

Figure 1

# **HISTORY OF OUR FAMILY**

by Jan Meijer-Drees

1992

Re-compiled and edited by Bastiaan M. Drees, 2016

INVOLVING THE PAST AND PRESENT OF:

the MEIJER-DREES branch

the VAANDRAGER branch

the BOERSTRA branch

the EBES branch

the MAREK new line

the STILL UNKNOWN lines

This book about our family history is supposed to be a living document that should be kept up to date by all future generations and then be passed on to each of their children. Mom (Jacoba Vaandrager) and I (Jan Meijer-Drees) have put this first version together in 1992 hoping to preserve as much as possible of our past and present. We will give a copy of this document to



each of our children -- Herman, Froukje and Bastiaan -- as soon as it is ready later this year. From there on you are on your own.

The *cover page* (**Fig. 1**) design speaks for itself. Today's Cosmologists believe that everything started about 15 billion years ago with the Big Bang, although they are not completely sure (will they ever?). From that moment on galaxies developed, the sun, the earth and then life that evolved through protozoa, microbes, apes and then into our family.

To present Mom and myself to you we have our pictures (**Fig. 2 & 3**). Of course we talk at length about ourselves and about our ancestors in the following chapters. Leafing through the pages and looking at all the photos we included I noticed suddenly that our predecessors hardly ever smiled (let alone laugh). Some look outright grim. Only the more recent generations smile. Perhaps that is because the Dutch do not have the word "cheese" in their vocabulary (the Dutch word for that is "kaas", which may make your mouth water but not smile). Remember then that many of your ancestors were upbeat people with a keen sense of humor, just like you and I.



**Fig. 2.** Mom (Physical Therapist):

JACOBA (JACKY) VAANDRAGER



**Fig. 3.** Me (Engineer):

JAN (pronounced Ian) MEIJER-DREES

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## (1) INTRODUCTION

A few years ago, we entered the ranks of Senior Citizens of the United States, 32 years after we immigrated from the Netherlands to Texas. When I retired from the Bell Helicopter Company in January 1987 (Mom had already stopped working earlier as a Physical Therapist at Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas) we moved from Dallas to Austin. We are now settled-in comfortably: a nice small but very practical house (**Fig. 4**) with a magnificent view of Lake Travis (our children Frouk and Bas with spouses and their children only one and a half hours drive from here (Herman, with his two boys, however, lives all the way in Los Angeles); good friends with whom we play every other day tennis. But we have also a very busy life with major projects constantly under way such as landscaping the grounds around the house, babysitting of grandchildren, entertaining family and guests from around the globe, and taking frequent vacation trips. On top of that Mom works once a week as a volunteer in the nearby public library. I am still visiting Bell Helicopters in Fort Worth about every other month for a few days as a consultant and I took art lessons in painting (even abstracts). In spite of all these activities, we decided that we needed to undertake one more important project: to get together this family book of which I just now started to write this first page.

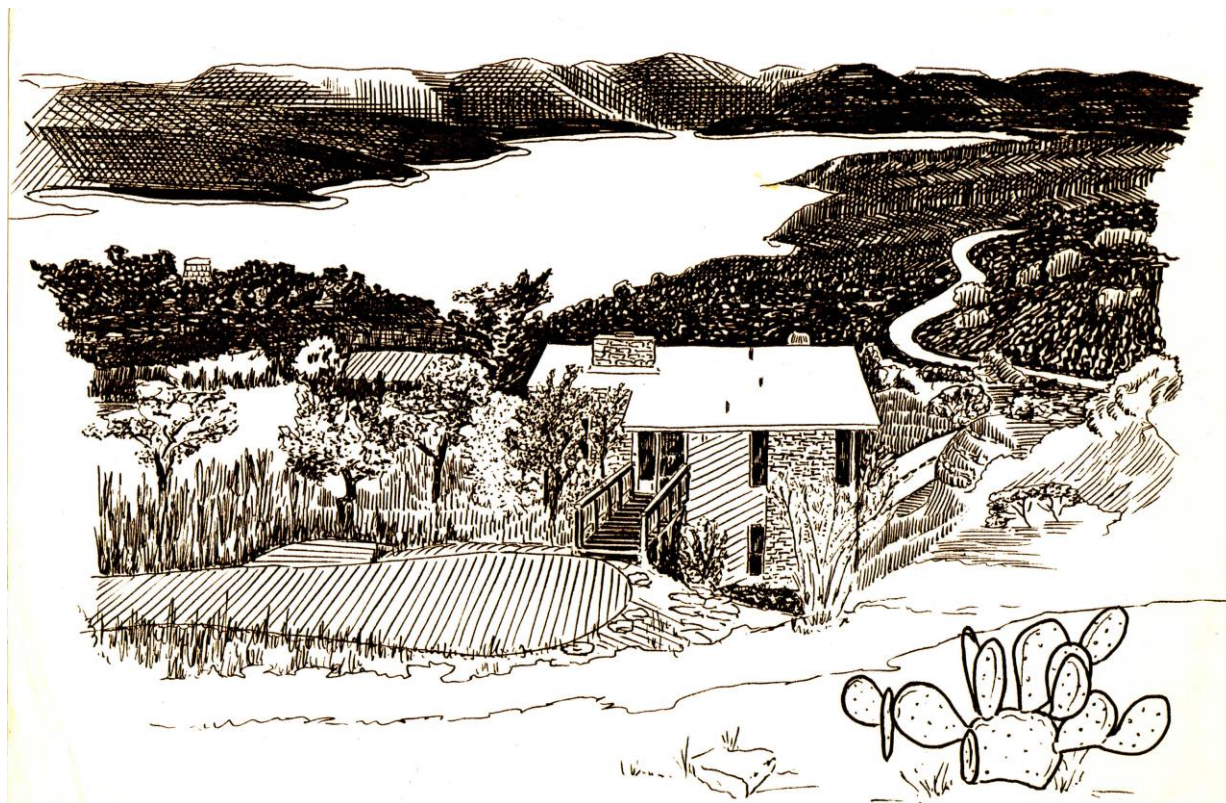
The reason to start this collection of family history, short stories and anecdotes is the realization that we ourselves know so little about our ancestors. In particular, we know very little about the time before our grandparents although some of what we found may surprise you. Of course, we have more to tell you about our grandparents because we met them when we were young. From that point on it becomes easier. We will document in this book enough about our

parents and ourselves to give you a fair picture of their and our lives, and to give you a feel about living in our times. We will enhance that by adding here and there some selected short stories.

We feel that inspite of many modern techniques to document history (such as slides, film, video and sound tape, etc.), the written document is still the most durable and universal. Before (say 100 or 200 years from now) the pages get yellow and start falling apart, somebody must make clean copies, but that should be easy to do. We recommend that when you add your own contribution to the book, that you keep it in harmony with its style, while limiting the amount of detail to essentials to keep it readable. Ultimately the book will get very bulky in any case.

Some of you will be able to carry the family name forward, and others will assume a different family name. We already have two grandsons with the name of Marek, and we have two granddaughters who may marry in good time into another family. That is the way it works. All we hope for is that descendants who do not carry our present family name will still record their own life story in this book or in another family book (in which case this book will become a subset), so that all information we have documented in this book will be preserved.

Mom and I will soon provide copies of this document to each of our children. We expect them to have added pages of their own to the book when the time comes for them to give copies (of an updated version) to each of their own children, and so on and on... Imagine, in the year 2100 conceivably some 100 of our decedents can then look back 16 generations, to some of their Dutch ancestors who actually may have spoken in person to the Pilgrim Fathers!



**Fig. 4.** Our present home, the "Lake House" (3910 Conejo Circle) overlooking Lake Travis, in Austin, Travis Co., Texas.



## (2) OUR DAY OF MARRIAGE

A good way to introduce ourselves is to talk a little bit about our day of marriage in Rotterdam on September 23, 1948 (**Fig. 5**), since that is the day central to our family tree: branches going up to our children and grandchildren, and roots to our ancestors.

Although Mon and I knew each other already during our high school days (she was a friend of my sister, Ali), it was not till after the war that we started to date each other. She was at that time studying medicine at the Amsterdam Medical University, and I was working on my Master's Degree in Aeronautics at the Delft University of Technology. After a reasonable time, we decided that this was for real and that we, following Dutch customs, should get engaged to be married, and buy ourselves smooth golden engagement rings. The ring then goes on the right finger of the left hand (unless you are Catholic, then it is put on the right hand). After another period in which you are supposed to think things over some more, you were considered ready to get properly married. At the wedding the rings are moved to the right hand (Catholics go the other way). Before that holy moment you are not supposed to engage in serious sex, not like today where it all seems to start when people meet each other for the first time.

Our wedding was a simple ceremony in the town hall of the city of Rotterdam, with a reception afterwards. But much had happened in the hectic months leading up to it. Mommie's parents and her younger brother Joop (Johan in the family tree) had been in Japanese prison camps in Indonesia all during the war. They returned to Holland in very poor health. The happy reunion did not last very long. Both her parents did not live long enough to attend our wedding.

There were also roadblocks. Traditionally a man should have a job with an income and a home before asking his girlfriend to marry him. Although I already had a well-paying job, I still

had not quite finished my study. My parents did not think that was good enough: first get your degree, they said. Also, we could not find a home to rent, because there was a severe shortage of living space in the years following the war. We were very fortunate, however, because just at that time “Ouwe Oma” Ebes (Mom’s grandmother, “ouwe” means old) decided to give up her house in Rotterdam to go in a retirement home. We were able to exchange that house for a 2 bedroom - 1 bath apartment on the 4th floor in Amsterdam where I worked for the National Aeronautical Laboratorium.

The date for my graduation was set, and we moved ahead with firm plans for our wedding. There was a last-minute heart-stopping discovery that I should have done one more aerodynamic exam in a terribly difficult subject (aero elastic stability) but an oral exam by a very understanding professor solved that problem: He never asked me tough questions. Even an emergency operation for my infected appendicitis no longer could hold us back. The operating doctor literally saved my life because the new wonder drug, penicillin, had just become available in Holland through American military troops which had liberated Europe from the German Nazi occupation. If it had not worked out that way, there would not have been a wedding, nor this book, nor Herman, Frouk and Bart, a truly terrifying thought!

The last crisis developed the day before the wedding when ordering the bridal bouquet. Suddenly I could not remember the name of the flowers Mom wanted. Perhaps it was “chrysanten” (Dutch for mums). The lady in the shop said that that was a very unusual choice for a wedding. I had to agree with her after she showed me what they looked like and I left the shop in desperation. I did not want to let anybody know how stupid I was. Walking back, I passed a street vendor who was loudly shouting that he was selling roses, tulips and cyclamen. That was it: White Cyclamen! I turned right around and ordered the bridal bouquet. It was a very beautiful

arrangement indeed.



**Fig. 6.** White cyclamen bouquet in wedding photo for Jan and Jacoba Maijer Drees, Sept. 23, 1948.

### (3) THE FAMILY TREE

Our family tree is depicted on FOLDOUTs (1) and (2) in the back of the book (1 gives the full line with 4 branches of ancestors; 2 gives more recent details) (**Figs. 53& 55**). I recommend that you always open the FOLDOUT (1) when reading one of the stories in order to orient yourself. You will find us in there: Jan Meijer Drees married to Jacoba Vaandrager. Going up from there you will see our three children: Herman, Froukje and Bastiaan, and our grandchildren, six in total so far. Going down we go back in history along four roots: the main line on the left is the Meijer Drees line of my father, then to the right the Boerstra branch of my mother, followed by the Vaandrager branch of Moms father and finally the Ebes family branch of her mother. It is important to note that all the persons below us were citizens of Holland. Everybody above us is American. Mom and I and our three children were born in Holland, but we all became U.S. citizens after having fulfilled the requirements of 5 years living in the U.S. and passing an entrance exam.

Bastiaan (we call him Bas or Bart) and my sister Ali helped me to compose this chart based on all the information we have about our family. The Meijer Drees and Boerstra branches were researched by my father during World War II. It goes all the way back to the year 1729, when my great, great, great, great grandfather Johan Herman married Trijntje van Waard well before Napoleon with his armies occupied Holland!

Continuously we have had problems with our double last name. My parents always insisted that we keep it exactly that way. I found out later, however, that on the day I was born, my father went all excited to the town hall to register the name of his first son as Jan Drees. The embarrassing error was discovered a few days later and corrected without much trouble to Jan

Meijer Drees. More serious, however was the attempt by the German occupational forces during World War II to eliminate double last names. Only Dutch citizens who could prove that they already had the double name at the time of Napoleon (Côte Napoleon of 1811) were permitted to keep it. Painstakingly my father traced down his ancestors by searching through the archives of countless churches and municipal buildings of many Dutch towns. He was able to save the family name intact. Without his efforts, our family tree would have been quite short.

To have a double name in America, we soon found out, creates a lot of problems. For day to day use we now call ourselves Drees. The technical papers I wrote over 35 years are all filed under Drees, and most of our friends here do not even know our full double name. But for official documents like checks, passports, etc. we still use the double name. Lately however, we have started to add a hyphen to make government computers to accept our full name. Without the hyphen in Meijer-Drees we were not able to receive our medical insurance money, to which we were entitled through the governments Medicare program.

Mom's Vaandrager family branch, which was put together by a professional (see *Chapter 4*) goes surprisingly far back in time: 1565 is the first date on the family tree! That is about half a century after Columbus and half a century before the Pilgrim Fathers fled from England to Holland (1608) from which they left in 1618 from Delfshaven (a small Rotterdam harbor about 1/2 a mile from where we lived) to arrive in 1620 in Cape Cod.

The Boerstra and especially the Ebes lines are quite short. It will not be easy to find out more without a major effort. Perhaps we can get some more information through other members of the family. We will try. We may have to add some extra pages later.



#### (4) OUR EARLY ANCESTORS

Although two branches of our family tree (see FOLDOUT (1), **Fig. 53**) go out quite far, especially the Vaandrager branch, we know very little about the generations before our grandparents. It is a pity that we did not realize this while our grandparents were still around to ask them to tell us about their parents and grandparents. Yet, we should not complain, we are better off in this respect than most families as you will see.

The MEIJER-DREES branch, before moving to the province of Overijssel and getting into teaching in the middle of the 1800's, was comprised mostly of farm workers, laborers and gardeners. They lived in the western part of the Netherlands in the province of South-Holland, where much of the land is below sea level (hence the name Low-Countries). Dikes, dunes and pump installations keep it dry today, but around 1500-1600 it was for a large part very wet. My parents told me that the last part of the name -Drees- stands for 'dras' or 'drassig', which means wet or 'marsh land'. The first part -Meijer- was an old word for renter or 'hirer' (as used in the Mejerij van den Bosch; see map of Holland). My father found the earliest record of the name in a small town Ouddorp where Johan Herman in 1729 married Trijntje Jacobs van Waard. Since Ouddorp lies in the watery part of Holland where windmills for irrigation were not introduced until about 1600 and adoption of a last name was not uncommon during those years as we will see when we talk about the Vaandragers, it is quite conceivable that the name Meijer Drees was given to one of our ancestor farmers in the 17th century when he rented a piece of land that was quite soggy at times.

The BOERSTA branch, which was traced back to around 1800, seems to have a great number of engineers. My uncle Koos (see *Foldout 2*, **Fig. 55**) was one of the technical directors

of Stork, a large machine factory in Hengelo which made powerful steam engines for electric power plants, factories, ships and drainage pump installations to replace the windmills. My grandfather Ruurd was manager of the machine shop of a milk factory (**Fig. 12-14**). His father Murk Arjens (1825-1912) was a windmill builder. I am pretty proud of that because I worked all my working life on helicopters which have large rotating wings not unlike windmills, while our oldest son Herman has been and still is deeply involved with modern windmills (even with the same factory in Hengelo that my uncle Koos worked for!). It is not inconceivable that we both inherited some of the engineering genes through the Boerstra family line (**Fig. 6**). It is unfortunate that we don't know what Arjen's occupation was. The only information I have is that he died in 1800, 26 years before his son the windmill builder was born (which would have gone a long way in showing that we come from a very remarkable family), but I took the liberty in the family tree to enter 1800 as the day he was born. We are not sure.

