

Opa's Story

Or a story about part of the life of Hendrik or Henk or Henry Flim

Born June 7, 1931 in the village of Nyverdal in Holland

Some time ago my lovely grandchild Emily Flim asked me to write about details and experiences as a kid so that the next generation may have some knowledge of times gone by and hopefully be proud of their heritage and roots and they also in turn can pass along their story to their children and descendants.

Well, here it goes but I will jump from one topic to another, not in a particular order and you will find many spelling errors, since I was born in a foreign land and only started - or at least tried to speak English when I was 22 years old. Before that I spoke Dutch but mainly a dialect, which is some kind of a language, difficult to understand by others, developed over the centuries by people living in a certain area who never travelled far from their homes.

As mentioned I was born in 1931 in an old farm house with a straw roof and an attached barn and from the kitchen where all the living took place you could see all the animals in the barn through a small window.

This reminds me of one of the English poems I had to learn in High School. It goes like this:

I remember, I remember
The house where I was born
The little window
Where the sun
Came peeping in at morn
It never came
A wink too soon
Nor brought too long a day
But how I often
Wish the night
Had born my breath away

Well I am now 81 years old and do not agree with the last part of the poem since I am not ready to kick the bucket as Dean McRae would say.

Everybody in those days was born at home, without hospital or doctor except in serious cases, but we had a lady, called a "vroed frou" coming to the house helping with the birth. After about 2 weeks all the ladies of the neighbourhood were invited for coffee and cake and the baby was passed from one to the other to be admired. We had a lot of old customs and the neighborhood had a lot to do with each other.

In case of a funeral the neighbours each had their specific duty to help washing the body, prepare the casket etc. No funeral homes then.

I remember the funeral of my Opa who died in 1940, just before the War started.

The casket stood in the barn for viewing, then loaded on a wagon, pulled by a horse and preceded by a man with a tall black hat. Walked to the cemetery and the wagon was followed by the family, friends, and neighbours.

When somebody died, this same man with the tall black hat went from door to door saying "I hereby announce the death of _ _ _ _." In some houses he was invited to come in for a drink with the result that he became slightly drunk and could not walk straight anymore.

Most of the neighbours were known and addressed by their nicknames without being offended because this has been the custom for many years. My Opa and Oma lived in the same house as we did, because he owned it and my dad would get the farm when he died providing he would look after them when they were old. This was the custom then, since there were no old age homes in our area.

This was not a good idea for my parents since they sometimes interfered with the upbringing of the kids. I remember that I cried extra hard when I did something wrong and had to stand in the corner of the kitchen so my Opa could hear me crying. He would then pressure my mom to let me go, but all in all, we lived in harmony.

I had a lot of boys in the neighbourhood I played with, mainly protestant boys because some of the catholic boys were swearing and there was one who pointed downward when he passed me, indicating I would go to hell, and then upwards indicating he would go to heaven. We loved teasing each other but it was all kid's stuff and nothing serious.

As I became older I had to help on the farm and we had very few holidays, but nobody had. I loved working with the horses. We had 2 of them usually, big gentle heavy work horses. We never had a tractor. I helped my dad plowing and brought the hay piled high onto the wagon and riding the horses in the evening to the pasture.

We did not like weeding, picking potatoes, cleaning up etc. but our complaints were ignored because my dad was very firm and that is where I learned my work ethic. We always had pets, like rabbits, doves, goats, chickens etc. who needed looking after.

To come back to the horses, we had at one time a big grey horse who after a big feeding had the habit, when pulling the wagon to fart, every step up to 15 times in a row. So we could boast about that to our friends.

Holidays were few, meaning visits to family, farmer's fairs, church outings, etc.

