I noticed that there were

regularly piles of stencilled newspapers called "Vrij Nederland" (Free Netherlands, still an influential weekly in The Netherlands) in our home. They were in a small room hidden under the pillow of an armchair that mother called the old Dutch chair. Mother delivered copies of this journal to people in the neighbourhood. "Ask 25 cents for it" I heard my father say. I understood that father and mother were involved in so-called illegal activities, but I did not understand the extent and exact nature of it. I did not know that father had contacts to spread the journal in Hoofddorp (his uncle Peter van Driel), in The Hague (Jan Lammers), in Rotterdam (his brother-in-law Klaas van Drimmelen [89]) and his sister in Bolnes (Grada Somsen [80]) and a childhood friend (Heijmen Smit). He only told me about this after the war. I knew, however, that Uncle Kees Troost, a friend of father and a teacher at the Christian school at the Hogeweg, and Jan Kassies were involved.



*Peter van Driel
[6586]*

They often came to our home in the autumn of 1940 and the winter of 1941 and especially with Jan Ad and I had lots of fun. Also a Mr Schopman, who worked at the stock exchange in Amsterdam, came regularly to our home. Very soon they became Uncle Luuk and his wife Aunt Alie. Uncle Luuk always brought some goodies from the baker's and Ad, Diny and I appreciated that very much. Of the winter of 1941 I pretty well remember the February strike. The whole city was in an uproar and father came home with horrid stories about the brutal actions of the "Grüne Polizei", the German military police. The work for "Vrij Nederland" went on steadily. The heading of each issue was designed and drawn by Jo Blok, headmaster of



*Klaas van
Drimmelen [89]*

a school at Valentine Quay. He and his wife were Uncle Jo and Aunt Annie for us. Most of those involved in "Vrij Nederland" lived close to each other in Watergraafsmeer, a suburb of Amsterdam. Uncle Kees at Linnaeus Quay, Jan Kassies at the Hogeweg, Luuk Schopman in Pythagoras Street, Jo Blok in Mariotte Square and we in Linnaeusparkroad.

After the capitulation of Belgium and France in the autumn of 1940 it was England's turn. London and other British cities were heavily bombed and Germany was also strong in the air. But the English beat back by bombing German cities, such as Cologne and even faraway Berlin. The way there frequently went over The Netherlands where the Germans had quite a lot of anti-aircraft guns. When English aircraft approached the sirens sounded. The popula-



*Grada Aleida
Somsen [80]*

tion had to look for shelter then. For us that was the staircase between the ground floor and the first floor. Ad, Diny and I were taken from our beds and then we sat with Mom and Dad and the other inhabitants of the first and second floors on the stairs to wait for the sirens to give the signal "safe". Being neighbours got a totally new meaning in this way.

From March 1941, the occupying forces struck. At the beginning of the evening of March 3 Uncle Kees Troost was arrested. Later my father told me that one thing was immediately clear to him and Jan Kassies: the publication of "Vrij Nederland" had to continue as if nothing had happened. A publication stop would immediately make it clear that Troost was involved. Shortly after three colleagues of Uncle Kees Troost were arrested while they were at work at the Hogewegschool: Teun de Goede from Duivendrecht, Chris Arntzen and Miss Maria Snel, an older, unmarried teacher who had taught me when I was in the second class. That day our lessons were disrupted by the arrival of some brute "gentlemen" in German uniforms who took our startled teacher with them. Consternation in our class was tremendous and the headmaster, Cornelis de Koning, allowed us to go home straight away. More arrests took place in the following months. Jan Kassies was arrested on May 10, and my father on May 17. Luuk Schopman, Jo Blok, Peter van Driel and Jan Lammers and several "printers" of the paper followed and in the summer of 1941 virtually the entire group (after a remand in Amsterdam) was taken prisoner in the prison in Scheveningen. For my mother and the other spouses these were heavy months. People did not yet think of going into hiding and everyone hoped disaster would pass by their doors. But one after another was picked up with strict regularity.



*Govert Somsen
in 1931 [83]*

Father was arrested on May 17, 1941. In the hall he said to me that he had to join these gentlemen and that I had to be firm. Only at the last step to our home it dawned on me what had happened. Father was arrested, just like Uncle Kees on March 3 and Jan Kassies on May 10. The bastards had also seized my father now. When I came in my mother was very emotional. Ad and Diny were silent and depressed. Mother told me that father had already been arrested at his school, the Idenburg School, Javastraat 126 in the Indonesian Quarter. He had been allowed to go home to pick up some stuff before he was taken to the German Division of the Detention Center at the Amstelveenseweg in Amsterdam. The men who arrested him had taken some trifles relating to The Netherlands and our Royal family. They could not get hold of an embroidered cloth under a glass plate on our tea-table mother told with visible pleasure. On Monday morning, May 19, there was already a postcard from father with the request to collect his dirty washes between 2 and 5 in the after-

noon. Clean clothes could be brought on Friday afternoon. More than one change per week was not allowed and snacks were also forbidden. Father did not stay long in Amsterdam. In June he was transferred to the cells in a prison in Scheveningen. In The Netherlands better known as the Orange Hotel.