Mom's VAANDRAGER line goes unbelievably far back, thanks to the study of a professional genealogist (**Fig. 7**). The Vaandrager name goes back to Frans Cornelisz Vaandrager, alias in 't Velt (1660-1737). His father was a 'vaandeldrager' (Dutch for banner carrier or flag bearer) possibly in the army of the prince of Orange (ancestor of the Royal Dutch family) which was instrumental in the liberation of Holland from Spanish occupation. Frans must have been very proud of this and decided to adopt Vaandrager as his new family name (The notion that the name came from a mill wright who had a windmill with a weather vane on top is not substantiated). It is very interesting to find out that before families adopted a lasting last name they would use the fathers first name with the word 'son' or letter 's' added to it (or in Dutch 'zoon' or letter 'z'). This is clearly the case for the three generations before the name Vaandrager was introduced: Frans Leendertsz (1565-1638/41) was followed by Cornelis Fransz

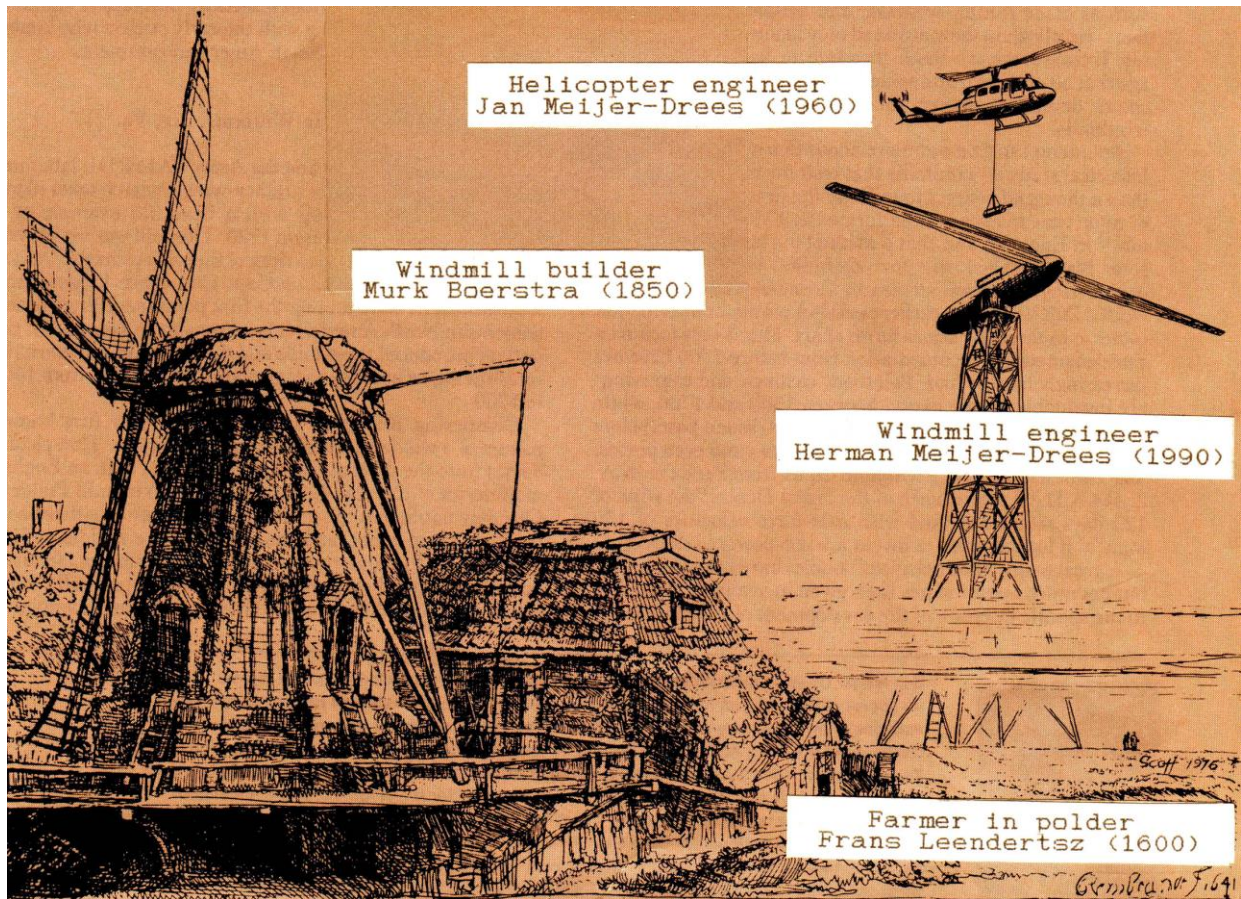
(1608-1661/67), and then came Frans Cornelisz in (1660-1737) who adopted the name Vaandrager.

When Frans Leendertsz died, he left behind a considerable estate: a farm house with land and agricultural equipment worth f2200 (f stands for guilder which today is about worth \$0.50), 21 cattle (1 cow = f30), horses (1 horse = f120), etc. and 6 tracts of polder land which he leased out (a polder was a piece of land surrounded by a dike that is kept dry by a windmill). All these early ancestors were farming near the town of Barendrecht and could have witnessed with their own eyes the Pilgrim fathers leaving the harbor of Delftshaven near Rotterdam for America (Barendrecht is only a few miles from Delftshaven).

The Vaandrager branch followed a very similar development as the Meijer-Drees line: first agriculture, then teaching followed by involvement in technology, medicine, etc. Mom's grandfather became an elementary school principle. Before him most were farmers. Many were obviously quite well to do and had positions in the town council or were involved in trading agricultural products. Only Arij (1717-1789) was an exception since he had a liquor business. Even today many Vaandragers are still working in farm related occupations in the Rotterdam/Barendrecht area.

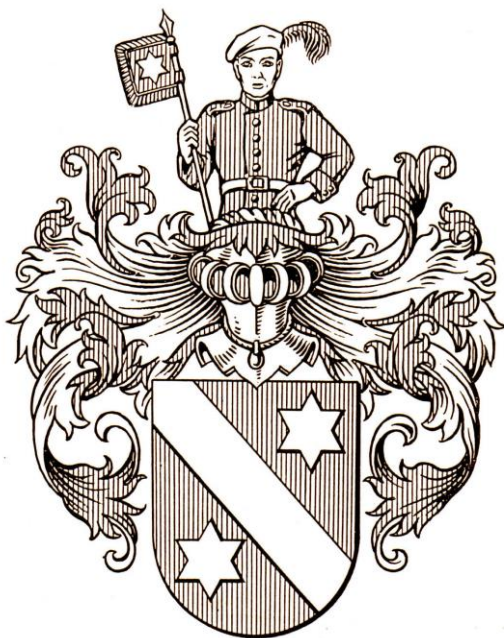
The EBES family branch does not go very far back on our charts. Mom's grandfather came from Groningen and her grandmother from the island of Terschelling. They married in the fishing town of Harlingen, on the coast of the province of Friesland. Hendrik went early-on to sea, sailing the oceans in clippers, witnessing the arrival of the steamboat and soon, at the age of 27, becoming captain of large cargo ships (**Fig. 15, 16**) (Somebody in the Ebes family must have much more information. Mom is trying to contact some of her nieces to see what they have, but so far we are not very hopeful that we will get very much. It would be nice to know more

because the Ebeses obviously were and still are very dynamic and adventurous people).



**Figure 6.** Amended etching of Rembrandt (1641), showing family involvement in rotating wings.





**Figure 7.** The “Vaandrager” arm (1843).



**Figure 8.** Bastiaan Vaandrager (1815-1893),  
farmer and grain merchant.



**Figure 9.** Andria Barendrecht (1827-1918)  
(2nd wife of Bastiaan).

(Oldest photos of ancestors)



## (5) OUR GRANDPARENTS

### (5a) My Grandparents

Following Dutch tradition I was named after the grandfather on my fathers side, because I was the first son born to my parents. The first daughter is named after the grandmother on the mothers side, as was the case with my older sister, Anneke (she died of an ear infection shortly after I was born) (**Fig. 38**). Looking at the family tree, it is clear that this Dutch tradition is not always rigidly adhered to, but there is a loose indication of a 'Jan-Herman' line and in Mom's branch, we detect a very solid 'Bastiaan-Hendrik' chain.

My grandfather on my fathers side was a school teacher and later principal of a school in the little town of Zwolle (see the map of Holland on the fold-out (1, **Fig. 52**) in the back of the book). Zwolle is situated on the river IJssel which runs in the Zuiderzee (which is now called IJsselmeer, after a dam was built to separate it from the Northsea). I remember us visiting the grandparents for their birthdays or for other occasions (**Fig. 10**). Often my Dad's sisters (my aunts Ali and Nies) and his brother (my uncle Jan) would also be there. To get there we had to take the train out of The Hague, or later out of Hengelo. Not too far by today's standards, but at that time it was a long trip and you had to stay overnight to return the next day. We all would stay in their small two story house, and my bed was made up in the attic in between a number of stuffed birds. There was much to do for us kids to play in the backyard (where they grew vegetables and fruits), while the grown-ups would endlessly sit inside talking, eating pastries and with lots of real whipped cream on their coffee. If the weather permitted in the afternoon we all would go out on a leisurely walk along the canal that ran into the IJssel river. My dad and my grandfather would make little flutes for us from twigs of willow trees which we passed in a park

along the way (see *Chapter 8c*, **Fig. 49**, on how to make these flutes).

It is apparent that my grandparents were aware of the importance of giving their children a good education, trying to improve upon the education that they received themselves. Their boys were sent to high school (much tougher than high schools in the U.S.: for instance, mandatory 5 years of English, French and German language in addition to Dutch; French in those days was still considered the primary international language). When my father scored as one of the best students in the nation he was offered a scholarship for the Delft University of Technology, a great honor. The problem was that much additional money would be needed for this study in Delft, more than my grandparents could afford (in 1880 grandpa earned f600 (f = guilders) per year as a teacher and f1760 (about \$600 to \$880) in 1907 as a school principal). Considering that they wanted to provide each of their children with equal opportunity for their development, my grandfather decided to turn down the scholarship for my father. As you will read in *Chapter 6*, my dad made out quite well in spite of this disappointment. This story tells us something about grandfather: education is important to him, but he let his sense of fairness prevail. He must have been a cautious man.

Of my grandmother, Hendrikje van der Voort, who was also a school teacher in her younger years, I don't remember much. She was always there, dressed in black with long skirts to the ground as was the custom of those days for women over 60. I do remember that her white wrinkled cheeks felt very soft when she embraced me. Come to think of it, my grandparents looked and acted much older than their age would indicate based on today's standards. They practically never visited us. That was probably not done in those times: we always visited them. They did not do any sports, like swimming. They did not use bicycles. But since everything had to be done by hand, by walking, carrying the groceries and coals for heating, no machines for

washing clothes or dishes, etc. they did get plenty of exercise. The hardships of life in those days may have shown up earlier, while no attempts were made to mask the process somewhat with colorful dresses and make-up (they probably never had heard of make-up and if they had, they would not have approved of it).

All his life my father insisted that his mother cooked the best potatoes in Holland. It must be said that the Dutch way of potato cooking is an art in itself (even our grandchildren will testify that we here serve the best potatoes in America although it is not impossible that Mom's gravy has something to do with that too. Anyway, we are very proud of their compliments). My father maintained that it was not only his mother's cooking making them special, but also the potatoes themselves. He was always talking about the 'Kamphuizer Aardappels'. Later in life he even invited me to come with him on a little trip to Zwolle, and we spent hours trying to find the farm where the Kamphuizer potatoes were grown. We never found it, everything had changed, in the place of the farm there were now new houses, apartment buildings and unfamiliar roads.

Of my grandparents on my mother's side I know not too much. I have no recollection of ever meeting my Grandfather Ruurd (he died when I was 3)(**Fig. 12**). All I know about him is that he was a supervisor in a milk factory, taking care of all the machinery (**Fig. 13, 14**). My mother told us that he had an office with windows looking out over the machine shop. The factory was located in the town of Oss, in the southern part of Holland. Both of my mother's parents, however, are from the province Friesland in the north (see *map*, **Fig. 52**). The Friesians are known in Holland als 'stiefkoppen' (hard heads), dominant and strong minded. Since the Ebes branch on Mom's side is also from the northern provinces, it is no wonder that we have a number of our close family members who are very strong willed and opinionated. Bear this in mind, it may help to understand your children better. (Continued, Page 18)



**Figure 10.** My grandparents: Jan Meijer Drees and Hendrikje van der Woort; their Golden Anniversary (my father designed this menu for the occasion). Menu (translated): tomato soup; appetizer; chicken fried veal; vegetables; roast young chicken; desert and fruits.

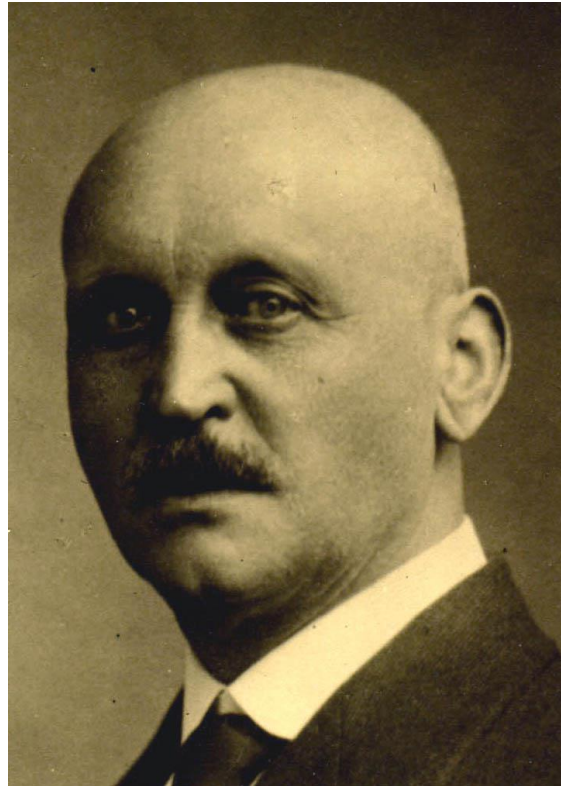
### THE GOLDEN ANIVERSARY PARTY

Zwolle, July 29, 1939: Everybody was there, all 15 of us including their 6 grandchildren. I remember playing the piano for them; I had worked hard on memorizing a piece of Tsjaikowski for this occasion. Everything went fine up to the point where I normally had to turn the page (which I did not have in front of me). I stopped. The tension was building behind me. I decided to start all over again. When I passed the same passage that time there was a sigh of relief and everybody applauded loudly. In retrospect, this was the highest of my musical career. Soon we moved to Rotterdam where I got a new teacher who insisted that I should change by bending my fingers like little hammers. I lost interest and gave up the piano. Now I am sorry I did.

My grandmother Anna Plevier (**Fig. 11, 18**), after the death of her husband, came to live quite close to where we lived in The Hague. I vaguely remember my first venture on my own outside the immediate neighborhood of our house when I went to visit her in her apartment. This caused enormous consternation because I had told nobody that I was going to do this.

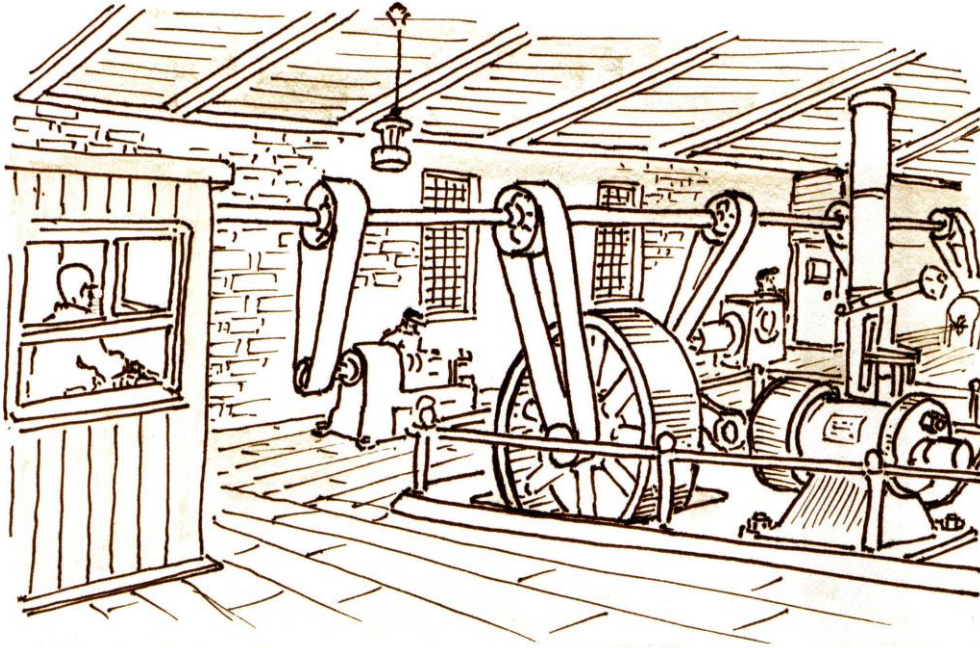


**Fig. 11.** Oma Anna Plevier (1920)



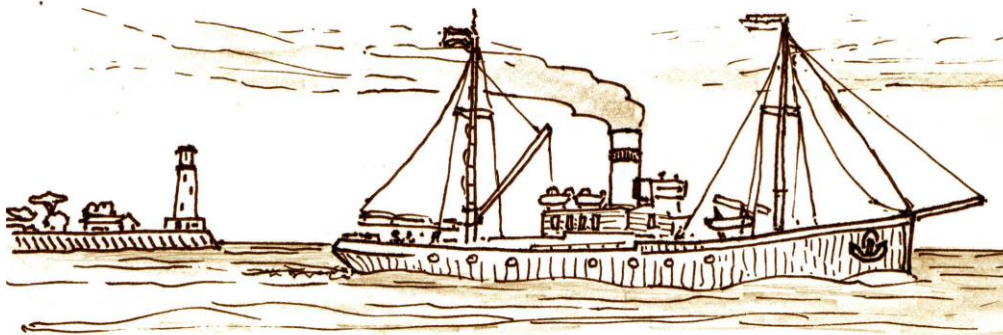
**Fig. 12.** Opa Ruurd Boersta (1920)





**Fig. 13.** Opa Ruurd Boerstra supervised the machine shop of a milk factory. One large steam-engine drives all the machines.