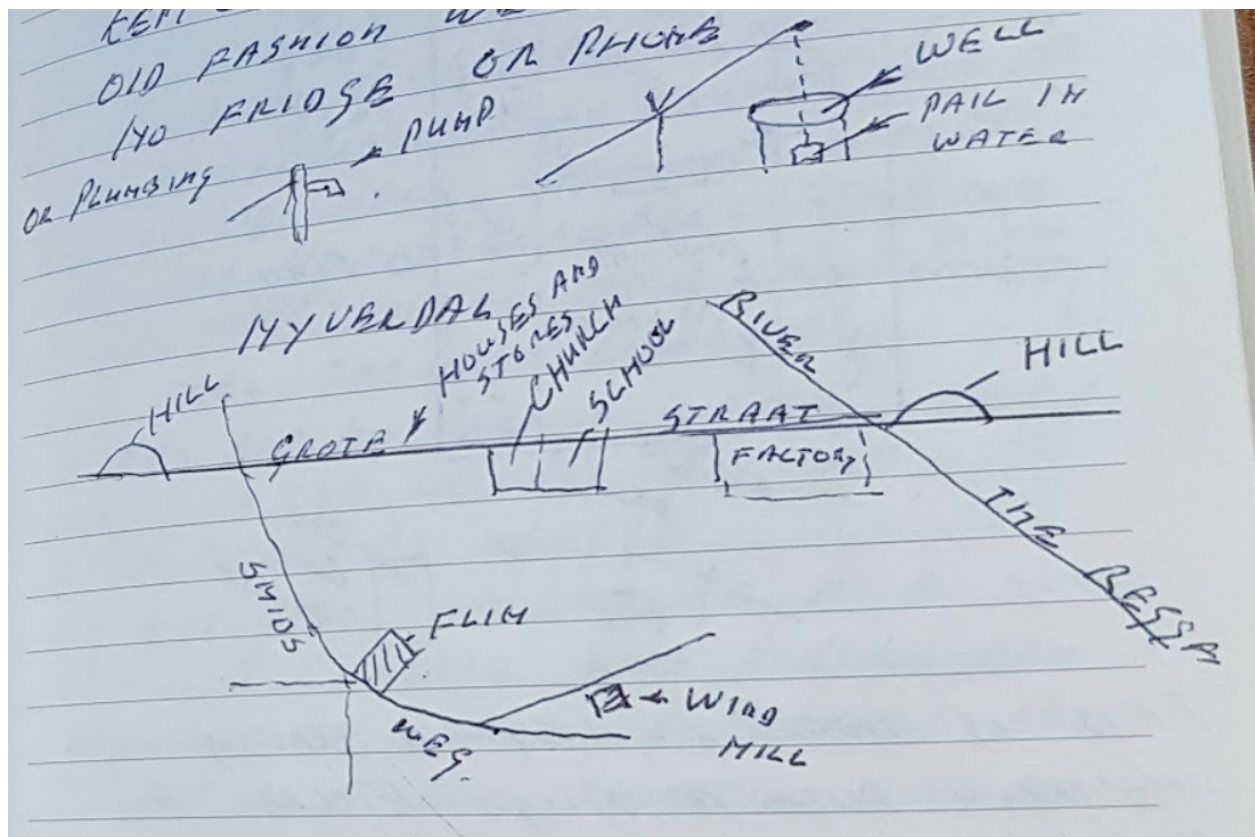
Our farm, like others in the area was small, about 30 acres and many had also part time work elsewhere.

We could make a living by growing and selling potatoes, milk, etc. and in the summer we had groups of young people, boys and girls from various churches staying and sleeping in our barn since the cows were in the field.

Nyverdal is a bit of a tourist area with surrounding woods.