Geertrui van Driel [79]

After the Dutch capitulation the German Sicherheitspolizei (security-police) made use of these prison cells and they called them "Polizeigefängnis (police prison) Scheveningen". Soon it was called the "Orange Hotel" by the Dutch people. By the end of 1940 there was a rhyme on the outside wall: "In this prison is no scum but the glory of Holland, by golly!" This spread like wildfire across the country.

The first letter from father that has been preserved was written in cell 622 on June 24, 1941. My mother and I had already paid him a visit. Also here the prison authorities did not care for the laundry. Every two weeks on Friday clean clothes could be brought there and the dirty washes could be picked up again. A cousin of father's, Marijke de Koning, took care of this. She was the daughter of a sister of my grandmother Somsen. Aunt Bets lived at the Frankenslag in Scheveningen. There mother received the letters that father had hidden among the dirty clothes and she could hide things among the clean clothes that went to the prison. I liked it a lot to go to Aunt Bets. The "big" guys who lived there whose parents lived in The Dutch East Indies made much impression on me because they possessed all sorts of interesting things.

The subsequent visits that I remember were not so awful. They took place in a wooden building in the courtyard near the entrance of the prison. In the center of the space was a long table of at most a meter wide along which the visitors lined up on the one side and the prisoners on the other side. You could shake hands and because there was less intensive surveillance it was easier to talk to one another. It was even possible to give things like gingerbread, biscuits, butter, toiletries, cigarettes and tobacco to the prisoners. In that summer of 1941 we spent a period with the eldest brother of my mother, Wim van Drimmelen and his wife in Delft with our whole family. From Delft it was much easier to visit father than from Amsterdam. In the meantime father had been moved to cell 657.

After the war I heard from father that he had been interrogated in prison several times. The Germans knew a lot of details about most of his contacts. Some he admitted, but he denied everything about his contacts

in Bolnes and Rotterdam and fortunately there were no arrests there. These interrogations took place in the context of the preparations for a lawsuit at a German court. The occupiers wanted to settle the case in a legitimate way for themselves.

At the end of November the entire group was transferred from the prison cells at the Pompstationsweg to the prison in Scheveningen. Father was put in cell 92. Regime there was much stricter than in the prison cells. At the end of November we were allowed to send a parcel with refreshments of 1 kg on the occasion of the feast of St Nicholas. Only mother could visit him in prison. Children were not admitted there. Meanwhile preparations for the lawsuit progressed but as a family we did not notice this. However, it was clear that the lawsuit would take place before the German Supreme Court department "Sondergericht" (special court of law). The addition "Sondergericht" indicates a form of special criminal jurisdiction which was especially applied to political opponents in Germany. The judges were entirely dependent on the data of the "security police". These were listed in an "Anklageschrift" (indictment). Dutch lawyers who wanted to defend the suspects needed permission of the "Reichskommissariat" (German authorities). Dad's Attorney was Mr. G de Grooth from Rotterdam, a former partner of the late Dr. Leendert H. van Winkelhof, a brother of Uncle Otto van Winkelhof, who was married to aunt Mien, a sister of my mother.

In February 1942 there was a case against 65 people who were involved in producing and distributing illegal newspapers. In addition to the "Vrij Nederland" group there were also the makers of other illegal newspapers. In a comprehensive "Anklageschrift" (indictment) all of them were charged with producing and distributing writings against the Germans. They came before the judges in five groups. The press was kept out. Only family members of the defendants and the lawyers were allowed to be present.

Father was summoned at sessions on February 17 and 18 in the premises of the Supreme Court in The Hague. Uncle Kees Troost and Jan Kassies were in an earlier group. Their punishments were very strict. Uncle Kees Troost got eight years detention centre (after a demand of twelve years) and Jan Kassies seven years detention centre. Mother attended both trial days of father. Dad got five years detention centre (after a demand of seven years). The president of the Court, Dr. Randermann, mentioned in his statement that in determining father's punishment it had been taken into account that he had three small children. Both prison sentences and detention centre were imposed.