**Fig. 14.** Opa Ruurd Boerstra (right).



**Fig. 15.** Opa Hendrick Ebes sailed the ocean on sail boats before he became Captain on steam cargo ships.

**Fig. 16.** Opa Hendrick Ebes (right).

**(5b) Mom's Grandparents**

We have already seen that the Vaandrager family branch reaches all the way back to the 16th century. Mom's great grandfather Bastiaan (**Fig. 8**) was a farmer like most of his ancestors. Grandfather Hendrick Vaandrager broke the tradition by becoming a teacher and an elementary school master in Rotterdam. From the Ebes branch we do not have anything like that. Mom has contacted some of the surviving Ebes family members who all seem to live in far away countries like Australia and Indonesia (again I like to stress the importance to try to get your parents to tell you about their families and to make NOTES of what they say. Get important DATES. Set aside PICTURES and save it all in one place till you retire or have time to ADD YOUR SECTION to this book). Meanwhile, Hendrick Ebes the sea captain, is the first ancestor we know about from the Ebes side (**Fig. 15, 16**).

Since Mom grew up before and during her grade school years in Indonesia (the Dutch Indies) there was not all that much contact during those years with her grandparents, except when they returned once every six years to Holland for a 6 months leave, that included 2 months on the boat to go back and forth. That all changed, however, just before the war broke out. It was then decided that Mom and her brother Henk should stay behind to go to the highschool in Rotterdam called Rotterdam's Lyceum where I also studied. That meant that the two would live with 'ouwe' (old) oma Ebes and the then retired sea captain Hendrick Ebes. When the war broke out in May 1940 Mom's parents with her youngest brother Joop were already back in Indonesia (**Fig. 54**). For five years there was never a sign of life of them, which was frightening, especially after Pearl Harbor when Japan joined the Germans and overran Indonesia. It was during these years that Mom came to know her grandparents very well. First the Ebes grandparents, then the

Vaandrager grandparents who had moved to a little town Driebergen were they had bought a home after her granddad retired from his teaching. After that she and Henk stayed some time in Amsterdam with her uncle Henk, oral and plastic surgeon, and later she came back to ouwe Oma. All in all, she went to three different high schools in addition to the 7 different grade schools she attended in Indonesia!

Ouwe Oma Jacoba Roos (**Fig. 19**) after whom Mom was named, was quite a personality with Friesian blood flowing in her veins. She was born on the island of Terschelling (see *map*, **Fig. 52**) and married Hendrik Ebes in the fishing town of Harlingen. With her husband most of the time away, she had to raise her four children all by herself. She worked in her younger years as a seamstress. She was very thrifty and was able to buy gradually several apartment houses in Rotterdam which she rented out. During the war it was not easy. At times there was no electricity, no gas for cooking, no food. Mom had to go out several times on her bike (without tires) with things like a bedspread to barter for food from far away farms.

Mom's grandfather the sea captain was born in Groningen, also in the northern part of Holland. He certainly also was a very colorful person, having commanded large ships all over the world since he became 27. Although he never lost a ship under his command in open sea, he lost one ship that was sunk by the Russians in the port of Dantzig to close off the harbor during the last part of WW-I. He traveled to Moscow where he protested loudly and because of his insistence was paid for his losses in pure gold. Once retired in 1939 he found that he could no longer give orders like he used to do on his ships while Ouwe Oma was running her ship. That was sometimes difficult for Mom and her brother Henk who were at that time living with them (**Fig. 23**). They were often caught in the middle of this clash of strong personalities. But he would make up for this by telling wonderful stories to his grandchildren about his world travels

to distant countries and to far away cities.

On May 10 1940, German troops invaded Holland and for five days the Dutch fought a losing battle. That day was also the birthday of my sister Zus (Alida) who had invited Mom and her brother for the very special "ijstaart" (ice cream cake). Amid all the noise of fighting around us she telephoned to tell them that the party was cancelled! Mom's Opa and Oma, like my parents, lived in a house on the Koolhaven. Our houses faced to the south where we could see dogfights between the Dutch and German airplanes over the airport. The families spent most of the war days in bomb shelters near their homes. The Dutch were forced to capitulate after the cities were threatened with total destruction by incendiary bombs. To set an example the Germans bombed the center of Rotterdam which burned for 4 days. After the war it was rebuilt into a modern city. A statue created by Zadkine (**Fig. 17**), symbolizing Rotterdam with its heart cut out stands near the center to remind us of what happened.



**Fig. 17.** Zadkine statue.

The Vaandrager grandparents (**Fig. 20-22**) unlike the Ebes grandparents were, I believe, very much like my father's parents. They had lived a more sedate and much less exciting life than the Ebes grandparents. By moving away from the dynamic city of Rotterdam, which claims that it has the biggest harbor in the world, to the quiet country town of Driebergen, they may have re-enforced this impression I have of them.



**Fig. 18.** Dad's Oma (1918).



**Fig. 19.** Mom's Oma (1918).





**Fig. 20.** Grandpa and grandma Vaandrager (1940)



**Fig. 21.** Grandpa and grandma Vaandrager (1950)



**Fig. 22.** “Ouwe” Oma and Opa Ebes (1924)



**Fig. 23.** “Ouwe” Oma and Opa Ebes with Mom and her brother Henk (1940)

## (6) OUR PARENTS

While our grandparents lived at a time when the beginning of the technological revolution became noticeable and the steam engine came on the scene as a power plant for ships, trains, and factories, it was not until our parents time that this revolution really took off. Everybody in Holland acquired a bicycle, in cities electric street cars replaced the ones pulled by horses, for longer distance travels there were electric and diesel powered trains, taxi cabs and private automobiles for those who could afford one and then of course they saw the airplane develop into a war machine but also for transport. Water, gas, electric lights, telephones, radios, record players, typewriters, etc. came to their homes. Life in many ways became more pleasant, but not necessarily easier because the accelerated pace started to put more stress on people.

Our parents also lived through two world wars, of which the last one (WW-II) was by far the worst for them because, in contrast with WW-I when the Dutch remained neutral, Holland was overrun and occupied by the German troops, and the Dutch colony Indonesia (where Mom's dad was serving as military doctor), by the Japanese. There was much suffering of which we will tell you a little more in this Chapter and in *Chapter 7b*.

### (6a) My Parents

Born in Zwolle in 1889, my father was the oldest child of four: his brother Janus (or Jan) became tax collector in later life and both of his sisters Alida and Nisina (usually called Ali and Nies) became school teachers (**Figs. 24-27**). After finishing highschool with top grades (see *Chapter 5a*) my dad studied to be a surveyor, and worked for some time in that profession. Soon, however, he was drafted in military service during WW-I. He was put to work on developing a

listening device to detect approaching airplanes. He came up with a huge horn that could catch the incoming sound while concentrating it at the narrow end into the the ear of the observer. Near the end of his military tour of duty when WW-I ended he married Akke Boerstra (**Fig. 25**). He called her by the name of Lien. She also was a teacher like so many women in my and Mom's families were before they married. She came from a large family of 7 children: my uncle Koos was the engineer of the family and a specialist in steam engines and boilers, working for a large factory; uncle Murk became commanding general of the Dutch Colonial army in Indonesia (then called Nederlands Indie); uncle Jan was appointed major in Malang, a city on Java in Indonesia; his twin sister Vroukje (called by us aunt Pau) married the president of a milk factory; aunt Hylkje became a nurse, and so did aunt Bets who had the great honor to become in later life personal nurse to Queen Wilhelmina.

My Dad at that time was hired by the PTT, which is the government institute for 'Post, Telefoon and Telegraaf'. His job involved the introduction of the automatic telephone which to a large extent eliminated the need for telephone operators. His first task at PTT's headquarters in The Hague was planning and teaching the new technology. In his spare time he wrote with a friend a new text book, that became the standard training manual for the engineers and telephone specialists.

At the same time the family expanded: Anneke was born in 1920 (**Fig. 38**). She was following Dutch tradition, being named after Anne, her grandmother on mothers side. She died five years later from complications of an ear infection. There were no antibiotics in those days. I have no recollection of her since I was born only two years earlier. When I appeared on the scene in 1923 I was named dutifully after my grandfather on fathers side. In 1926, my sister Alida was born (**Fig. 40**). To this day I have always called her "Zus" (Dutch for sister).

From The Hague where I was born, we moved to Hengelo in the province of Overijssel, not too far from Zwolle where dad's parents enjoyed a quiet life in retirement. Dad became the Director of the Telephone District Overijssel. Several years later we all moved to Rotterdam when he was promoted to head the large Telephone District of the province of South Holland. He had some 1,000 people working for him. He held that position through the difficult years of German occupation until he reached the age of retirement in 1954. The job he vacated at that time could then only be filled by engineers with a Master's degree in electrical engineering from the Delft University: proof that Dad had overcome the missed study opportunity that was denied him in his younger years (see *Chapter 5a*).

Life in those years was different than it is today. For us kids, it was filled with school work, piano lessons, a lot of soccer in the street (police on bikes would patrol the neighborhood to try to prevent this). Then there were other sports such as field hockey, tennis, ice skating on the canals or swimming in a small nearby lake. Of course, there was no TV, instead we did a lot of reading. For vacation (the school summer vacations lasted only one month!) we would often go to a 'pension' (with 3 meals per day) in one of the beautiful wooded parts of the country. Other members of the family --uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces-- often would join us there, and we would have a great time together playing, talking, bicycle day trips, etc. Vacationing in surrounding foreign countries was not often done by my family. My parents never owned a car, and they did not think they needed one. Shops were always close enough to walk to or, if not, one could conveniently use the tramway to the center of town.





**Fig. 24.** “Oma” Akke “Lien” Boerstra

Meijer Drees (1920).



**Fig. 25.** My parents (1918).



**Fig. 26.** 1947.



**Fig. 27.** 1970.



In general life was more relaxed then today. But my mother with her Friesean blood, strong will and opinions was not all that relaxed. Housewives in those years were not supposed to pursue a career. Raising the children, cooking and cleaning house was it. She had almost all her life a maid for household chores and some cooking. A seamstress would visit us occasionally to help mother with sewing and making dresses. Mother herself was an accomplished needle point worker. Fortunately, she could continue to make things (often with patterns designed for her by my father) after she had a stroke a few years before her death. Several examples of her artistic needle work still decorate our present living room.

My Dad always had an interest in art. He had several artistic friends who were professional painters, and he himself received in 1909 a certificate for completing an art course. He also designed all the furniture using oak wood that came from doors of an old castle. Most of that furniture stayed in Holland with my sister, but a few pieces were sent by boat to us after my parents died. Dad also made some furniture himself. In particular, you may be interested in the cradle he made and in which all his children, all our children, my sisters children and all our grandchildren had their first month's sleep. It has already crossed the Atlantic Ocean several times. (Now it is in Holland with Albert, the oldest son of my sister. You may want to keep track of it).

My Dad died in 1980 and Mother three years later. They had moved to a modern retirement home about five years after Dad's retirement. We always felt that that was a bit premature, but it gave them a secure feeling of care free independence designed to never becoming a burden to their children. It was a small place that required little upkeep and they did not have to cook because 3 meals per day were served by the kitchen of the house. Also, they felt secure because of an in-house medical facility and nurses on call in emergencies. It did not restrict their freedom

and they even paid us twice an extensive visit here in America.

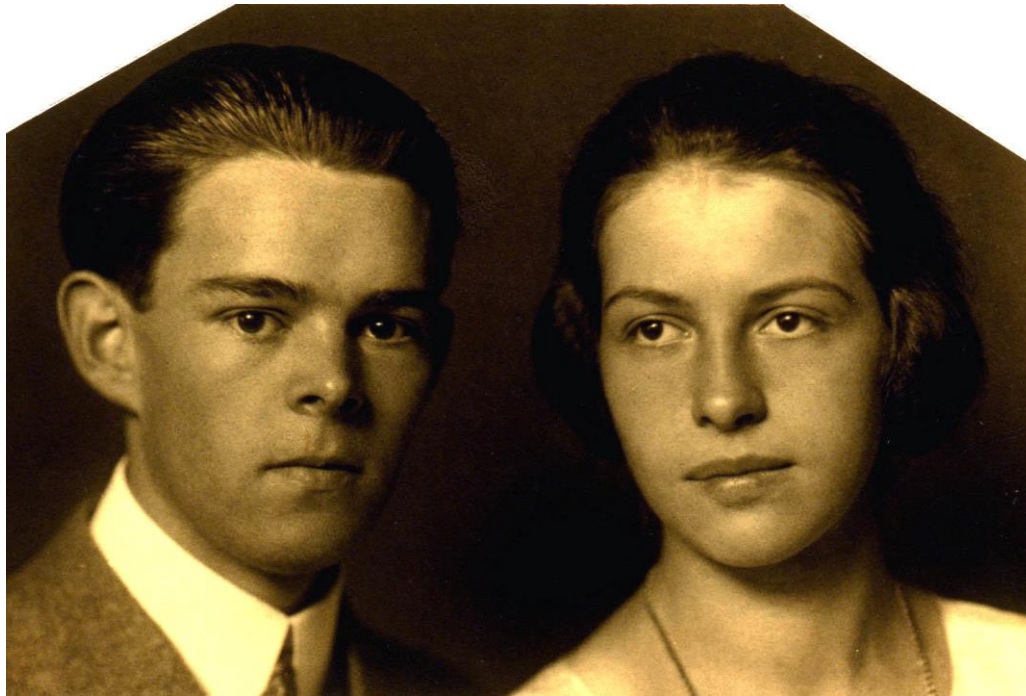
### **(6b) Mom's Parents**

Mom's dad was born in 1900 in Rotterdam (**Fig. 30**). He had a one year older sister Maria Adriana Johanna, who was called Rie. His father was an elementary school principal who made sure that his son received a good education. After finishing high school Mom's dad signed up for a study loan from the government so he could go to the University of Leiden (one of the oldest universities in Europe) to become a medical doctor. In order to get this loan, he committed himself to serve, after completion of his studies, as a medical officer in the Dutch colonial army in Indonesia (**Fig. 50**). Before going over to Indonesia he married in 1924 Froukje Ebes (called by many, just like our daughter, by the name of Frieda)(**Fig. 28, 48**). She was a tall strong-willed beautiful woman, the daughter of Hendrik and Jacoba Ebes (after whom Mom was named) (**Fig. 29**). With her very dark eyes we always speculated that the Ebes family may have had somewhere a Spanish connection (around 1600 when Spain ruled over Holland?). She had two brothers: Henk who became an oral and plastic surgeon, Klaas who received a PhD. in Tropical Forestry, and one sister: Theodora (Do) who obtained a degree in mathematics and who taught mathematics in high school. Mom came on the scene in 1925 in Rotterdam, and soon thereafter they left by boat for the one month long journey to Java, the main island in Indonesia.

In Indonesia, they moved to a remote army station in Atjeh on the island of Sumatra. Her Dad was most of the time away, making the rounds to remote areas on Sumatra, leaving her mother to handle everything herself in this outpost in the middle of the fierce Atjeh tribes. She always had a gun handy, but never had to use it. Mom's brothers Hendrik (Henk)(**Fig. 38**) and Johan (Joop)(**Fig. 40**) were born there (Joop even without any medical help since her Dad was

not home). One day there was an extremely strong earthquake. They all ran to the center of the village. The ground undulated like an ocean and suddenly split wide open. Luckily they did not fall in, but much damage was done to all their ceramic and porcelain cups and plates. They lived in a bamboo house on poles with the river flowing underneath with crocodiles and big snakes. Mom still remembers the horror to wake up one morning seeing a Python moving towards her bed; her Dad shot it a few moments later. In school, they were at times the only white children. They all quickly became fluent in the Malayan language. Other places they lived were Balikpapan on Borneo and Bandung, Bondowosso, Magelang and Tjimahi on Java (**Fig. 54**).

Life in Indonesia before the war had its advantages. The climate was tropical and there were no air conditioners, but it was better than Holland. In comparison with overcrowded Holland it gave the people a feel of freedom and space (more or less similar to the way we feel living in Texas). At home, Mom's mother, who was a very accomplished piano player, would get the family often around the piano to sing together. Her Dad had a beautiful voice. There was a large household staff of about six for baby-sitting, cooking, cleaning, yardwork, etc. Many of these Indonesian helpers would become very attached to the family. Others, however, would only work till they had just enough to buy themselves a simple meal of rice and spices. The Dutch, far from their homeland, would group together, form clubs and settlements. Many of them worked hard to establish schools, hospitals, and in general were committed to a process to ultimately turn over the colony to the Indonesian people. But, because of the war, it never got that far.



**Fig. 28.** Bastiaan and Frouk Vaandrager (1923).



**Fig. 29.** Frouk (1947).



**Fig. 30.** Bastiaan (1947).

Shortly before WW-II, Mom and Henk were left behind in Holland, because there were no high schools in the places that her dad was being stationed, and so the family became separated. Mom did not hear from her parents and Joop for 5 1/2 years till after the war. The Japanese did not take long to overrun Indonesia, and confiscated all their possessions. Her Dad became a prisoner of war. When he was transported by ship to work on the infamous Burma rail road, the ship was torpedoed by a British submarine and sunk. He held on for four days to a piece of wood. He was among the few (only 1/4th) who were finally picked up, but by a Japanese ship, and was put back in another prisoner of war camp. Next, he was put to work on building a railroad in Northern Sumatra under unbelievable circumstances (one dead POW for each railroad tie). Without any medical supplies, he treated the sick with medicinal plants he found and had to amputate limbs from fellow prisoners with a camp knife and without anesthesia.