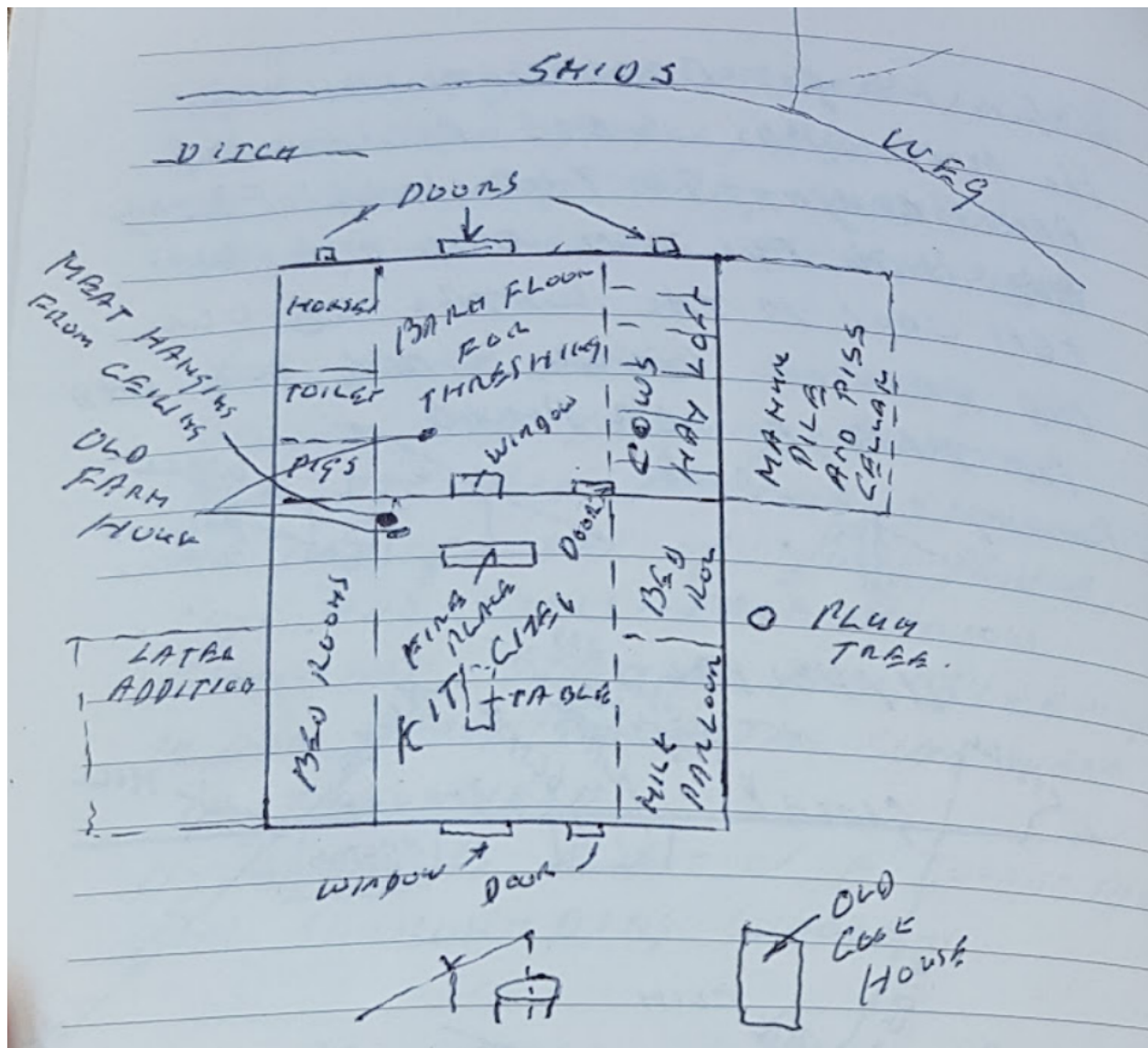
Our farm fields were partly surrounding our farm, but our pasture where the cows were all summer were about 6 km away. This meant 2 trips a day to milk the cows and we used a bike loaded with 2 milk cans to get there.

When we got back from milking, the milk cans were picked up and brought to the milk factory and milk for our own use was kept cool in the water of our old fashioned well since we had no fridge or phone or plumping.