Some of the Amsterdam "Vrij Nederland" group got shorter prison sentences. Still during the war the tea-



Willemijntje van Drimmelen, Aunt Mien [6486]



Elisabeth de Koning - van Driel, Aunt Bets [6592]

chers Arntzen and De Goede, Uncle Peter van Driel, Uncle Jo Blok and Uncle Jan Lammers were released. Unfortunately schoolteacher Maria Snel died in the Scheveningen prison. Virtually all convicts in this trial were transferred to Germany as early as February 1942. With a large group Father went to Kleve (Germany) by train on February 28. There they spent the night in the local prison. Father shared a cell there with Uncle Kees Troost and Uncle Jo Blok. On March 2, Uncle Kees and Father were put in another cell, now with Uncle Luuk Schopman. They stayed in Kleve till March 7. Then they travelled on to Cologne. There Father was put in a large cell together with six others, all acquaintances. On March 11, Father, with a number of other convicts, was transferred to the detention centre in Rheinbach (on the E 31).



Goof at the detention centre in Rheinbach 1979

Throughout this period the support my mother got from our family was heart-warming. She got many letters and regularly there were sisters of father or mother with us at the weekend.

In a detention centre the prisoners had to work ten hours a day. For a short period of time father did so in his cell with a fellow prisoner, a Frenchman. On March 16 he was already employed in the bookbinding department. There he worked all day with seven other prisoners. With the first set of letters there came a regulation, written in German, which said that the prisoners were only allowed to receive a brief letter once in every six weeks. If there was more post then it would not reach the person concerned.

A prisoner in a detention centre had to stay alone in his cell for the first six months after his arrival. Probably there was lack of space because in July 1942 father was placed in a cell with two others, a Belgian and a Dutchman. During the day he had to work in the bookbinding department but in the evenings and on Sunday they could talk to each other. In the bookbinding department father made a case with all sorts of compartments which he sent home. Mother used it to store rationing cards registration cards. It was forbidden to

receive parcels and various parcels that were sent from The Netherlands never reached father.

Once in every two weeks there was a Protestant church service in the detention centre. Father liked to go there and there he was able to celebrate the Lord's Supper for the first time since his arrest. Sometimes he met acquaintances and they could talk to one another for a few moments. Soon he was asked to accompany the church services on the organ. Then he was allowed to practice on Saturdays and could play a little longer after the service on Sundays. He enjoyed that very much. In the prison church there were also services for the inhabitants of Rheinbach. The Protestants in Rheinbach did not have a church building of their own. He also played at these services. At Christmas 1942 he even sang along in a men's choir of this parish.

In October 1942, the "Hausvater" (the head of a kind of household service) asked father if he wanted to work with him. In the bookbinding department there was not much to do. For the past few weeks they had only pasted bags. Father accepted the offer immediately even though it meant that he was separated from Jan van Santen. He got a cell for himself again in another wing but on the other hand, it meant that he got a lot more freedom of movement. At the "Hausvater" he had to lug, take away the laundry and carry out administrative work also. He also had to work several hours on Sunday. Because father moved through the whole prison he regularly met other Dutchmen. He also arranged the luggage for people who were set free or who were transferred to another prison.

Some prisoners, including Uncle Jo Blok, worked outside the detention centre, usually in the open air. They looked much healthier than those who were always inside. But working outside could be very heavy at times. Dad was pretty busy with the work inside. They were long tiring days but it pleased him though. Physically it went well with him, he was healthy and he was even a little heavier. A brother of his mother, Uncle Leen van Driel [6571] from Hoofddorp, visited him in 1943 and found that he looked pretty well. Because of the busy work time went fast. But the lack of family life did not decrease. Especially not when he had to arrange the luggage for people who had finished their sentences. It was hard to take for him.

A big concern was how mother could manage to provide for our family. Because of his conviction he could not continue teaching according to the German rules. The school board did no longer get money from the government for his salary. Nevertheless the board paid out the normal salary to mother every month. The Chairman of the Board, the Amsterdam clergyman Doornbos, and the head of the school, Mr Blok, played an important role in



*Leenderd
Willem van
Driel [6571]*

this praiseworthy decision. As early as the spring of 1942 father learnt from mother's letters that salary payments continued which was a great reassurance for him. After the war the State sanctioned the actions of the board and the case was financially straightened out.