Her mother, meanwhile, was interned in a women's prison camp, and Joop who at first could stay with her, ended up later in a civil camp for men all by himself. The conditions were horrible. Hunger, torture, diseases, many did not make it. Mom's mother told her later that she was so glad that Mom was not with her because the Japanese would regularly round up the young girls to become 'hostesses' for the Japanese officers...! From 1942 to 1945 form letters (25 words once a month) reached the camps through Red Cross channels from occupied Holland. The Japanese would pile up all these letter bags in a big heap and then proceed to pour kerosine over it and burn everything in front of the entire camp (**Fig. 31**). Her family barely survived and were liberated by the British troops under General Lord Mountbatten (who personally mailed the first letter that Mom and Henk received from her parents). The happy reunion of the family in Holland after the war, however, did not last very long. Both parents died because of the terrible hardship in the Japanese camps a very short time later, her mother in 1947 and her father, who

just had begun to start practicing medicine again, a year later.



**Fig. 31.** Letters from Holland sent by Red Cross are burned by the Japanese.



## **(7) ABOUT OURSELVES**

Of course, we know much more about ourselves than of our parents, grandparents and all the other ancestors together. It is unavoidable that this will be the longest chapter, but it is our intention to keep it concise and in balance with the previous sections.

The times we live in differ considerably from that of our parents: The pace of technological progress has accelerated greatly. Space flight made possible several visits to the moon and the helicopter (to which I contributed personally) developed into a useful aircraft. Television came on the scene with far-reaching consequences for almost everyone worldwide. Computers took over, not only science and education, but also the banking system and changed the way wars are fought. Tremendous strides were made in medical technology although we are still waiting to find the cures for cancer and the "AIDS" epidemic. Great hopes are being raised that generic engineering will come to the rescue. We, like our parents, went through the terrible times of war (WW-II), but today we are also seeing rays of hope for world peace now the communistic block has disintegrated. Instead of making wars we may start working on improving social conditions, the world's environment and other noble causes. Time will tell.

### **(7a) Short Account of our Lives**

#### The Dutch period

I was a slow starter and not a very good student in grade school, but in high school matters got better because I did quite well in mathematics and sciences. Foreign languages (mandatory French, German and English) were not my favorite subjects. I loved drawing and sketching and

was completely fascinated by airplanes. When I finished high school, we already were one year into WW-II and occupied by Hitler's German Nazi troops. My grades were good enough to be admitted to the Delft Technical University to study aircraft engineering. The study was interrupted when all the Dutch universities closed their doors in protest to the rounding up of all the Jews, which were sent to concentration camps in Germany and Poland (which also had been occupied by Hitler). I went underground for a while, then transported to Berlin to work as a slave laborer. Next I escaped and was back in Holland when in 1945 we were liberated by the Allied troops (British and Canadian), which made it possible to continue and finished my Master's degree studies (specializing in helicopters, cum laude). For a more detailed account of the war years see *Chapter 7b* and *Chapters 5* and *6*.

It was one day after I received my certificate from Delft University that I married Mom (see *Chapter 2*). Mom was born in Rotterdam, but as mentioned before, after 3 months her family moved to Indonesia. She went to school there while they went from one place to another (7 times). She had interesting years there with many things to do. Her younger brothers were born in Sumatra. As older sister, she was supposed to keep watch over them but that became increasingly more difficult when they grew up. The family ties were very strong and they were one happy family. Back in Holland, her brother Henk and she were suddenly separated from the rest of the family in Indonesia because of the war, as I explained already in other chapters. They went to three different high schools during that time staying with their grandparents on both sides (Rotterdam, Driebergen) and with uncle Henk Ebes (Amsterdam). During the last part of the war both were working on a farm near Amsterdam because there was no food. From there she could occasionally bring supplies to Oma, her grandmother in Rotterdam and the grandparents on her father's side in Driebergen.

I had known Mom already during her high school years in Rotterdam where she was a friend of my sister, but it was only after the war that we became seriously interested in each other. She dropped her Medical study at the University in Amsterdam when we married and soon she had her hands full with the arrival of our three children, Herman, Froukje and Bastiaan (**Fig. 34, 35**). They arrived in rapid succession with intervals of only one year! Since I was during those years over my ears submerged in my helicopter work she confessed later that every time she was pregnant she was worried that she would give birth to a little baby helicopter... (**Fig. 32**), luckily that never happened.



**Fig. 32.** Mom and her little baby helicopter in the hospital while I (**Fig. 33**, right) was officer in the Royal Dutch Navy (for one night I was even appointed commanding officer of a large destroyer. Fortunately, it was in a dry dock for repair and I did not get sea sick).



**Fig. 34.** Herman, Froukje (Frieda) and Bastiaan (Bas, Bart)(1954).

Already during the last year of my study, I was asked to help testing the first post-war helicopter that arrived in Holland (a U.S. built Sikorsky S-51) as a flight test engineer for the Dutch Aeronautical Laboratorium in Amsterdam (the Dutch equivalent of NASA in the U.S.). I did that for 2 years but then suddenly I was called up to serve 3 years in the Royal Dutch Navy (**Fig. 33**), first as an officer, then as a civilian to help certify a new airplane. Then, in 1953, a dream came true. I was given an opportunity to form a small team to develop our own helicopter, which was later called the Kolibrie (Hummingbird). In *Chapter 7c* the story of these incredible eight years of my career are summarized in greater depth.

The end of 1958 brought tremendous changes to our life. I stepped down as technical director

and chief engineer of the Helicopter Company (called NHI) that created the Kolibrie and was hired by the Bell Helicopter Company in Fort Worth, Texas, USA. In January 1959, we emigrated with our kids to Dallas to start a new life and 5 years later we all became U.S. citizens.

### The American Period

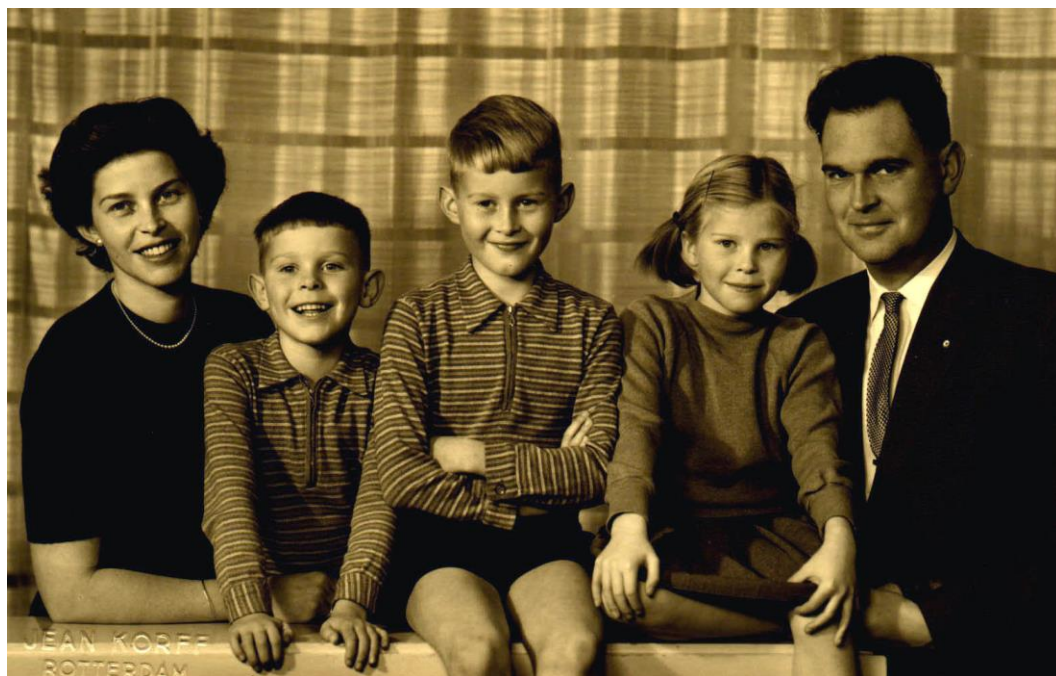
We had very little trouble adjusting to our new homeland. The kids at school learned English very quickly and even started to correct us after a few months (**Fig. 36**). Mom got involved immediately in the League of Women Voters, in singing in a church choir while many neighbors and new friends invited us to their homes. We very much enjoyed being invited to participate in a very interesting amateur Anthropology Group and we frequently attended Chamber Music and concerts by the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. We immediately had two cars and within a year we had bought our first house: a ranch type house with a large yard in front and back. We also bought a piano which brought us to the point where we had spent all our savings.

At Bell, my new function was in research. Soon I was involved in finding ways to reduce vibrations and in flight testing my ideas to see if they would work (some did, most did not). I enjoyed myself immensely. My Kolibrie experience was clearly a very valuable asset and soon I was asked to supervise a group of engineers and scientists. Over the next 30 years I was frequently promoted, gradually increasing my responsibility and the number of people working for me. I ended up as Vice President Technology, a function that I held for many years. I was during all these years involved in almost all of Bell's new product developments. Several of my inventions (I had 15 Bell patents in my name and a few Dutch patents) found their way into production models, I published 35 technical papers (among which a few papers on the history of Windmills as they relate to modern rotary wing developments), I assumed many functions in the



American Helicopter Society (AHS), such as President of the S. W. region, and Technical Director and National AHS Forum director. I received a great many awards, some of which I am particularly proud (such as the Grover Bell award for inventing the Nodal Beam, the AHS Honorary Fellowship award, the Albert von Baumhauer award, the prestigious Alexander A. Nikolsky Honorary Lectureship award after I retired; for my work on the Kolibrie I received the Diplome Paul Tissandier from the Federation Aeronautique International while the first recognition I received at the beginning of my career was the Cierva Memorial Prize for an essay on "A Theory of Airflow through Rotors and its Application to some Helicopter Problems."

Well, that's enough of that. Back home we gave all three kids (**Fig. 35, 36**) music lessons (piano and cello) with little success and we went on a number of fantastic family camping vacations to see our new country: Texas first, the Gulf beaches, then a trip to the west coast, the east coast, the Rocky Mountains, Grand Cayman Islands etc. I volunteered to become Scoutmaster for our sons' scout Boy Scout Troup, which was a unique way to learn more about them.



**Fig. 35.** The Meijer Drees family (1958).



**Fig. 36.** The Meijer Drees family (1964).

Pretty soon, Mom realized that within a few years all our children would go to college and leave the house. She decided to pick up her medical studies again, but that became an unbelievable story: Women over 30 in the U.S. were not supposed to go back to college to become a medical doctor! Roadblock after roadblock was put in her way by the schools, probably illegally. Ten years later this would not have happened any more, but at that moment it forced Mom to change her plans. Because she only got credit for the courses she had taken at Amsterdam University Medical School she had to repeat her undergraduate degree! (Schools in Europe are set up differently). From there she decided to get a degree in Physical Therapy. All that took her 4 years. From that point on she worked as a Physical Therapist in a rehabilitation center and then in Presbyterian Hospital in Dallas; first full time, later half time when the hard physical work became too much for her. There were too many other activities asking for her attention such as cooking, cleaning house, entertaining, playing tennis. Then, ten years before we retired, we bought the Austin house in which we now live. It also needed attention and upkeep. Mom's interest concentrated on planting trees and landscaping around the 4 acres that surrounds the house, a big undertaking.

The three children (**Fig. 37, 37a**) meanwhile progressed well with their studies. Herman was admitted to West Virginia University in Morgantown where he received his Bachelor degree in Aeronautics, then he went to MIT for his Masters. In between, he studied one year in Delft where I got my degree. He married Carolyn Vinson Pinson. His interest was in windmills and with financial help of Carolyn's father he started a company where he produced a unique vertical axis windmill. Unfortunately, the firm didn't survive, forcing him into bankruptcy and to seek other job opportunities. Meanwhile two sons, Jan Benjamin and Willem Vinson were born, but the family went through a terribly difficult period, that led several years later to a divorce. Carolyn

remarried. Luckily for Herman, they still live close to each other in Los Angeles so that he sees his boys regularly. And we, so far, have been very fortunate to have had both boys staying with us here in Austin for a few weeks during summer vacations. Presently, Herman is self-employed and has started a -thus far- very successful and exciting new business. On top of that he and Karen Jeakle are going to be married on March 14 this year (1992). It is our goal to get this book ready before then, so Karen can have a better idea of what kind of family she marries into.

Our daughter Frieda, like her Mom, became also a Physical Therapist. She added to that a Master's degree in Education and Administration. She married her boyfriend from high school Marvin Richard (Rick) Marek who has a degree in Pharmacy as well as a Masters in Hospital Administration. Presently, he is Hospital Administrator of a large brand new and beautiful Rehabilitation Hospital in San Antonio. He was responsible also for its building. They have two boys, Jacob Lee (Jake) and Ryland John (Ry), both already excellent tennis players (Jake now is beating me in singles). A few years ago, Rick and Frieda had some difficult years with a nasty lawsuit about fraud by a contractor working for them on their house. The trial was grossly mishandled by their own lawyer. They lost and suddenly had to declare personal bankruptcy. All that is luckily behind them now. While all this was going on, Frouk held several jobs in Physical Therapy for children, a field she specialized in. It all paid off: just last year she became responsible (as director) for setting up and running a new Physical Therapy program that she designed for schools in the largest school district in San Antonio.

Our youngest son, Bastiaan (Bart) was always attracted to butterflies and insects even while still in grade school and excelled in art, for which he had lessons from a Mr. Olin Travis, a wonderful teacher. He followed Herman to Morgantown and obtained his Bachelor degree in Biology with a minor in Arts as well as his Master of Science degree in Entomology from the

same school. From there he went to Ohio State University for his PhD in Entomology. He married Carol Frost and much to our delight they came to Texas. Bart had accepted a position with the Texas Agriculture Extension Service with responsibilities over a large part of south east Texas. Carol then proceeded to get her Master's degree in Plant Pathology at Texas A&M University. Moreover, Bart and Carol blessed us with two most adorable granddaughters: Carly Jobs and Erin Lien. Bart keeps on making a name for himself in his field by fighting fire ants, "killer" bees and whiteflies, while publishing many articles and a book. He recently became Professor in Entomology at Texas A&M in addition to his job with the Extension Service. The first Professor in our family!



Herman	Bart	Mom	Carol	Rick	Frieda
Karen	Ry	Carly	Jake	Me	
Jan	Erin	Will			

**Fig. 37a.** The extended Meijer Drees family: three generations (1991).





**Fig. 37b.** The extended Meijer Drees family (1997).

### Brothers and Sisters

In a few places, we mentioned my sisters and Mom's brothers, but we want to say a little bit more about them and show a picture of them.

There was ANNEKE who died in 1925 of an ear infection (**Fig. 38**). My mother told me an incident that happened while she was pushing the pram (stroller) with me in it when a big dog came up to us in a very threatening way. Anneke, as small as she was (2 years?), quickly stepped in front of the dog to protect me, certainly a very courageous act!



**Figure 38.** Anneke Meijer Drees

Mom's brother HENK after the war became a Physician and married HENNY Cohen (**Fig. 39**). He practiced first in Holland, then in Uganda, next in Kenya and finally settled in 1969 in the U.S. in Dallas where we were. He got an additional degree in Radiology and practiced in the V.A. Hospital. There are 4 kids: Bastiaan, Annette Corinne and then Philip. In 1980, Henk died of a heart attack.



**Figure 39.** Hank and Henney Vaandrager.

JOOP, Mom's youngest brother also became a Family Physician. He married KIA Halbertsma (**Fig. 40**) and they have 5 kids: Bastiaan, Clasine, Hendrik, Kiki and Janneke. In

1961 they moved to Dallas and Joop has been practicing there ever since. Kia works in a medical facility.

My sister ALIDA received an education at the Academy of Art in Rotterdam and married REIN Meijer who now is a retired inspector of the Dutch Internal Revenue Service (**Fig. 40**). They have three sons: Albert, Herman and Jan. They live in Hengelo and have a very active life: piano concerts and refugees work for Rein, environmental activities for my sister. They visited us last year when we took this photo.



**Figure 40.** Joop, Alida, Kia and Rein (left to right) (1991).

### **(7b) The WORLD-WAR II Years**

By reading the chapters about our lives and that of our parents and grandparents it must already be clear that WW-II had a significant impact on our family. We were surprised to find that many of our friends here, who generally are very well informed, had no idea what it was to live under German or Japanese occupation. Most of the general public is even more ignorant to the extent that some still did not believe that the holocaust ever took place even after we told them that the few Jews who had married into Mom's family were picked up by the Nazi SS troops, transported like cattle to German concentration camps and never returned.