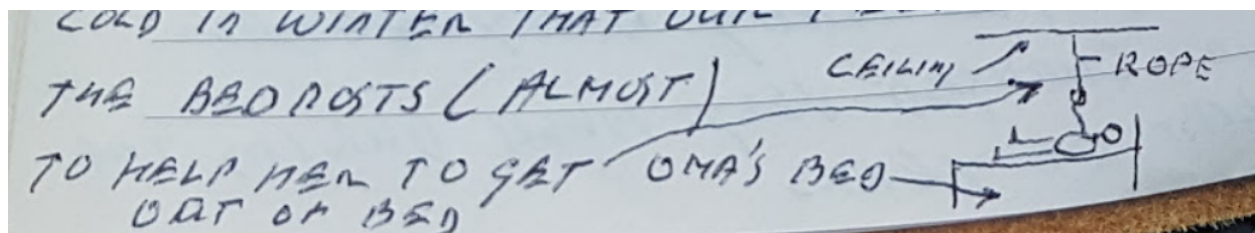


Nyverdal means industrial valley

It is located between 2 hills and the factory (clothing, etc.) provided work for many. Nyverdal has changed very much during the last 60 years.



This is more or less a drawing from our farm with a huge kitchen and fire place with meat hanging from the ceiling. All of our living took place in the kitchen where we had a bath in a tub once a week, no shower or bathtub. Bedrooms were sometimes so cold in winter that our feet froze to the bedposts (almost)



Every year a butcher, assisted by us kids came to our house to slaughter a pig or cow. This was quite an event. He killed the pig by hitting it hard on the head in one blow to make it unconscious, then quickly cut his throat with a knife and collected the blood in a pail, to be used by my grandmother to make blood porridge. We as kids were using hot water to clean the pig and scrape off the hair. It was then hoisted on a ladder, cut open, the meat dried and salted, and my mother would hang it on the ceiling and cut off a piece as needed. We kids used the bladder as a soccer ball. A curtain was placed around the meat to somewhat prevent flies to get at it but sanitation was not a priority and germs were not discovered in those days so nobody got sick.

As mentioned before, we had the odd holiday and then went visiting our relatives and their kids. We all went on our bikes to visit my mother's relatives who lived in vroomshoop, a village about 20km from Nyverdal.

They lived on a small farm, were very old fashioned and religious and had the manure pile and the well very close together and never were sick either. My grandfather made wooden shoes out of wooden shoes out of wooden blocks in his spare time which were transported by my mother in a wheel barrow every Saturday to a store, about 3 km away to be sold.

Everybody was wearing wooden shoes at that time, except to church. They are very comfortable and warm, especially with a bit of straw in them in winter.

I remember that my grandfather prayed very long, in a whining voice on Sunday mornings before breakfast while we were all kneeling in front of our chairs. I also remember an old aunt with 2 yellow protruding teeth, no money for a dentist, what a waste of time and money and I don't know if there were dentist at that time. They were very good and hospitable people and we loved going there.

Another visit we made was to an uncle and aunt in Ommen, a village some 25km away from our home. He was a baker and had a very old fashioned bakery store with one of these antique huge coffee grinders. He took us fishing in a river close by and there was farmers market every week. Lots of horses, cows, pigs, hens, etc. were brought and sold, farmers were arguing about prices and it was all very noisy and interesting. I remember my uncle kneading the dough with bare arms and hands while smoking a cigar while the ashes occasionally dropped in the dough, then putting twigs and firewood in the old oven, putting the loaves in and setting it on fire.

This is all very old fashion but don't forget I am writing about a time some 70 years ago.

On Sundays, after church his whole house was filled with people who expected a free coffee and cookie and my uncle had to give it to them in order to keep them as customers, weird customs but those were different days.

Another visit we made in Nyverdal was to a rich sister of my dad, her name was Tante Dima. She had married a dealer in cattle feed, was a widow now, very rich but it went a little to her head.

We always had to be neatly dressed, be polite etc. but she had a nice garden with lots of strawberries, fruits etc. and we could eat as much as we wanted.