The fatherless family in Amsterdam managed pretty well. Of course we missed father but mother was very brave and the support of our relatives was fantastic. We were often in Bolnes, Ridderkerk or Rotterdam. There were several places to stay and usually mother and Diny were at the one address and Ad and I at another address. At Grandma Somsen [79] only Aunt Grada [80] and Aunt Dit [82] were still at home. There all four of us



*Klazina, Gus,
Ad and Diny
(ca. 1943)*



*Dirkje Johanna
(Dit) [82]*

could stay. But mother also visited Granny van Drimmelen [1539] who no longer lived independently but alternately stayed with Aunt Mien [6486] van Winkelhof in IJsselmonde (on the border with Bolnes), Aunt Nel Bol in Hendrik Ido Ambacht or Aunt Marie van der Staij in Ridderkerk. We also stayed very often with Aunt Marie [85] and Uncle Arie de Jongh [100] and with Aunt Anneke [81] and Uncle Klaas van Drimmelen [89].

In spite of the war with the resulting problems it was often very cosy. We really were not always in sackcloth and ashes. For many people and especially for those who had to do hard work food supply was a problem. Fortunately we did not experience that a lot. Of course, there was no chocolate, coffee or tea, but there were substitutes. We also lacked oranges and bananas. But mother had bought rye flour from a bakery in Aalten through Aunt Marie Lammers and twice a month a nice rye bread was sent. We enjoyed a slice of rye bread with butter and sugar enormously. It's just like cake we said then. Once mother had also bought a large bag of apples so we could eat applesauce all winter. I even thought they were delicious eating apples. In the summer of 1943 I stayed in Zeeland for a week with Leo van Winkelhof, the youngest brother of Henk van Winkelhof [116]. He had found a boarding house at the farm of the Francke family. Leo and I travelled with him from Rotterdam to



*Geertruida Wilhelmina
van Drimmelen-
Verstegen [1539]*



*Maria Somsen
[85]*

Middelburg. For both of us that was quite an experience.

Highlights in father's prison existence were the fortnightly church services. Father quite often played the organ. Dad had a good relationship with the prison preacher who lived in Euskirchen. Mother even had a short exchange of letters with this preacher. In his letter he wrote that father enjoyed the services very much.



*Arie de Jongh
[100]*



*Anneke Somsen
[81]*

Meanwhile the situation in Rheinbach had changed. Prisoners who had served their sentences could no longer return home but were employed in Germany under the "Arbeitseinsatz" (hard labour). So father rather stayed in Rheinbach. He knew the situation there. That seemed much better to him than ending up somewhere in Germany under perhaps much worse conditions. This turned out from one of the last letters he wrote from Rheinbach. In fact regime there became much stricter; the letters he was allowed to write home were halved in size.

The situation in The Netherlands for us changed too. German pressure on society rose and quite regularly compatriots lost their lives because of reprisals. Food supply was meager but fortunately Uncle Peter van Driel, who was released in the course of 1943, took care of additions from Hoofddorp. Because of his business he had a permit to use a car and he made good use of it to help others. I did entrance examination for the Oosterpark High school and passed with good grades. At that school they already knew that father was imprisoned in Germany and the history teacher, Dr. Jan Roelink (later I was to be his colleague at the VU University in Amsterdam), complimented me with the results and insisted that I wrote this to my father.



*Henk van
Winkelhof [116]*

On 6 June 1944 the long-awaited allied invasion took place. At different places on the Normandy coast English, Canadian and American troops came ashore. Also in Germany they responded to the rapid advance of the allies. Prisoners from a number of Western German detention centres were transferred to prisons further away in Germany. From Rheinbach a large group, including father, went by train to the detention centre of Ziegenhain, a village near Schwalmstadt, about 60 km southwest of Kassel. Later father told they

could already hear the American guns in Rheinbach. From Ziegenhain father wrote a postcard to Uncle Klaas and Aunt Annie van Wieren [7845] in Leeuwarden (Aunt Annie was the youngest sister of my grandma Somsen [79]) on 4 October.

He had already been in Ziegenhain for several weeks. Via Leeuwarden the postcard reached us as late as December 14. A registry form of the detention centre in Ziegenhain has been saved dated October 13, 1944. I suspect father posted it to Leeuwarden because the allies came up quickly to the North and he did not know what the situation in southern and central Holland was like. The last letter mother wrote to father (with bits in it of Ad and me) was on 10 October 1944. That letter has been preserved. Probably returned as undeliverable.



Annie van Wieren-van Driel [7845]

The Allied march came to a halt in the autumn of 1944. The supply lines from Normandy were too long and the battle of Arnhem did not bring the expected breakthrough across the big rivers. Nijmegen was liberated, though, and the bridge across the river Waal was conquered. But there the march got stuck. In the autumn of 1944 there was heavy fighting in the east of North Brabant and Limburg but the allied armies gained little ground. The same was the case along the German-Belgian border. Aachen was conquered at the end of October, Roermond and Venlo only on 1 March 1945.