Matters got quickly from bad to worse after Rotterdam was destroyed and we surrendered in May 1940. The Royal family fled to England. Dutch sympathizers with the Hitler regime were spying on everybody, you had to watch out what you could say in front of strangers. Radios had to be turned in, as well as gold and silver in your possession. In school, Dutch history books had to be changed by the teachers to reflect the superiority of the German "race" by blocking out certain sections. Food rationing started soon. About a year into the war there was a massive uprising against the rounding up of the entire Jewish population. As a result, all the Dutch Universities closed their doors. The Germans retaliated by ordering all the male students (that included me) to report the next day to be transported to Germany. If you did not show, up they would arrest your parents. My nearest friends and I got together to discuss this at great length the night before and concluded that we did not want to get our parents involved in this and so we became slave laborers in Berlin. Many others did not go and went underground. In Berlin, we were living in primitive camps with wooden barracks and were put to work in factories along with French and Russian prisoners of war. The heavy nightly allied bombing and later daylight bombing sometimes barely missed us. Then, my best friend and I, through an effort by his parents, were able to escape and to travel back by train under false names to the high fence that was installed by the Germans along the Dutch border. The underground forces helped us to get over it at the right moment when the German border patrol was not looking. We received false identification papers (**Fig. 42, 42a&b**), which were stolen earlier from a nearby town hall that the underground forces subsequently had set on fire. I found shelter by friendly people who were risking their lives by taking me in their home and I worked in a small machine shop in the town of Kampen near Zwolle. The owner operated in a secret corner of his factory a sender to communicate with England, and we were at night often repairing guns for the underground. The

Germans somehow found out, moved in and shot him while he was trying to escape by swimming across the river IJssel. I decided then to travel on my bicycle (using back roads) to Rotterdam where my Dad had prepared a secret hiding place in the attic of their house (**Fig. 41**).

With her parents in Indonesia, as I already explained, Mom and her brother moved from one grandparent to another, then to an uncle and a farm, but by the time I got back to my parent's home, she was back in Rotterdam. That last winter of the war became extremely difficult. People were dying from hunger. We saw, in front of our house, fighting over one potato that fell of a truck. The few cars still on the road and the trucks ran on wood or city gas from a big balloon on the cabin roof since there was no longer gasoline available. Electricity was cut off, we had to use candles and other ways to have light in the living room and fuel for heating was scarce. I was at that time a heavy smoker, but you had to learn how to roll your own cigarettes. Then we ran out of tobacco, so we switched to tea, but tea also disappeared. Luckily tea drinkers still could buy "ersatz" or imitation tea and that is what I smoked (Soon after the war I stopped smoking altogether).

I already mentioned that Mom made bicycle trips to farms to barter food for commodities from her Oma's and her other grandparent's homes. My father had connections with the farmer community through his work in his telephone district and was able to get once in a while some extra potatoes, but they had to spend all their savings to survive. In the midst of all this misery there was new hope. D-Day brought success and the allied troops were steadily coming closer. The battle of Arnhem, however was a big disappointment for us because it delayed our liberation for 8 months. The Germans by then realized, too, that the end of the war was near. In a desperate attempt, they ordered all young men to stand at the front door of their house at 8 in the morning to be picked up for transportation to Germany. If you resisted, you would be shot. This was

printed on the flyer that we all found in our mailbox. A friend of mine and I spent that morning in our secret attic shelter till the SS-troops had searched our house and had left. Another big scare sometime later had me again; this time with only seconds to spare, in the shelter when the SS suddenly invaded our house and stormed up the stairs to the attic. One SSer remained there all morning, sitting in the window sill just about 4 feet above me. Later when they were gone I found out that it was not for me, but for our neighbors who were hiding Jews and weapons in their house as well as a printing press for the underground.

On a more amusing note: about a year earlier the police had come to get my father in the middle of the night. My parents, always expecting to be picked up after my escape from Germany, had prepared a plan just for such an occasion: Dad would quickly hide under the mattress of his bed while my mother would go to the front door. The plan was promptly set in motion that night but he then found out that it was easier said than done at his age. He was caught halfway under the mattress. Fortunately, it did not matter because the officers were from the Dutch police and only wanted to escort him as quickly as possible to his office where some sort of emergency had come up. Yet, the story illustrates well the tension everybody was under.

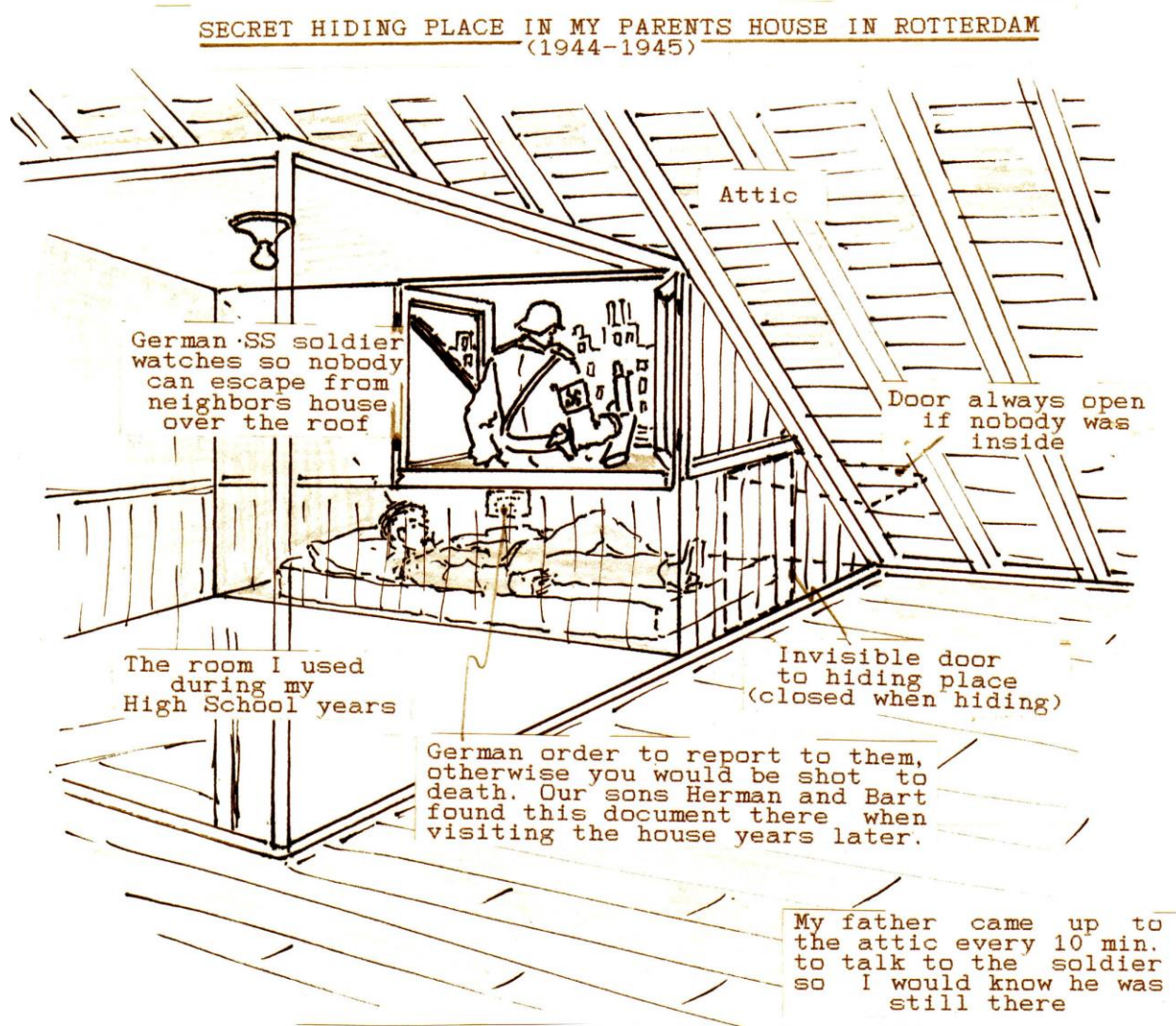
Finally, the German troops left and confiscated my Dad's bicycle without tires. Hundreds of Allied bombers came and flew very low over our houses. We could see the airmen waving at us. They dropped food for us. That was a very emotional experience signifying to us the end of the war.

But, the war with Japan was not over, however. Mom's brother, Henk, immediately signed up for service in the Royal Air Force (RAF), so he could help liberate his parents and his younger brother, Joop, in Indonesia. He became a Spitfire pilot, but then the atomic bomb ended the war in the Pacific before he was sent over there. The Vaandrager family was soon reunited



but, as I mentioned earlier, not for very long since both parents died, a result of the suffering they endured in the Japanese prison camps.

After each war, nobody in his right mind wants to fight another one, but new generations take over which never have seen war other than in the movies where it is often glamorized. To them war is not so bad. But WW-II could have gone the other way. Hitler could have had the atomic bomb before the U.S. if he had understood its significance. It is a horrible thought that I don't want to entertain.





**Fig. 41.** The hiding place in the attack.

afdeeling III  
 No. 2666  
 Vestigings- en  
 verhuizingsverbod

Kampen, 9 Juni 1944.

De Burgemeester van Kampen;  
 Gelezen een adres dd. 11 Mei  
 van J. Meijers  
 wonende te Kerkrade  
St. Pieterstraat 64  
 houdende verzoek om zich in deze gemeente te vestigen/~~binnen~~  
~~deze gemeente te mogen verhuizen~~, adres Okmastr. 20;  
 Gelet op het desbetreffend telegrafisch bericht van  
 den Gevolmachtigde van den Rijkscommissaris voor het verplaatsen  
 der Nederlandsche regeeringsbureaux;  
 BESLUIT:  
 het verzoek van adressant(e) in te willigen/~~af te wijzen~~.  
 Afschrift van dit besluit zal worden gezonden aan  
 adressant(e) en den Opperluitenant van Politie alhier.

De Burgemeester voornoemd,  
 Get. E. F. Sandberg.  
 VOOR EENSLOUEND AFSCHRIFT  
 De Secretaris van KAMPEN:  




K 1563

Fig. 42. One of my false identification papers in 1944:

My new name: Jan Meijers

Born: 9 January 1923 in the town of Leiden

Occupation: Designer for a coal mine

(Dominiale Mijn Maatschappij NV in Kerkrade)

Identity Nr: W 60/no. 003515



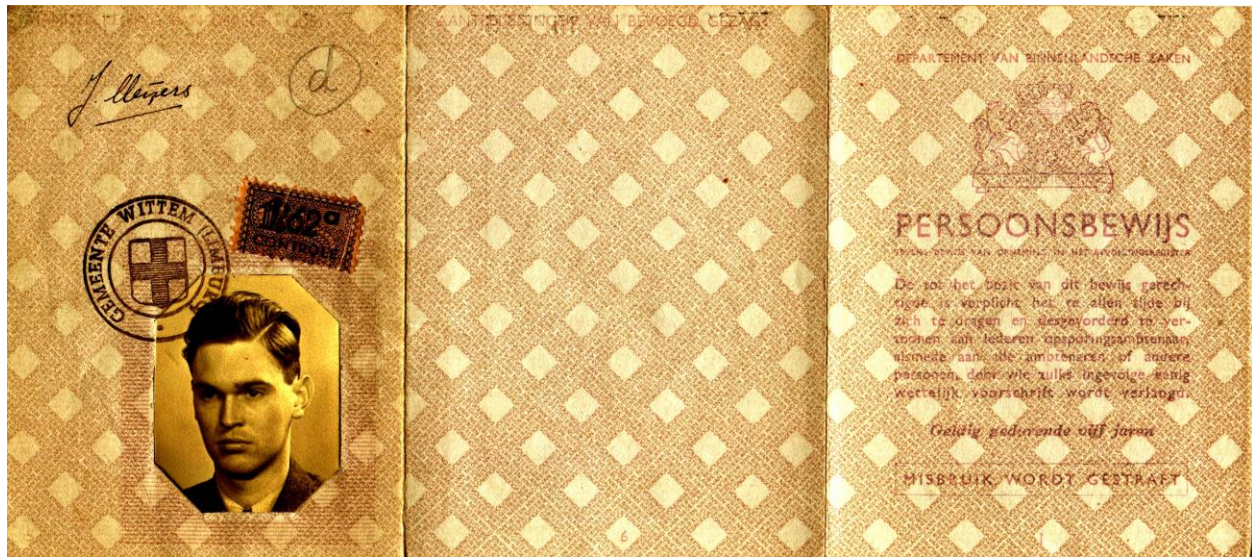


Fig. 42a. Forged identification for Jan "Meijers".



Fig. 42b. Forged identification for Jan "Meijers".

### 7c) The "KOLIBRIE" Years

Looking back at my career, the decade in which we developed the Kolbrie ramjet helicopter emotionally stands out as the most exciting time of my working life, more so, I believe, than the thirty terrific years I worked for the Bell Helicopter Company (I am not complaining about those at all). My good friend, Will Kuipers, who played a significant role in the development and

ended up also working at Bell, documented this period of our lives in great detail in a well written book named "THE KOLIBRIE STORY." Another but smaller book was written in Dutch, is less accurate and called "Nederlandse Helicopter Industrie KOLIBRIE" by P. van Wijngaarden. Copies of both books have been given to each of our kids. There is also a video film that everybody has a copy of (it is a poor-quality film, but it is all we have). Here I will try to condense the story to about one page.

While I devoted the last year of the war and the last years of my studies in Delft to helicopters, a new emerging vehicle and not yet taken seriously by many, it was through my father that I met Gerard Verhage, an electrical engineer at the PTT who, while hiding for the German occupational SS-troops during the last months of the war, invented a new idea for a helicopter rotor. When we first met in 1948 we decided that we should make a small helicopter to try it out. After we demonstrated the soundness of the patented principle through models to a group of important people, we were given a chance. The Dutch government, eager to help the aircraft industry to catch up after the war would supplement contributions we obtained from other sources so that in 1952 the SOBEH (Foundation for Development and Building of an Experimental Helicopter) was formed. I became the chief engineer for the project, Gerard stayed with the PTT for the time being and joined us much later, I hired a very small group of young engineers: Will Kuipers, Dick Biekart and Dik Swart, and the 4 of us set out to make a dream come true. We did not have a secretary, nor an accountant. That was done by some people in their evening hours for a small fee. We did not waste any money on niceties, and we had almost no overhead.

Technically, we developed the most simple power plant possible: 60 horsepower ramjets which had no moving parts, attached to the tip of each of the two rotor blades. The airframe

structure, seating two people, was extremely simple and robust. Because of the ramjets we did not need a transmission, nor a tail rotor. We optimized the design for agricultural spraying of insecticides. Our analyses showed us that the Kolibrie could spray for far less cost than conventional helicopters. This was later indeed proven to be the case.

We encountered many major technical problems. The first jets were under powered, the first flight ended with a hard landing and damage that required a significant redesign of the rotor. When we were back in the air, we discovered that we needed a tail rotor after all. By then we had about 10 people working. As a final step, we redesigned the entire fuselage to make more versatile and easier to produce.

By now the aircraft flew extremely well (**Fig. 43**), it was time to think about airworthiness certification and production. To do that we restructured into new a corporation: the NHI (Nederlandse Helicopter Industrie). That was also the time that Gerard Verhage joined us to become general manager. We received our airworthiness type certificate for the ramjet engines (a world first for this type of engine) and for the aircraft itself on March 3, 1958. Delivery of the first aircraft started immediately.

Looking back, as soon as we changed to from the SOBEH to the NHI, dark clouds appeared on the horizon. The few shareholders insisted that we make a sizable profit on the first 10 aircraft. But that was impossible. We had teething troubles in the field, which had to be fixed. We had severe logistic problems because suddenly we had Kolibries flying not only in Holland but also in Israel, Germany, England and even in Cuba. Inexperience caused us to have contractual problems. Besides that, the government institute that had supported us through all our development setbacks suddenly started to cause serious distractions. Unexpectedly, out of the gray-blue sky and, without any warning, everything came to a climax when Verhage was told to



resign, and I was told to stop the entire ramjet development and transfer the operation to the Aeronautical Laboratorium in Amsterdam (the Dutch equivalent of NASA and had no experience in that field). I could not accept this, nor Gerard's resignation. Our protests were in vain, efforts to rescue the situation failed, nobody listened and on July 2, 1958 both Verhage and I submitted our letters of resignation. Will Kuipers took my place. But, the damage was done, however, and within two years all Kolibrie activity came to a complete stop.

Still there are lingering questions of what really happened and why. We may never know. But life goes on and soon we made a fresh start in our new homeland America.



**Fig. 43.** The Kolibrie coming in for a landing.



## **(8) STORIES, RECIPES AND ANECDOTES**

In order to keep the family history straight forward, we did not include too many short stories and anecdotes in the basic text, but there are a few we want to tell you about. They will help give a more personal idea of what kind of people your ancestors were. Also in this chapter, Mom will include some special Dutch and Indonesian recipes which you might try out.

### **(8a) Short Family Stories**

#### The Oldest Story

The oldest family story comes by word of mouth from the farmers in the Vaandrager branch which were for hundreds of years working the farms near the small towns of Barendrecht and Charlois south of Rotterdam. They were religious church going people of the Protestant conviction. It could have happened around 1800 when Gerrit Vaandrager, his wife Willempje and many of their 10 children were attending the Sunday service in the nearby church. Gerrit was a well-respected member of the community of Charlois, serving his countrymen on the city council. That morning, however, he did not feel that well and at a very quiet moment during the sermon he let go of a very loud and embarrassing fart. Everybody looked up and around to see where that came from. Gerrit decided to make the best out of a bad situation and turned around to the man behind him and said for everybody to hear: "That'll relieve you, neighbor!" For a long time afterwards they were no longer on speaking terms.