So far I have written mostly of my early years before the war which were mostly happy feeling secure in my family going to church twice on Sunday, going to boys club, Christian school etc. was the norm, my dad was very active in church as elder and chairman of the men's society etc.

I did not like school too much, was a shy kid, got average marks on my report card but nothing to boast about.

I got 2 sisters above me, Alie and Dien. Alie was and is to some extent very bossy and we were at odds with each other many times. She was usually the winner but very playful and we never stayed angry.

Dien was very good looking and kind and caring for others. She became mentally ill after having a few children, had a very difficult life, stayed in nursing homes and died some years ago. I loved her deeply. After me came Bertha, Gerrit, Jenny, and Joke. Bertha was very smart at school, somewhat picky and those traits are still there. Gerrit my brother was a nice kid, we played a lot with each other. A few years before he died, we together flew to Las Vegas and rented a car for sightseeing.

I remember that we wanted to see the Grand Canyon going down on a mule but we were not allowed since we both were more than 200 lbs heavy. The 2 of us then rented a small plane and with the pilot flew over the Grand Canyon for a little while. I love flying and did the same with Bryan and Allard in B.C. flying over the mountains and I seem to remember that we scooped up snow from the mountain tops, but you better confirm this with Al and Brian.

Jenny married a Canadian, nice fellow and lives in Woodstock. Joke, the baby in the family was very smart, became a teacher and died some years ago.

Yes as a family we have had many blessings but also our share of pain and sorrow. But found comfort in our faith.

Another strange custom was to address people in different ways because not everybody was considered equal. If you were rich or the wife of a doctor or preacher you had to say *mevrouw* so and so. If you were the wife of a teacher you had to say *jufvrouw* so and so, and the wives of common people were addressed as *vrouw*. In our village we had several schools: one for CRC people, one for reformed people, one for catholic people, and one public school for everybody.

There was some friction and tension between the students of the various schools, nothing serious and we enjoyed having fights with each other.

So far I have written mostly of the time before the war which was mostly a happy time.

The war started in 1940 when I was 9 years old and in grade 3. I remember the German soldiers marching in front of our farm preceded by tanks and planes flying overhead. We were all standing outside, were very anxious and subdued and quiet.

No fighting took place in our village since the small Dutch army was located more in the center of Holland where heavy fighting was going on for just a few days.

The war came to a sudden end after Rotterdam was bombed causing many dead, destruction and fires. Our queen and government were able to escape to England. At first the Germans were trying to persuade the Dutch to cooperate and accept the Germans with little success and as the occupation progressed times became tougher and tougher. The Dutch underground army became active and did as much damage to the Germans as possible, and this had to be done in secret and was very dangerous.

There were all kinds of restrictions forced upon us. We were not allowed to listen to the radio and the news in the newspapers had to be all in favor of the Germans. The Jews had to wear a star on their clothing so they could be recognized, and later on in the war were hunted and transported to German concentration camps.

A lot of Jews went into hiding helped by Dutch families, and this was very dangerous and the people who helped the Jews, if discovered, would be shot.

In Nyverdal many Jews found a hiding place but I also did see Jews being rounded up, loaded on cattle trucks and transported. This was terrible to watch and made a deep impression on me. We had an old barn where the underground army was hiding weapons under the hay, and also kept a radio hidden there where the adults, during certain times in the evening, could listen to the news coming from England, all of course in secret. As kids we were told to be very careful not to talk about these activities.

Some Dutch boys of 18 years or older were forced to work in Germany in factories producing weapons of war. A lot of boys did not want to do that and disappeared to work in secret for farmers in the countryside. We had 2 of them and they were never caught, one of them also taught me how to play the organ. Sometimes the Germans would surround the village, trying to catch these boys or Jews, and we called this a *razzia*.

The farmers had to give part of their crop or animals to the Germans and I remember that there was always a soldier watching as my dad and helpers were threshing the grain on the barn floor to make sure that the Germans got their share. My mom invited the soldier to the kitchen for

coffee and this gave my dad a chance to hide some of the grain for our own use. Some of the German soldiers were okay, they hated the war.