But how happy we were when we received the postcard from Ziegenhain on December 14. Finally a sign of life from father. That same day mother thanked Aunt Annie [7845] in a letter and told her about our relatives and our family. That letter has been saved and gives a striking picture of the situation in Amsterdam.

We were glad Uncle Peter [6586] invited us to Hoofddorp for Christmas and New Year's Eve. That's where Grandma Somsen's [79] family lived. He picked us up in his two-seater car. Mother and Diny stayed with Uncle Peter and Aunt Jannetje [6587], Ad stayed with Aunt Mina and I stayed with Uncle Goof [6579] and Aunt Cor [6580], who lived next door to the Van Driel's old smithy where they were still forging ploughs and horses were still being hoofed.



Aunt Jannetje van Driel - Alewijn [6587]

There was no shortage of food in the Haarlemmermeer and if we were short of coal there was always enough wood. Uncle Peter's and Uncle Goof's kids were still at home. Goof and let with Uncle Peter, Anneke and Co with Uncle Goof. let

was in high school and Co at university, both in Haarlem. In January Uncle Peter brought us home again but that didn't last long. It was virtually impossible to provide us with the things we needed, like bread and milk, from Hoofddorp. So he suggested we stayed in Hoofddorp for a longer time. Mum and Diny, again with Uncle Peter, Ad with Uncle Goof and me with Uncle Leen [6571]. We all liked the idea and it was by far the best solution. That's



Goof van Driel [6579]

how I ended up with Uncle Leen in January 1945. Uncle Leen was the oldest of the three brothers from Hoofddorp and he had lost his wife, Aunt El [6572], several years earlier. He was a somewhat reserved, strict man and I found it somewhat daunting to have to stay with him. But soon it turned out we got along just fine. My Mum, who often got a lift into Amsterdam with Uncle Peter, brought back schoolwork for me from university. To be honest, I couldn't be bothered but I've regretted that later on. The oldest son of Uncle Leen, Goof, used to plot the progress of the allied forces that attacked Germany on a big map of Europe and I used to assist him in doing so. March marked the start of the final push. In the west the River Rhine was crossed, the industrial Ruhr Area was surrounded and the heart of Germany was being attacked. In the east the River Oder was being crossed. Also Berlin and Saxony were being attacked. It was an exciting and also adventurous time. The latter because now and then a courier would spend the night at the Van Driel families. These were mostly young women on bicycles who carried messages for illegal organisations. They would tell us about the situation in different parts of the country. Also we would listen to short broadcasts of Radio Orange via an English transmitter.

It might sound a bit strange but despite the rigours of war it used to be very pleasant staying with our family in Hoofddorp. The only thing missing was news from our Father. Fortunately the war was coming to an end. That became clear when, from the end of April, bombers started dropping rations. We had never seen so many allied bombers fly so low.

Only days later, on Saturday May 5 1945, the German army in Holland surrendered. It was a beautiful day and I was up early. I picked up Ad at Uncle Goof's place and together we went over to Mum and Diny. Everybody was over the moon and wanted to express that feeling by raising the Dutch flag and dressing in Orange. On May 7, an "Unconditional surrender" of all of Germany followed and the war in Europe ended. For us this meant waiting for any sign of life from our Father. We knew he had been in Ziegenhain in October 1944 and in the following weeks tensions rose. Until June, when we got news that Dad was still alive. An acquaintance of Uncle Klaas [89] from Rotterdam, Adriaan't Hart, had just returned from



Food droppings above Amsterdam

imprisonment by the Germans. When Uncle Klaas had met Adriaan and had asked him if he knew anything about Goof Somsen, he replied he had met Father in person. He didn't mention anything about Dad's health. Uncle Klaas phoned Mum and told her: "Sien, Goof is alive!" Goof van Driel, Uncle Peter's son went straight to the school of Ad and Diny to inform them. I heard about my Father in the home of Uncle Leen which is close to the school.

Not long after receiving this news about Dad, Uncle Peter brought us back to the Linnaeusparkweg. The inhabitants had cut down all the trees for fuel, also the railway sleepers had been removed from the tram rails.