Mom really did not want this story to be told here, but I convinced her that one cannot hide nor alter historical facts.

### The Sea Captain's Dinner

A more recent event took place in the Ebes family. Mom's grandfather the sea captain (she called him Opa) had come home from a long trip to faraway lands, bringing presents for everybody with him and many adventurous stories about his trip. "Ouwe Oma" (Mom's grandmother) had prepared a great dinner and invited many family members to celebrate the occasion. Mom's uncle and brother of her Opa was in deep discussion with his brother, when he suddenly noticed something in his cauliflower. Not wanting to interrupt the conversation he inconspicuously moved a cooked caterpillar to the edge of his plate without saying anything. When the plates were being removed a little later, he discovered to his horror that the caterpillar was no longer there...! He survived, thank goodness.

### The Train to Amsterdam

Shortly after the war - Mom and I were already engaged to be married - I was still studying in the University and Mom studied medicine at the Amsterdam University. Both of us lived near our schools, but every so often, we would go visit our parents in Rotterdam. So, on Monday morning we set out together to take the same train back. From Rotterdam the train takes about 15 minutes to reach Delft and a little over an hour to get to Amsterdam. In Delft, I got out of the train and Mom settled back in her seat. Suddenly, however, she saw my briefcase left in the overhead rack. My mother had warned her that I was quite forgetful and asked her to make sure I would not leave my suitcase in the train. Since the train was not yet in motion she ran to the door just in time to hand the brief case to the train station official and ask him to hold it for me to be picked up later. The next stop was The Hague. The man across from her got up to leave the train and frantically searched in the overhead rack...for his briefcase! He did not take it too kindly

when Mom told him what had happened. He had to catch the next train back to Delft, then back to The Hague and be two hours late for his meeting.

### The Visit to the Eye Doctor

As I mentioned earlier, I was somewhat slow in my early school years, partly because I was sent to school one year too early (I was 5 instead of 6). It was for its time a very advanced school, called a Montessori school. When I did not do too well, my parents started to get worried and tried to find out what was wrong. In questioning me, they found that I had complained having trouble seeing what was on the black board. That was a surprise but they decided that they better have an eye doctor check my eyesight. I still remember them discussing how much that would cost. Both of my parents were there to hear the outcome of the eye examination and prepared for some bad news. To their relief the doctor could not find anything wrong, but it did not explain why I could not see what was on the blackboard. The next step was to go to the school and talk to the teacher. It was then that they found out. Instead of regular school desks, round tables were used. The teacher had me sitting with my back to the black board! That was easily corrected, but it did not much improve my grades. The doctor bill was 3 guilders.

### Swimming and Other Sports

In Holland with all its many great rivers, lakes, canals, beautiful beaches, one would expect that everybody would be taught to swim very early, but that was not the case when I was young. My parents, however, felt that it was important and had me taking swimming lessons when I was about 12. The swimming pool was in a little pond in the town of Hengelo, where my Dad was Director of the Telephone District. He was promoted to move to Rotterdam just when I had to do

my final swimming test. I even had to demonstrate that I could stay afloat and swim fully clothed. We had to borrow clothing for me, because everything was already packed for the move.

Mom, at that time in the tropical heat of Indonesia, had to swim to stay cool. She already swam like a fish when she was 3 years old and she became in local events in Indonesia and later in high school one of the top competitive swimmers. Even today, she swims every day about 40 to 50 laps (water temperature permitting). Our daughter, Frieda, during her high school years followed in Mom's footsteps by entering many YMCA competitive swimming events in Texas.

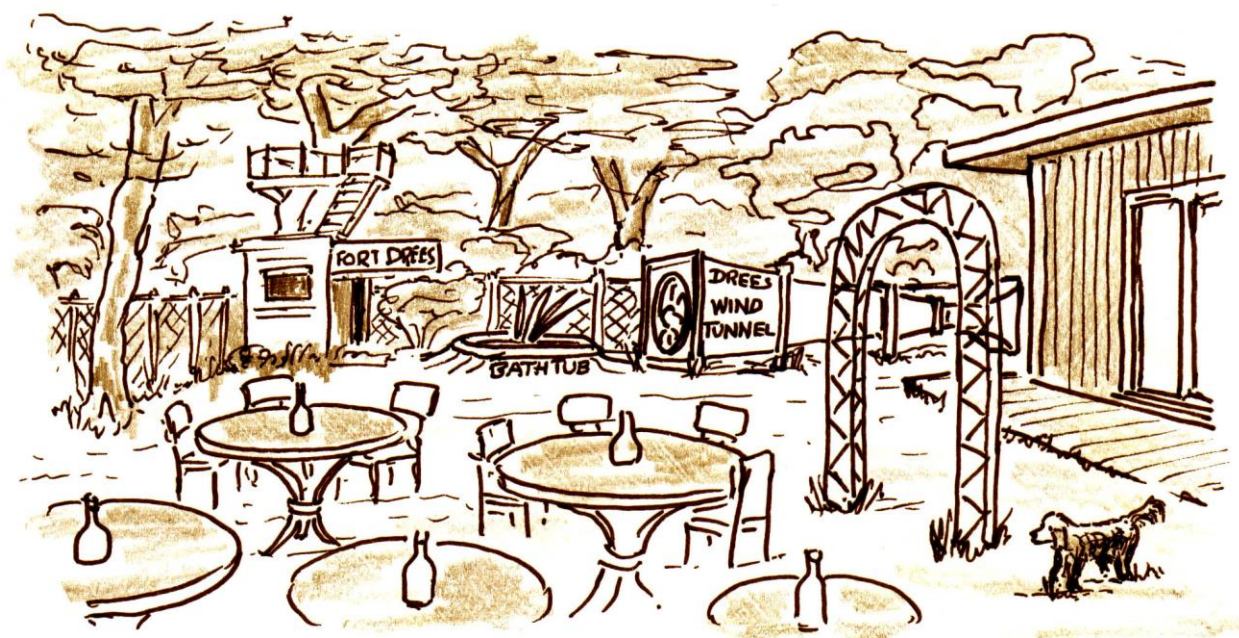
My Dad, in Zwolle during his school years, learned to swim in the river IJssel. Every morning before school he would walk to the river for lessons in a fenced-in swimming area with floating platforms and a bath superintendent. When the superintendent organized a great swimming contest for the citizens of Zwolle, my Dad decided to participate. He caused great consternation when he and some of his friends, right after diving out of the starting blocks for the final long distance race, disappeared in the murky water of the river. After a short scare, they were located hiding underneath the platform below their starting positions. I don't think he earned a prize that day.

To complement our physical fitness activities, Mom and I play a lot of enjoyable tennis these days. When our parents were young they all made attempts to master this sport but it never came to much. In our case, we are at it already for a long time and among senior citizens we can hold our own. The big event lately for me and Frieda's husband, Rick, is to keep from losing in doubles to our grandsons Jake (14) and Ry (12) who play almost like professionals (Jake already has beaten me a few times in single matches).

### The Dallas Backyard

When we were looking to buy our first house a year after we settled in Dallas, it was through our children that we found what we wanted: the kids had discovered that there was a tree house in the rear corner of the backyard. Soon we found use for the large crate in which our furniture from Holland had arrived by adding it to the tree house. With the neighborhood full of young children, our tree house was instrumental in the forming of the “Stichter Street Gang” which to this date, 30 years later, still holds together (6214 Stichter Ave. was our address). The tree house became known as “Fort Drees.” It was not easy to become a member. We know that Secret Codes and Rules were established to qualify (such as running an obstacle course around the block and climbing a tree) and about how to behave (no spitting, etc.). A chief was elected. Many real or imaginary wars with neighboring gangs were fought and won. All our children, when they married, officially had their new spouses admitted as full members.

Later, our backyard witnessed many other activities. Bart with his interest in biology dug in a second-hand bathtub near the tree house. He could grow water plants in there and have fishes. I don't think it was a great success but it taught him a thing or two. Herman used an old attic fan to build a 30-foot-long wind tunnel in which he conducted a number of aerodynamic tests that netted him awards in the school and city science fair. (Bart also had entered with a winning project of a rotating dish in which he grew plants under centrifugal force. He found that the plants grew up pointing towards the middle). Frieda decided to have her wedding ceremony in our backyard, which probably led to the biggest gathering of people we had ever seen in our yard (**Fig. 44**). Luckily it did not rain that day, but barely.



**Fig. 44.** The back yard at 6214 Stichter Avenue set up for Frieda and Rick's wedding, Sept. 1, 1973, just before the guests arrived. Note in the background Fort Drees, Bart's bathtub pond, Herman's wind tunnel, Floppy the dog and the wedding arch.

### **(8b) Dutch and Indonesian Recipes**

There are a number of dinner courses or delicacies that you cannot get here in the U.S. I feel fortunate, now that I think about this, that I married Mom because she prepares quite regularly some of these recipes just for the two of us. When we have friends over for dinner she will prepare often more elaborate ones to give the party a more Dutchy or Indonesian flavor. And when there are birthdays or it is Christmas or New Year's Eve, we will have warm Bisschop wine with Oliebollen and Appelflappen. Herman, Frouk and Bart all know how to prepare most of them (Frouk even has become our expert in the art of making Kroketten and she may have prepared a whole plate full of them sometimes when we visit her in San Antonio). We feel it is



this family book that can best assure that those special recipes can be enjoyed by all of you when we go forward into the 21st century, generation after generation.

### Sinterklaas and Kerstmis

In Holland Santa Claus is not coming on Christmas, because that is strictly seen as a religious holiday with a decorated Christmas tree, special services in church, elaborate Christmas dinners and hopefully snow. The Dutch celebrate the day of St. Nicolas (Sinterklaas) on December the 5th, at which time presents are exchanged. Sinterklaas comes from Spain by boat (that goes back to the 16th Century when Spain ruled over Holland) and he has one helper: Zwarte Piet (Black Peter), who reports to him on who has been good and who has been bad. St. Nicolas rides a white horse and Black Peter carries a large sack with presents over the roof tops. They have access to peoples' homes through the chimney. The children place their shoes near the fire place at night hoping they will find some goodies in them the following morning. The children know that if they did not behave so well during the year that Peter will put them in the sack to be brought to an angry Sinterklaas, a truly frightening thought! December the 5th is the big day on which adults also give presents to each other at the end of the day when it gets dark. With each present goes a hilarious but sometimes slightly critical poem that must be read in front the whole family. Meanwhile, there is this delicious Marsepein, Banketletter and Speculaas (from supermarket, called Windmill cookies) to eat.

After all that Santa travels to America via the North Pole where he arrives in time for Christmas. We suggest, therefore, to use the recipes (1) and (2) (below) during the Christmas holidays together with the Dutch Kerstbrood and the Plum Pudding recipes.

(1) MARSEPEIN (Marzipan, comes from Spain and is also popular in Mexico): 8 oz can Almond paste cut up in small pieces; 1 egg white; 1 to 1 1/2c (cup) powdered sugar; mix and knead until smooth and pliable; tint and shape into marzipan candies (little balls rolled in cacao powder make little potatoes, etc.)

(2) BANKETLETTER (Almond filled pastry, preparation time 30 min., baking time 30 min.): 2c (cups) all-purpose flour, sifted; cut 1c lightly salted butter to pea size in the flour; add 5 Tbsp ice water slowly, stirring with fork; wrap in wax paper; chill 1 hr.; combine 2 cans (8oz each) almond paste, 1c sugar, 1 egg, 1/2 tsp lemon extract or 2 tsp grated lemon peel; form into 4 rolls (12"); heat oven 425°F; roll pastry on wax paper in rectangle 12 1/2 x 16 in.; cut in 4 strips 12 1/2 x 4 each; place roll of filling on edge; lift wax paper and roll pastry around filling; press seam to seal or form letters if so desired; transfer to cookie sheet; seal and brush with egg white; sprinkle with sugar; bake and cool on wire rack.

(3) KERSTBROOD (Christmas bread): 1 package active dry yeast; 1/4c warm water (105 to 115°F); 1/2c sugar; 1/4 tsp salt; 3 eggs + 1 egg yolk (reserve white); 1/2c butter softened; 3 1/2c all-purpose flour; 1/2c chopped blanched almonds; 1/4c cut-up citron; 1/4c cut-up candied cherries; 1/4c black currents; 1/2c raisins; 1 Tbsp grated fresh lemon peel; dissolve yeast in warm water in large mixer bowl; add sugar, salt, eggs, egg yolk, 1/2c butter and 1 1/2c of the flour; mix on low scraping bowl constantly for 1/2 minute; beat on medium scraping bowl occasionally 5 more minutes; stir remaining flour in with rest of ingredients; cover and place in refrigerator overnight; beat dough 25 strokes; divide in two greased loaf pans or other container; beat reserved egg white slightly with 1Tbsp water; brush loaves with beaten egg white; let rise

until double in warm place; bake in preheated 375°F oven for 20 to 25 minutes; may be decorated or frosted while warm.

(4) PLUM PUDDING (Can be made way ahead of time and stored in refrigerator. Taste will improve in doing so): 4 Dutch rusk rolled to fine crumbs or 1/2c zwiebak or dry bread crumbs; 1/3c flour; 3 Tbsp sugar; 1/4 tsp baking powder; 1/4c citron and 1/4c almonds chopped fine; 1/2c raisins; 1/2c currents; 1/2c any candied fruit, chopped; 1 stick butter or margarine; 2 large eggs; 1 Tbsp freshly grated lemon peel; 1/4c rum or orange juice or combination of the two. Cream butter and sugar, add eggs one by one, then the dry ingredients alternating with rum (juice); add the fruits and mix well; fill a container sprayed with vegetable oil with a lid for about 3/4th (a coffee can will do); place in pan of water on top of the stove and let it cook in the boiling water for 2 hours (be sure there is enough water at all times to reach to top of pudding); serve warm on warm platter; pour rum over it and ignite; serve with a thin custard sauce (cold).

### New Year's Eve

New Year's Eve in Holland is a time that families get together and everybody stays home sitting around the fire, recalling the events of the year. It is then that the following recipes are most appreciated:

(5) BISSCHOP WIJN (Bishop's wine): Pour 3 bottles red table wine in crock pot on low or in pan on stove making sure wine cannot come to a boil; stick 10 to 12 whole cloves in a small orange or other citrus fruit and place it with 1/2 a stick of cinnamon in the pot; let steep until hot and flavorful; add sugar if so desired (1/4 to 1/2 cup).

(6) 25 to 30 OLIEBOLLEN (Oliebolies is what Rick calls them): Combine, stir and let stand until foamy 1 pkg dry yeast, 1/4c warm water 105-110°F and 2 Tbsp sugar; with electric mixer on low stir into 3c flour, alternating with 2c milk (tepid 10-15 sec in microwave), 2 Tbsp melted butter (not hot), 1 slightly beaten egg, grated rind of fresh lemon; lastly add the fruit: 1 chopped sour apple, 1 cup currants + raisins, 2 Tbsp finely chopped citron + 2 Tbsp finely chopped orange peel mixed and dusted with a little flour (to keep them from sinking); cover and let sit in refrigerator 3-12 hours; beat 25 strokes with wooden spoon; let rise in warm place until double. Heat peanut oil to 375°F or until barely giving off smoke; form balls of dough using 2 tablespoons, being careful not to beat down rest of dough (keep covered); drop in hot oil, 3 or 4 at the time, turn with slotted spoon when top is dry. Cook 2-3 minutes longer (test with skewer); drain on paper towel and dust with confectioner's sugar.

(7) APPELFLAPPEN (Apple Fritters): 2 1/2c flour, pinch salt; 3 tsp baking powder; 3 Tbsp sugar; 2 slightly beaten eggs; 1 1/4c milk; 5-6 sour apples, cored and sliced 1/2" thick (I use Golden Delicious or McIntosh); heat oil to 375°F; dry apple slices or sprinkle with confectioner's sugar just before dipping and cooking (about 3 minutes); serve with confectioner's sugar on top.

(8) HUZARENSLA (Huzar's Salad, given this name for the red uniform of the Huzars): Place in a large bowl: 1/2-1 lb cubed leftover cooked meat (beef); 4c cubed cold boiled potatoes; 2 large sour apples; 1 lb can diced cooked beets, drained; 1 1/2 Tbsp finely chopped onion; diced white from 3 large hard cooked eggs; 1/2 tsp salt + dash black pepper; mix together in smaller bowl; mashed yolks from 3 hard cooked eggs; 1 cup sour cream; 2 Tbsp vinegar; 4 Tbsp

mayonnaise; 1/2c sweet relish; pour over potato mixture, toss lightly; garnish with sweet gherkins, white cocktail onions; serves 8 to 10.

### For all Occasions

The following recipes can be used throughout the year, although erwtensoep and stamppot do better when it is cold outside. These are also not gourmet dinners, coming from what farmers would prepare for themselves.

(9) ERWTENSOEP (Dutch Pea-Soup): Follow regular recipe but instead of onions use leeks and instead of carrots use celery root; serve with smoked sausage and dark bread, preferably rye.