In the woods, surrounding Nyverdal about 5 kilometers from our home the flying bombs (the V1 and V2) were shot to London England where they did a lot of damage. In order to put them out of order, the Allied Forces bombed Nyverdal several times. During a bombardment we had to lay flat on the kitchen floor or hide in a trench, dug in the soil some 8 feet deep and 3 feet wide we called this a loopgraaf.



During the worst bombardment about 80 people died. We were all lying flat on the kitchen floor praying, when a lady came screaming into the kitchen who had just seen her boy killed in a burning house. I will never forget that.

This happened all towards the end of the war when the people especially those living in the city had not enough food to eat. A lot of them came with carts, wheelbarrows and bicycles without tires to the farmers living in the countryside to buy food, potatoes, eggs, etc. Many came to our farm and we were able to help many.

A lot of children living in the city were sent by train to live with farmers and country folks. Oma, her sister and brother also were staying for a few months in eastern Holland where there was more food. People on their way back to the cities were often robbed of their food by the Germans and many in the city died from hunger. Later on planes from England dropped food in the cities and that helped a lot.

I also remember the many planes from England, loaded with bombs on their way to bombardments in Germany. They came in droves, some were shot down and you saw little figures, swinging back and forth hanging from a parachute. Some of these were captured and shot or put in prison, and some escaped and smuggled back by the underground to England.

The Germans took over our school, so we went to school in various homes and had to bring our own pencils and paper and also turf (peat) to burn in the stove to keep warm in the winter. Electricity was quite often not available so we used a lot of candles and oil lamps.

At night we had to close all windows etc., with curtains so that no light could be seen outside to attract planes, shooting etc. I did not mention this before but I had a little brother. His name was

Hermawn. He became very sick and had to go to the hospital by car, without lights, in the evening, driving very slowly, my mother went with him. An operation now would have saved his life. He died a few days later in the hospital during a bombardment, but the hospital was not hit. My mother was at his bedside. When we were kids, before going to bed we always said this prayer.

Ik ga slapen, ik ben moe
Sluit my beide oogjes to
Here houd ook. Deze nacht
Over my getrouw the wagt

Translated this means

I am going going to sleep, I am tired
I close both of my eyes
Lord, also this night
Take care of me

Herman said this prayer, then fell asleep and died. He was about 5 years old and we still miss him.

During the last month of the war the Germans took over our farm and we had to leave. We moved in with family about 20km away and my dad biked every day to the farm, to look after what was left of our cows. The Germans, knowing they were losing the war, stole whatever they could. We moved with a horse drawn waggon, filled with furniture- me laying on top holding a white flag, but we arrived safely.

Don't get the idea that we were always worried, we as kids had also lots of fun and adventure. I ended up in bed in a small bedroom since I had a concussion and had to stay quiet. In the same small bedroom was a bed with an elderly aunt in it with a glass eye.

Every night this eye came out, put in a dish, next to my bed where it stared at me all night. My aunt, a very nice woman, got a visit from her elder. A very somber man in a black suit told me that I was a very blessed young man, being so well looked after, but I disagreed.

This family, very kind and old fashioned, was Janne Mue and Albert Oom, had a small farm, some cows, some goats, a horse, but also sometimes used a pair of oxen for plowing, which was even at that time somewhat unusual. Oxen are strong, slow and calmer than a horse.

Soon thereafter we were liberated by the Canadian army and everyone went wild, jumped, danced, laughed, climbed up the tanks, thanked and gave little presents to the soldiers, etc. etc. for finally we were free again. The Canadian soldiers marched by. They were smothered with flowers and everybody was extremely happy. The soldiers gave us white bread and oranges which we had not had for a long time and were very nice.

The churches were full that Sunday after the liberation with songs of thanksgiving, the Jews and others came out of hiding, and everybody was very emotional.