Meals consisted of army rations, biscuits, canned beef and fish, egg powder and canned milk. We thought it was all right. But still no news on Dad. Others of the "Vrij Nederland" – group had already returned. Uncle Kees Troost and Uncle Luc Schopman. Suddenly, in the beginning of July, there was news. How this news reached Mum, I can't remember. It was written by Dad and handed on to somebody. This short note still survives to this day. Dad wrote he had arrived in Maastricht and that he was in good health. He said he hoped he would be able to come to Amsterdam soon, but transport was very slow. He was hoping to hitch a ride with somebody or be picked up. I quote: "Congratulate Diny on Thursday. Maybe I will be home by then." Thursday July 5 was Diny's birthday. Mother immediately informed Uncle Peter. Then she had to get a license to be allowed to travel to Maastricht. It wasn't allowed to travel freely by then. Uncle Peter called back to say that he and Aunt Jannetje would come and pick Mother up on July 5 and drive her to Maastricht. She would then return



Pruned trees on the Amstellaan near the Rijnstraat during the revelry.

immediately informed Uncle Peter. Then she had to get a license to be allowed to travel to Maastricht. It wasn't allowed to travel freely by then. Uncle Peter called back to say that he and Aunt Jannetje would come and pick Mother up on July 5 and drive her to Maastricht. She would then return

with Dad. Our housekeeper, Dina, would stay with us, so we wouldn't be alone. During the course of the morning somebody rang the doorbell and Dad came up the stairs. I recognised him immediately but thought his face looked a little puffy. During the emotional reunion Diny, who had turned nine, and I told him that Mum was on her way to Maastricht to pick him up. Ad was staying with friends. Later we heard that one of those friends, when seeing a passing train, told Ad that it would be very possible that our Dad might be on it. When Ad came home for lunch a lady told him that his Dad had returned. Ad told her she had to be mistaken because his Dad would arrive that evening. But she persisted and Ad ran home to find Dad already there.



Amsterdam Central Station

I can't remember how but the news of Dad being home again spread like wildfire. As was the custom in those days the neighbours raised their flags. The first to visit were Uncle Kees and Aunty Ger Troost. All day Dad had to tell his story over and over again and every time I listened intently. In the beginning of the evening Mum returned from Maastricht with Peter and Jannetje. After being apart for more than four years the family was back together again.

After his homecoming Dad told us about the last part of his time in Germany. I remember him telling that the prisoners from Ziegenhain had been transported east by rail. From Halle in the Saaledal there is a direct rail link to Wittenberg on the Elbe (The city of Luther). That's where he was in a prison camp and had to assemble airplane parts in a factory, the Arago Werke.



festivities after the liberation at the Amstellaan in Amsterdam

Health deteriorated because conditions were very bad, food was sparse and they had to work long hours. From this period we still have a document of the



Disinfecting prisoners of war in the American camp in Dessau

Gefangenenlager Elberegulierung (prison camp Elbe control) dated March 10 1945. The Russian army reached this area in April 1945. The Russians just captured the jailors and opened the gates, that was it. They didn't organise for the prisoners to be transported or cared for.

The same thing happened with all prison camps that housed prisoners from all over Europe. Big groups of ex-prisoners roamed the country and did anything to get some food. When Dad was released he was totally exhausted. He told us he had "no will to live" at the time. The Arago factory was near a village of Mühlinger, just outside Wittenberg. That's where Dad tried to find shelter. He was taken in by a single lady, Frau Barthel. Her husband, a police constable, had been killed by a group of Polish people. Because of her care Dad regained his strength, which resulted in him helping to find food. He told us that if he went up to farmers and asked them for food; it was freely given. The Russian army did not organise any transport for the ex-prisoners. Their army didn't cross the Elbe River. Just west of Wittenberg lies the village of Coswig on the Elbe River. That's where you could cross the river to the Americans. In Dessau the Americans had organised help for what they called "displaced persons". After regaining some of his strength my Father went there. His name was recorded, he got a medical examination and some sort of passport. Also a Dutch flag was sewed onto his jacket. After that he was waiting for transport.

I don't know the details of the route he followed but eventually he ended up in Maastricht from where he travelled to Amsterdam by train. Somebody met him there and drove him home. He'd even brought us some souvenirs. I remember a knife produced by the Arago Werke and a fork with the hilt of a knife. These were still used in our home long after the war.



Wooden sign

He had also brought a wooden sign with a German text around the edge: "Unser täglich Brot gib uns heute" (Give us our daily bread). He had me read it out loud but only when he showed me to start at "Gib" (give) was I able to translate: "Give us our daily bread". I should have done

my homework after all especially on the German language. I still have the wooden sign. It hangs in my study in Hoogeveen.



Govert Somsen [83]



Klazina van Drimmelen [96]



Gezinus (Gus) Somsen [97]



Ad Somsen [98]



Diny Somsen [99]

Thanks to Dick Somsen [130] for the pictures from the genealogical files.

In the footsteps of Alice's father

by Harry Somsen [146]

Saturday 4 and Sunday, July 5, 2014, Alice and Eddie Sticker celebrated the 50th anniversary of their riding school and equestrian center in IJzerlo, with a big party.