(10) STAMPPOT (Dutch Hash): 4 Large potatoes peeled + cut in pieces; boil in 1/4 in. water on low for 30 min.; in separate pan cook 2 packages turnip or collard greens (the Dutch use kale); drain and add to cooked potatoes; mash together using a little milk, margarine or bacon fat; serve with smoked sausage and left over gravy; serves 4-5.

(11) CHOCOLADE PANNEKOEKEN (Chocolate pancakes): Use a 7"-8" skillet; 1 1/2c flour and 1/2 tsp baking powder, or instead self-rising flour; 1 Tbsp cacao powder (more or less to taste); 2 eggs; 2c milk or buttermilk; 1 large package vanilla pudding + pie filling prepared. This makes about 12 pancakes. Put 2 Tbsp prepared vanilla pudding and pie filling in the middle; fold sides along vertical lines, then roll up; place on platter with the seam down and cover with plastic wrap to keep from drying out.

(12) BOTERKOEK MET GEMBER (Cookie cake with Stem Ginger in Syrup): 2 2/3c all-purpose flour; 1c sugar; 1 1/3c lightly salted butter; 1/3c chopped up ginger and syrup; 1 egg; mix flour and sugar; cut in butter; add ginger and slightly beaten egg; form stiff dough; press in 8 in. square glass casserole dish or cake pan; bake at 325°F for 30-40 min.; don't over-bake; cut in 1 by 2 in. pieces; store in cookie tin.

(13) GEVULDE BOTERKOEK (Cookie Cake filled with Almond. This recipe is another variation of the Dutch "boterkoek". Somebody submitted it as a new recipe of her own creation to the Pillsbury Bake-Off and won the Grand Prize of 25 thousand dollars! The Cake definitely deserved the prize but the lady sure didn't): Crust: 2 2/3c all-purpose flour or unbleached flour; 1 1/3c sugar; 1 1/3 lightly salted butter or margarine, softened; 1 egg. Filling: 1c grated or finely chopped almonds (8 oz can pure almond paste, SOLO brand); 1/2c sugar; 1 tsp grated lemon peel; 1 egg, slightly beaten; Spray glass casserole dish; lightly spoon flour into measuring cup; level off. In a large bowl, blend crust ingredients at low speed until dough forms; chill if desired; divide dough in half; spread half in bottom of pan. In small bowl, blend filling ingredients; spread over crust to within 1/2 in. of sides of pan; place other half of dough over filling; press dough into place; bake at 325°F for 45-55 min. or until light golden brown; (self-rising flour is not recommended).

(14) BITTERBALLEN (Makes 35-40 savory cocktail balls especially good served with small glasses of Dutch gin called 'jenever' for men only. Ladies don't drink that; they stick to 'bessenjenever', a fruit liqueur): 3 Tbsp butter; 5 Tbsp flour, 1 cup chicken broth; 1/2 lb cold cooked chicken or veal, shredded; 1 Tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley (optional); 1/2 tsp



Worcestershire sauce; salt to taste (about 1/4 tsp); pepper to taste; 1/2 to 1c dry breadcrumbs; 1 egg beaten with 2 Tbsp water; prepared Dijon type mustard; heat the butter in sauce pan, add the flour and cook, stirring for 2 min. Gradually add the broth, stirring constantly until a thick paste is formed. Add the meat, parsley, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper and combine thoroughly. Spread mixture on plate and refrigerate for 2 hours. Form into 1 in. balls. Dip in egg and roll in bread crumbs. Deep fry a few at a time for 2 min. (oil should just be giving off smoke). Drain on paper towels. Serve hot on wooden cocktail picks with the mustard for dipping.

(15) KROKETTEN (Croquettes, makes 8); use same dough as for Bitterballen. Divide into 8 parts. Form into cylinders 1 in. in diameter. Roll in bread crumbs then in beaten egg, then again in bread crumbs. Deep fry for 3-5 min. Variations: (a) use beef broth and leftover shredded beef; (b) use milk and leftover fish and dash nutmeg; (c) use milk and 2 small cans of shrimp (drained) or one can of salmon, chopped fine.

### Indonesian dishes

(16) NASSI GORENG (Indonesian Fried Rice): 2c rice, cooked; 2 onions; 3 Tbsp peanut oil, 1 lb hamburger or any left-over meat; 1 bean size piece of trassi (shrimp paste) or 1 small can cooked shrimp; 2 tsp ground cumin; 4 tsp ground coriander; 1-2 Tbsp soya sauce; salt to taste. In large wok or Dutch oven sauté the chopped onions in peanut oil until golden; add meat and stir until cooked; add shrimp paste, mash with back of spoon; add spices; add cooked rice and season with soya sauce and salt; serve with pan fried bananas, peanuts, cucumber salad and eggs over and easy on top. Don't forget the Sambal (or salsa) and the Chutney (optional). When using canned shrimp, add those (drained) at the very last. Beer and iced tea go well with this dish.

(17) BAHMI (Indonesian-Chinese Noodle Dish): 12 oz noodles cooked as directed; 1 lb cubed raw pork and bean size piece of trassi (shrimp paste) or 1/2 lb cubed pork, 1/4 lb ham and 1 can of shrimp; 2 leeks (may substitute 1 large onion or 1/2 onion and 1/2 bunch green onion, chopped, green tops included); 2 cloves garlic; 3-4c chopped cabbage or 2c cabbage and 2c bean sprouts; 1 carrot thinly sliced; 1/2c green pepper, chopped (optional). In frying pan, brown raw meat in a little peanut oil or margarine; season with salt and simmer until done. In large wok or Dutch oven sauté leeks (or onion) and garlic on medium heat in peanut oil; add other vegetables with a little (2 Tbsp) water and stir fry until done but still crisp; add cooked meat and noodles and season with 1 to 2 Tbsp soya sauce and more salt if needed. If using ham, drained shrimp and bean sprouts add these last. Garnish with strips of egg omelet and tomato wedges (Optional: serve with peanuts, dill pickles, and beer or iced tea); serves 4 to 5 people.

### 8c) More Anecdotes

#### Make-up and Zegjes

After the finger-licking *Chapter (8b)* on Dutch recipes, we want to continue with our short stories because the more we write about them, the more we remember. I already mentioned that in our grandparents' time, make-up was not used and I conjectured that they would probably not even have approved its use. That brings us to the days that Mom and I decided to get serious about getting married.

That decision was good news, especially for Ouwe Oma (**Fig. 46**) who probably had started to worry a bit that her granddaughter would never find a suitable man. Mom's mother, I believe

did not share this worry. She was perhaps more willing to wait somewhat longer, hoping for a millionaire's son to come along instead of "een van die kale ingenieurs" (one of those scraggy engineers). Ouwe Oma had talked to Mom on her 21st birthday to give her some parental advice to not wait forever and warned her "niet alle vogels over haar nest vliegen laten" (not to let all the birds fly over her nest). That is not to say that she would approve of making "de groente goedkoop van heur kant" (to make the vegetables cheap from her side).

My mother who knew Mom already for many years probably started to look at her with a more critical eye when she heard the news. She noted that Mom used lipstick (**Fig. 47**), something she thought was utterly frivolous. So, as soon as Mom visited our house she made it clear that she did not much approved of lipstick. Mom went home a little shook-up and told her Mom about this incident. Her response was that since I apparently liked her the way she was (and I did, lipstick and all), she should not worry about it (**Fig. 48**).

Later, when our daughter, Frieda, was growing up rapidly, but not yet quite a teenager, she started to experiment with make-up. We felt that that was a bit premature and told her that it was OK at home, but not to school. We lost that struggle rather quickly.

**Note:** the Dutch quotes at the beginning of this story are just a small sampling of the family "zegjes" (sayings) that came filtered down through time with a touch of Friesian dialect and were used particularly by Moms family in order to express themselves very clearly with a minimum of words.

### The General

One look at the pictures of my Mother (**Fig. 25-27**) and my Oma Boerstra (**Fig. 45**) will convey the impression of strong minded, proud personalities. My aunt Bets was the same way. They would walk stately with their heads high. When my Oma went shopping she would not walk but 'stride' to the marketplace, followed by her maid a yard behind her with the shopping basket. Yet they also had quite an emotional temperament. Their brother, Murk - the General of the Dutch Colonial Army in Indonesia - had the same strong personality and features, but he did not share their hot temperament. In fact, he was the 'rock of the family' to whom they all would go for brotherly advice if he was around. He was back in Holland as a retired general a few years before the war and thus missed the opportunity to command his troops against the Japanese. He told me about his life as General, losing part of his hearing because of the firing of guns and about the time he was teaching officers: in his slow and majestic way, he showed on the blackboard how to attack the enemy when his piece of chalk dropped on the floor. He bent over to pick it up and at that moment the back of his thin tropical uniform pants ripped wide open. He let the class have a good laugh at it and then proceeded as if nothing had happened, demonstrating that even a Commanding General is only human.



**Fig. 45.** Oma Boersta on her way to the market.



**Fig. 46.** Ouwe Oma advises Mom by quoting “zegjes”



**Fig. 47.** Mom visits with New Cherry hat and lipstick (1947).



**Fig. 48.** She discusses make-up strategy with her Mother.

### The Bad News

It is to be expected, when you dig into the past of your family, that not everything is sunshine. And our families are no exception. We know of two hot tempered 30-year-old twin (Vaandrager) brothers who got into an argument about a bottle of red wine. They never spoke to each other anymore and when one of them died, the other refused to come to the funeral. And then there are stories to tell about in-fights resulting from dividing up inheritances, but we will not dwell on that.

I also found out that there is a German branch of the family. In the middle of the war, "Obersturmfuehrer" of the "SS-Panzer Grenadier Division," Erwin Meierdrees received in 1943 the "Ritterkreuz des Eisernen Kreuzes" (Iron Cross) from Hitler. He probably was too high up in the ranks to sit right on top of me above my secret hiding place (see *Chapter 7b*). The good news is that there is also a hotel somewhere in Ostfriesland, Germany called "Haus Meyerdrees"; we don't know exactly where, however. And then, and this is bad, in Amsterdam in 1946, F.H.R. Meierdrees killed a man with a knife because he accused the victim of having served with the SS troops during the war.

Now back to more pleasant subjects such as how to make the whistle that my grandfather used to make for me.

### Opa's Flute

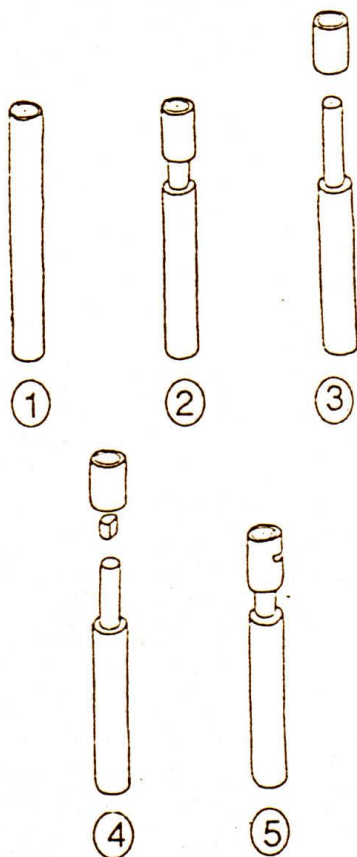
I mentioned in *Chapter 5a* the flutes my dad and grandfather would make for us from branches of the willow tree. Here is how (see **Fig. 49**): - With a sharp knife cut a straight  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. smooth branch 6 in. long (no side with twigs on it), see (1); - 1 in. from straightest end cut ring in bark, see (2); - Make that end soaking wet, and while turning branch tap end it with knife handle,



bark will come off, see (3); - cut  $\frac{3}{8}$ th of barkless end, and cut flat side on this plug, and slide it back in bark, see (4); Now cut a short groove in the bark just under the short plug. Other tree types may work.

That's all, simple!

## NATUURLIJKE INSTRUMENTEN, of zoals het hier vroeger ging....



Fluiten werden hier vroeger gemaakt van allerlei bomen en planten: Vlier, Lisdodde, Wilg, Es, Riet of Lijsterbes.

Hieronder vind je een beschrijving van hoe je van een wilgetak een fluitje kan maken. De lente is hier de beste tijd voor. De bast van het hout laat dan het gemakkelijkste los.

**Nodig:** Een mooie rechte wilgetwijg zonder zijtakken, 15 cm lang en ongeveer een wijsvinger dik (1 - 1,5 cm doorsnede).

\* Een scherp mesje.

- Doen:** 1. Op ongeveer 3 cm van het meest rechte uiteinde met een mes een rechte ring van ongeveer 1,5 cm dik uit de bast snijden (zie tekening 2).  
 2. Het uiteinde (van 3 cm) goed natmaken en al draaiend er met de heft van het mes op kloppen. De bast komt dan los te zitten.  
 3. Stroop de bast eraf (zie tekening 3).  
 4. Van het bastloze uiteinde ongeveer 1 cm wegsnijden (voor het mondstuk).  
 5. Dit ronde schijfje een platte kant bezorgen en in de bast terugschuiven (zie tekening 4).  
 6. Vlak onder het ingeschoven mondstuk een opening in de bast snijden (zie tekening 5).  
 7. Fluiten maar.

(Uit: "Muziekinstrumenten, zelf maken / zelf bespelen"; Cantecleer, De Bilt, 1974)

**Fig. 49.** Opa's flute.

### Extra Sensory Perception (ESP)

We all have sometimes these experiences where we suddenly think of some family member or dear friend from whom we have not heard in a very long time only to receive a letter from him or her a few days later. But Mom really did have a remarkable nightmarish dream one night in 1942 during the war about seeing her Dad clinging to a piece of debris in the ocean. She saw her mother and brother, Joop, standing on the beach looking out at a sinking ship in the background. The next morning, she talked about this to Henk and her grandparents. The part about the wreck turned out to be all too true. After being taken captive by the Japanese in Sumatra his regiment was transported across the Strait of Malacca on an oil tanker which was torpedoed by a British submarine as we discussed in *Chapter 6b*. Only a quarter of the men survived.

Another example occurred in the summer of 1944 when Henk and Mom were traveling to the dairy farm near Amsterdam where Henk was going to hide from the Germans. He had just finished high school and was due to be sent to Germany as a slave laborer. Henk's bike had the only rubber inflatable tires of the family because it was imperative that he would have a quick means of escape in case of trouble. Mom was riding on solid strips of rubber around the wheels. About halfway, Henk turned around and said to Mom: "Look, when we go up that dike at the end of this polder my rear tire will burst." And so, it did! (They still made it safely to the dairy farm).

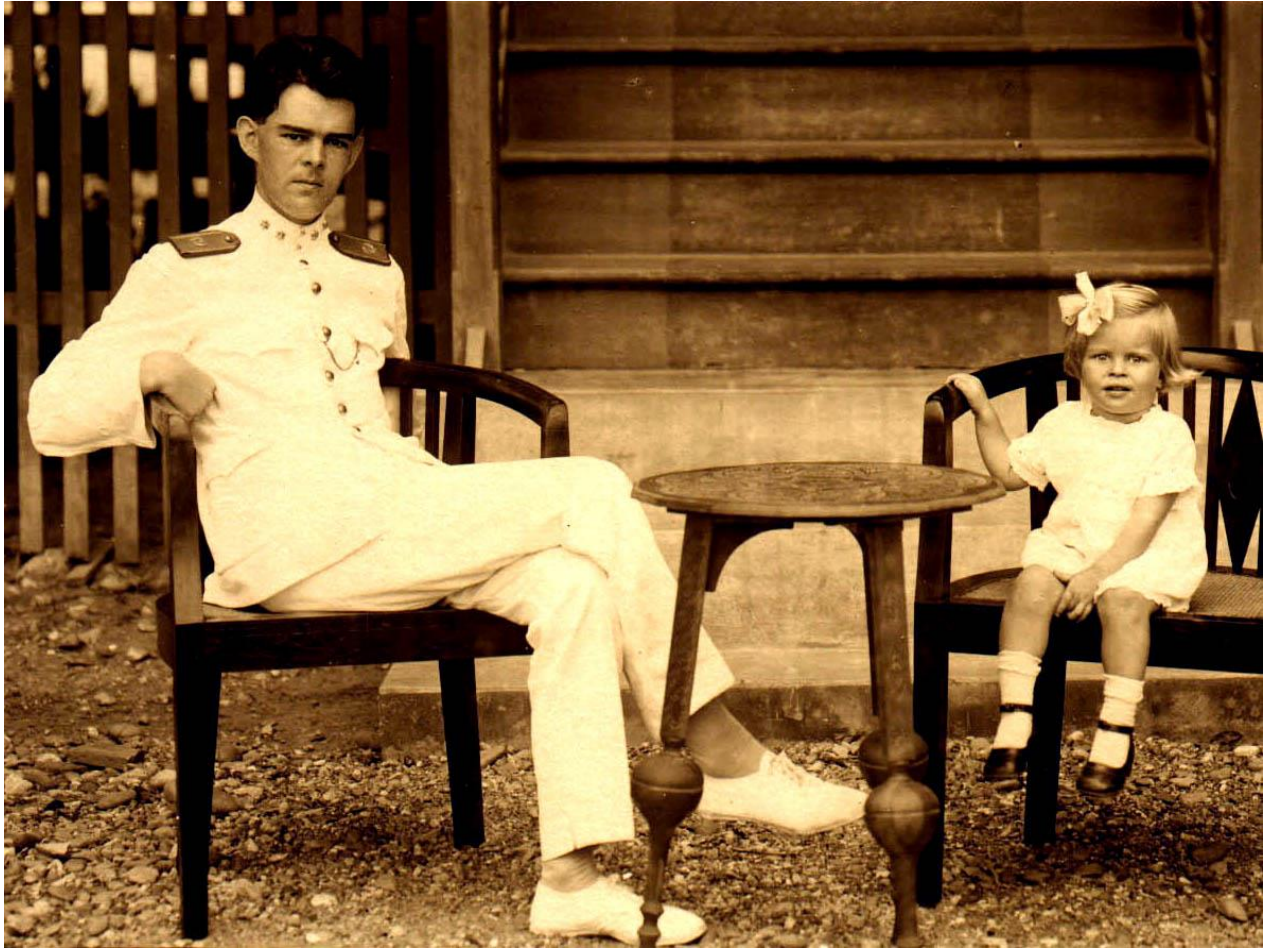
Then in 1946, after Mom's parents and her youngest brother, Joop, had moved in with Ouwé Ebes in Rotterdam, Mom was studying in Amsterdam and brother Henk was with the Royal Air Force in Great Britain. Joop was going to high school trying to make up for 3 1/2 years in a Japanese prison camp. One afternoon he announced that he was going to the railroad station to await the boat-train from London because he just knew that Henk was going to be on it. Everybody discouraged him but he persevered. Sure enough, he was right! (Henk who was by

then a certified Spitfire fighter pilot brought him a beautiful brand new Raleigh bicycle).