The Equestrian Centre "de Achterhoek" was established in 1964 by Mr. Henk Westervelt, who kept stallions for the breeding of English and Arabian horses. His favorite hobby. At this location at the Dinxperlosestraatweg, he hired a manege to train them. Later on he started teaching there to become the first in the region to teach in an indoor riding hall. He was one of the first certified instructors in the Netherlands. His daughter Alice, who already worked at an office started to help her father as an instructor. The big change came in 1996 when the farm



Eddie and Alice Sticker

of the family Bokkel, "Het Hoftijzer", the riding school belonged to, was put up for sale. Alice Westervelt and Eddie Sticker bought the farm including the hall and reshaped it into a modern company with a new big riding hall and stables for 55 horses. The riding school has had five stars of the Federation of Dutch Equestrian Centers for several years now.

With the purchase of "The Hoftijzer" by Eddie and Alice things also changed for both of them. When her father suddenly died in 1996, Alice and Eddie both decided to cancel their jobs and concentrate fully on the center. Initially Eddie, who previously worked at a cigarette factory in Zevenaar, horses did not appeal to him. But by riding and caring for them, this changed. Alice and Eddy find it important that the company and the envi-



Aerial photo of equestrian centre "de Achterhoek"

ronment look neat. 30 horses are used in the riding school. Here, the number of applicants to learn how to ride is still increasing, sometimes by 10 a week. The other horses belong to clients and are accommodated in the center.

Wishes remain for the future and Alice would like to create a space where theoretical training can be given. And hopefully, further in the future, a further expansion with a third hall.

In 2007, the Somsen family celebrated their big 3rd worldwide family reunion in the 2nd brand-new riding hall built there. Since 1997, from the 1st global family reunion, the Somsens have had an annual weekend with camping and a barbecue at "The Hoftijzer", at this equestrian center with mini camping and riding school.

Thus, the family and loyal barbecue attenders have followed everything at the riding school closely and consider Eddy and Alice more or less as family. They are kept informed through Somsen Horizon and Somsen Newsletters about all the ins and outs. In 2009 Alice celebrated her anniversary, she turned 50. An article this was published in Somsen Horizon 23.

The Somsen family wished Alice and Eddie every success at this milestone when they had their annual barbecue on Saturday, August 23 at the "Hof te IJzerlo".

In Memoriam Liesel Somsen – Blecking (1946 - 2014)

by Harry Somsen [146]

Liesel Somsen-Blecking [1596], beloved wife of Helmut Somsen from Wertherbruch Germany, passed away on Thursday, June 12th 2014, at the age of 67. Liesel was born in Anholt /Isselburg, Germany on July 28th 1946, daughter of Ernst [3355] and Grete [3356] Blecking. On July 23rd 1968 she married Helmut Gerhard Somsen [1562] from Werth/Isselburg, Germany, in the Evangelical Church. Two children were born from this marriage: Wolfgang [1572] and Julia [1571]

Helmut and Liesel were loyal visitors to the Somsen family reunions and Helmut holds a seat on the Somsen Foundation board from the very start. Several board meetings were held in Wertherbruch at the home of Helmut and Liesel in the past, where Liesel always made sure we were well cared for. It was always a real pleasure to visit them.

In recent years, Liesel started experiencing health problems and despite her cheerful nature, she eventually

lost this uphill struggle. Her loved ones, in the end, had to leave Liesel in the care of our Lord.

"In deine Hände lege ich voll Vertrauen mein Leben" ("Into your hands, I commit my spirit"). From Psalm 31, sung during her memorial service. This memorial service was held on Wednesday June 18th 2014 in the Evangelical Church, Provinzialstrasse 61 in Wetherbruch, close to the family home.

The funeral program paper held a text from 1. Samuel 16,7: *"Ein Mensch sieht, was vor Augen ist, der HERR aber sieht das Herz an."* ("For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart").



Liesel Somsen – Blecking

Obituary Julia Somsen Quayle (1942 - 2014)



Julia Somsen Quayle [765]

Port Clinton: Julia Somsen Quayle [765] passed away on Saturday, April 19, 2014 while on vacation in Florida. She was born January 5, 1942, in Salt Lake City, UT, to Leo Harry [735] and Dorothy Lucile Somsen [736]. She lived in Cokeville, WY, where she attended school and became the high school valedictorian in 1960. Julie graduated from the University of Utah with a B.A. in English and a minor in French in 1964. While at the University of Utah, she completed a study abroad program in French at La Sorbonne University in Paris, France, where she received the highest degree offered, La Degree Supérieure.

Following graduation from the University of Utah, Julie earned an M.A. degree from the University of Wyoming in English in 1965. An accomplished English teacher and grammarian, Julie taught Language Arts at Utah State University until 1967.

In 1966, she married William Ray Quayle [2955], at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Cokeville, WY. Julie and Bill moved to Owosso, MI, in 1967, where Bill began a long-term career with Ford Motor Co. Julie taught Language Arts at General Motors Institute in Flint, MI. Julie and Bill moved to Sandusky, OH. And then to Ann Arbor, MI. where they became passionate followers of University of Michigan Athletics. In 1980, they moved to Port Clinton, OH. A gifted educator, Julie began an outstanding teacher career at Port Clinton Middle School in 1988. Loved by her students, Julie was often cited as an outstanding teacher, winning the statewide golden apple award sponsored by Ashland Oil Co.

Julie was an accomplished pianist having studied piano at the University of Michigan under Marion Hunt, a student of The Julliard School in New York. Hands problems curtailed her piano playing and teaching. She retired from teaching in 2004.

Since retirement, travel and civic involvement have been a main focus of her life. At the time of her death, Julie was on the Community Foundation, managed contracts for the Musical Arts Series at Firelands, served as a member of the Northwestern Ohio Arts Council, and as the pianist for St. Thomas Episcopal Church. She served on past Vestries of St. Thomas, The Ida Rupp Library Board, PC Swim Boosters, PC Athletic Boosters, and the Port Clinton Parks Board. Julie was a member of PEO and the Port Clinton Literary and Social Club.

Julie is survived on Saturday, April 26, 2014 by her dedicated husband, Bill [2955]; her two loving sons, Douglas Brian [2956] (Mary Jane) [5066] and Matthew Garret Quayle; [2957] her grandchildren of whom she was very proud: Henry Elliot [5067] and Emma Elizabeth Quayle; and her beloved sister, Silvia Somsen Henricks [766]

Julie has touched many lives through her teaching and giving and is loved by all who knew her. Her courage, strength and kindness will long be remembered.

Somsen Genealogical Family File



At the beginning of August this year our Genealogical webmaster Mark de Groot [138] put another update of our genealogical files on our website: www.somsen.org

The reason for this is the large number of changes, additions, and new information provided to us since the last update (November 2013). We would like to thank all the family members who took the trouble to

inform us about births, marriages, divorces and death of their family members, parents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces and nephews. This allows us to compile updates of our Somsen Genealogical Family File regularly.

Please do not hesitate to visit our website and verify that the mention of your family is up-to-date and whether the inserted photographs of yourself, your parents and/or your children need renewal. Send me your comment and I will be glad to help you with your "update work".

With kind regards,
Derk J. Somsen [130]
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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:

07-02-2014: Adalynn Joan [7818], d.v. Levi Allen Peet [7817] en Jenny Kay Schuchard [3638]

Married:

30-06-2012: Jenna Rae Somsen [3635] en David Baxter Stoppleworth [7735] Jamestown, ND. USA

27-07-2013: Sara Jo Schuchard [3637] en Dustin Michael McGregor [7736] Jamestown, ND. USA

Deceased:

05-12-2012: Bernard Charles te Slaa [5196], 86 Rock Valley, IA. USA

29-03-2014: Hendrika Berendina (Riek) Klein Wolterink-Somsen [499], 86 Aalten

12-04-2014: Derk Jan (Dick) Somsen [51], 87 Wassenaar

19-04-2014: Julia Ann (Julie) Somsen-Quayle [765], 72 Port Clinton, OH. USA

11-06-2014: Frits Veldink [2550], Eibergen

12-06-2014: Liesel Somsen-Blecking [1569], 67 Hamminkeln, BRD

26-06-2014: Judith Ann Behm-Chantos [3605], 73 Danville, IL. USA

03-05-2012: Carl Everett Holm [3835], 70 Shelley, ID. USA



Liesel



Julia Ann



Carl

Somsen calendar 2015

For the very second year the Somsen Foundation is producing a family calendar. Twelve months with pictures and details about our family and its history. The calendar will be printed in A5 and will look good on your desk. And of course it will be a nice way to remember holidays in the Netherlands and the US. **Also, it is a nice gift for your children or other family members.**



It can be ordered for \$ 10. However, if you combine it with your donation for 2015, you can even get it at a reduced price!

To order this beautiful calendar pay \$ 10 (or \$ 7 + your donation 2015) either by using PayPal on our website (www.somsen.org) or to our financial contact:

Stephen D. Somsen [2459], 47231 East Fir Street, P.O. Box 526 Darrington, WA, 98241 USA, tel.: 001 562 430 0079, e-mail: ssomsen@aol.com).



The riding hall of Equestrian Centre "de Achterhoek" of Eddie and Alice Sticker



The old fireplace in Pakkebier from 1878