### The Family at the Dinner Table

In the times of our parents, it became obvious that some form of birth control was needed. Holland was already one of the most populated countries in the world. The question of how to do that safely had not yet been entirely resolved. Even in our times, the French maintained that the first child would be a "l'enfant d'amoure", the second a "l'enfant de devoir" and the third a "l'enfant d'accident". But in the years of our grandparents and earlier ancestors, it was very common to see very large families: 8 or 12 children was not at all uncommon. I believe that all this led to some strict rules at the dinner table. The children had to stand at the table rather than sit, they were not supposed to talk, unless spoken to by a grown-up, they had to use the special respectful form of language that exists in Dutch (as well as in German and French) and, of course, never address their parents, nor uncles or aunts, by their first names.

Mom and I grew up in a less rigid world but there had to be some discipline. For instance, our boys had the task to move the garbage cans once a week to the curb to be emptied by the city service. The few times they forgot or refused they would find a fine selection of the garbage piled up in their room, and if they did not make their own beds they would find all the sheets, blankets and pillows under their beds. At the dinner table, they could sit and talk, but sometimes matters got out of control. The table we used was in the den and was round with one steel leg in the middle. It had the advantage that it was not all that rigid so that, when I slammed my fist down on it on my side, the other side would jump up including the soup, potatoes and all the flatware. It was a very effective way to restore order and peace, although Mom did not like it all that much because of all the spilled soup and gravy on the floor.



**Fig. 50.** Mom and her Dad (1927).

### Health Care in Colonial Indonesia

To be an Army Doctor in Atjeh seems easier than it was as Mom's dad found out quickly. One look at the map of Indonesia (**Fig. 54**) and its vastness makes that clear, considering that in the back country of Sumatra in the province of Atjeh there were no roads to speak of. The doctor with his helpers would have to go by railroad trolley, a little platform on wheels, or on the river in large canoe-type boats to reach the native villages and army outposts. These trips were by no means without danger. Tigers and other aggressive wild animals were not uncommon, poisonous snakes and crocodiles were in abundance while the local population of Atjeh was known for its

fierce tribal wars. On the other hand, Mom's dad was the only doctor around, and when he entered a village with his entourage he would be welcomed by the entire population of the settlement. Long lines would form for treatments. One of our family sayings (zegjes, see first anecdote in this chapter) is that we all would start the day with "groooote koppen thee" (huge cups of tea). That comes from the case of an Atjeh women who came to see Mom's dad because her little boy was so very thin. He suspected that the problem was lack of proper food and questioned her about what they ate. "Doc," she said, "we start the day with groooote koppen thee."

Gradually Mom's dad was promoted to better places (**Fig. 50**). After 3 different villages in Atjeh and an assignment in West Java, he was stationed in the town of Balikpapan on the east coast of Borneo. There was, because of the Shell Oil company a large contingent of Dutch people and they kept him quite busy. If someone in the family would feel sick, however, he was quick to declare that it would pass all by itself and not to bother him with it. And, so it happened that Mom's mother who developed a terribly raw throat could not get his attention even after repeated attempts. She finally decided to go and see him through the normal channels and went to the waiting room and waited patiently until it was her turn. Never in Mom's memory was there greater animosity than at that moment when she stepped into his office. They had to be quiet, though, so the other patients would not notice. It was the talk of the town for days.

### The "Kersenpit"

While writing these short stories we remember more and more, but we must somewhere stop. I could write about my Mother's love for poems (shared by our daughter Frieda) or about the evening 2 hour walks (rain or not) with my Dad along the small historic harbor (from where the

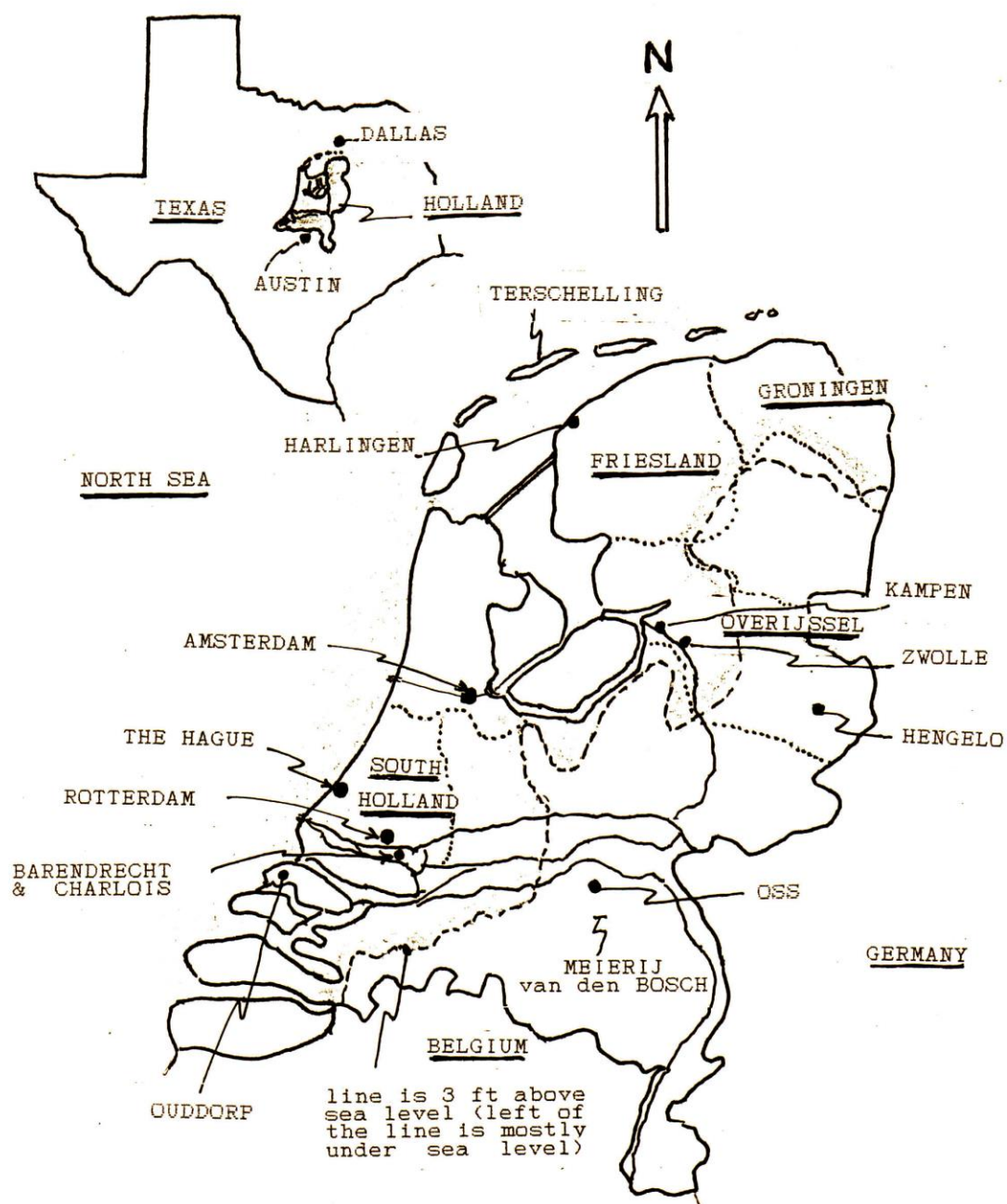
Pilgrim Fathers left in 1618) to take the small ferry back and forth to the other side of the Maas river where the dry docks are. That were the times he listened to my plans and problems, once in a while injecting some comments. He never complained about himself although he had, of course, his own share of disappointments.

He also had a way with our kids, such as when he watched our son, Bas - then two years old, eating his favorite cherries. Just when he was about to stick the last one in his mouth his grandfather suggested to give him one also. Bas, who always had to protect his rights against his older brother and sister was suddenly faced with a serious dilemma. After some moments of thought, he made his decision: He handed the cherry to my Dad but stipulated that "de pit is mijn" (the pit is mine); a deal that still is remembered by all of us (**Fig. 51**).



**Fig. 51.** "The pit is mine."





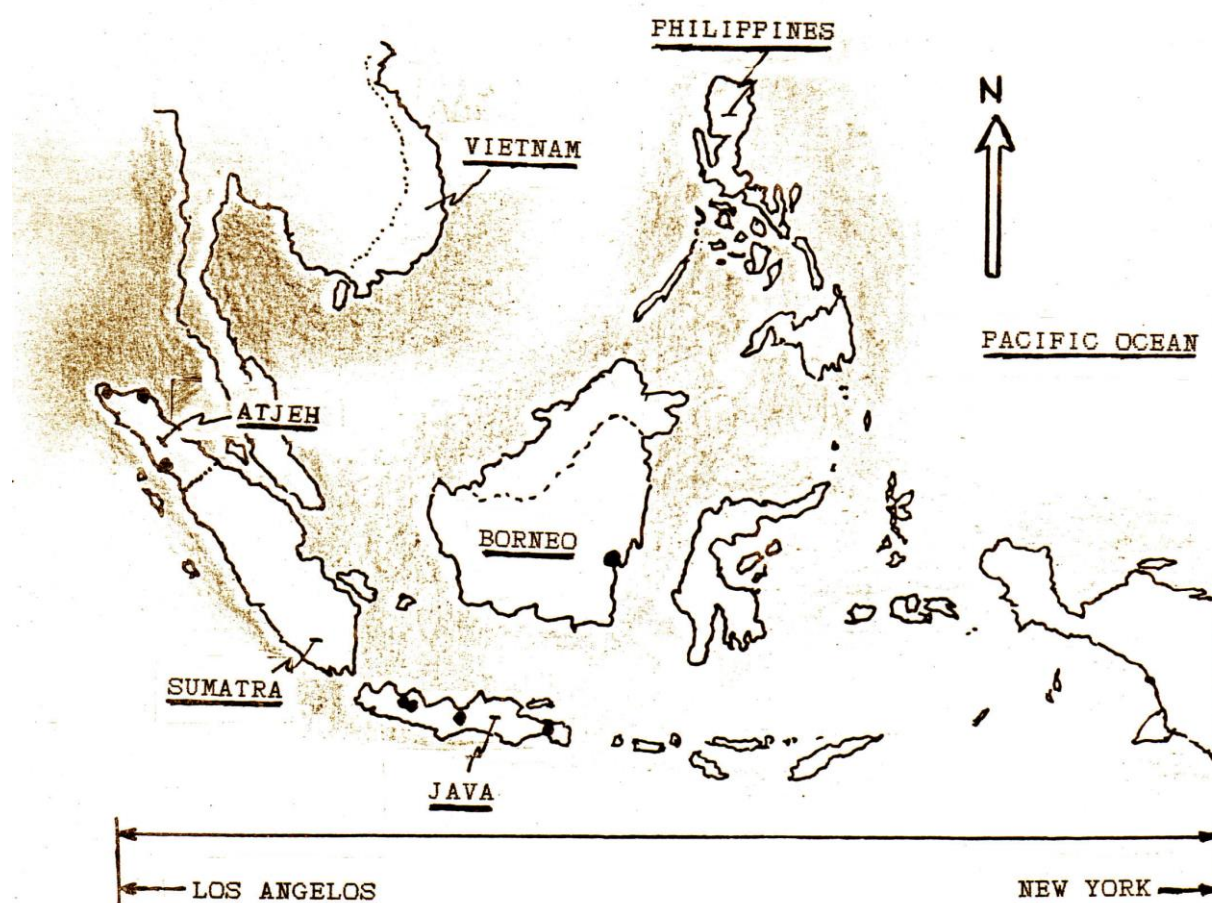
## THE NETHERLANDS (HOLLAND)

The NETHERLANDS fit in just between DALLAS and AUSTIN

Fig. 52. Map of Holland.



Fig. 53. Meijer Drees family tree #1 (1992).



# INDONESIA

(called DUTCH "EAST INDIA" or  
"OOST INDIE" before WW-II)

**Fig. 54.** Map of Indonesia.



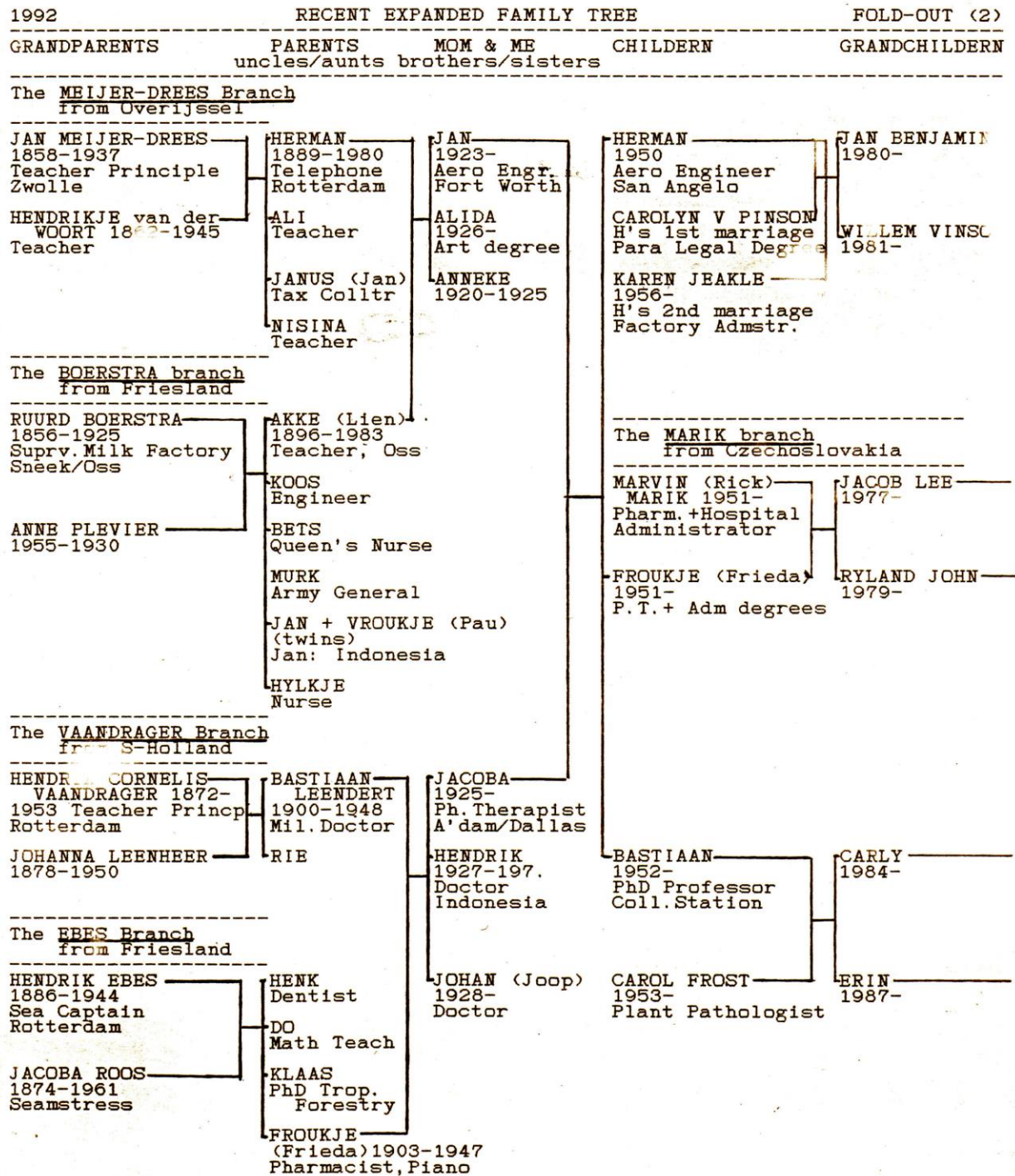


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