During the war a lot of Dutch people were active in underground activities, such as hiding Jews, stealing documents, liberating prisoners, helping pilots return to England etc. etc. There were also some Dutch people called NSB, who helped the enemy. They betrayed their neighbours, informed the Germans where people and Jews were hiding, girls going out with German soldiers etc. etc. After the war they were arrested and punished for their behaviour and shunned.

It is amazing that so many German people could have followed such a war criminal as Hitler, be influenced by his evil. Policies which had caused so much suffering for millions of people, of course there were also many Germans who knew better, but were forced to support the German army. I recently read a book titled "All Quiet On The Western Front". This is a story of soldiers in the first World War and describes the horror of war and was forbidden by Hitler during the second World War.

A lot of Canadian soldiers died to liberate Holland and are buried there. In Holten, a village about 15 km from Nijverdal is a Canadian cemetery and I visited this during a trip to Holland. The graves are looked after by students from various schools who place flowers there. Old Canadian soldiers are invited to Holland on Remembrance Days, on May 5th, and Holland and Canada have made very good relations with each others, also because many Dutch emigrated to Canada including us. And our Dutch queen stayed in Ottawa for a while. Many tulip bulbs were donated by the Dutch government and bloom in Ottawa.

After the liberation we moved back to our farm, which was a mess and had to be cleaned up. Most of the cattle were gone, including a horse and wagon with furniture. Much to our surprise the house was located about 50 km from our home and returned.

Holland was in a bad shape. A lot of buildings, roads, etc. were destroyed etc. The marshal plan of America did help a lot to rebuild the countries which had suffered, and a lot of Dutch emigrated to Australia and Canada - including some of our friends. I was 14 years old when the war finished and had completed the lower school.

I will not write about my life after the war. I went to highschool in Nijverdal for 4 years, then to college for 3 years in another town named Almelo. I never liked school, was an average student, but fairly good in math and chemistry. We used to bike to school every day with a bunch of students to Almelo, which was fun except on windy and rainy days. With my sister Bertha, we used to study at home after school in a small room and had also a lot of arguments and fun. According to Bertha, I used to fart a lot to get her out of the room, but I think it was the other way around.

When I graduated from college I was restless, which I still am, and went to France, to learn French and broaden my horizons. *J'ai travaillé dans la France pendant 1 mois??* Does that make sense?

I ended up in the middle of France on a farm run by a Dutch farmer who had lived there for a long time. The farms in that area were centuries old, surrounded by stone walls and each farm had a wine cellar. We used to go there at night for a little drink, taking a rifle with us to shoot rats. They were nice people and put me to work weeding and other farm work together with other farm hands. Two former German soldiers had to do free labour on the farm because so much damage had been done in France by Germany.

After a few months, I moved to southern France since I did not learn French and to be in a complete French environment. I worked on a farm with many orchards, grapes, peaches, etc. The farm was located at the foothills of the mountains, formerly the border with Spain, called the Pyrenees. After a while I had to return to Holland, bought a bike, and it took me 9 days to get home.

When I got into Northern France, I was welcomed by a cheering row of people standing along the road. I did not understand then that I was number one in the Tour de France, which passed me later on. Unfortunately I still don't speak French, and very poor English which my dear children love to point out.

Back in Holland I worked a few months in a Factory, then I was in the army, which I liked very much. Around that time we decided to emigrate to Canada since the situation in Holland was not that rosy, and my mother especially saw no future for her children on the farm.

As mentioned, I liked to be in the army, but since we were going to emigrate soon, I did not follow the rules too strictly, and showed up too late with my friend at the barracks, when everyone was gone on field exercises. Since they did not know what to do with us, they put us in jail for a few days, and I am proud to say that so far, I am the only Flim so far who spent some time in Jail. No doubt others will follow.

We did request to go to church on Sunday, and were marched to church, supervised by an armed sergeant, who did not know what to do with his gun when entering the church, causing some unrest among the worshippers. Anyways, we had a lot of fun and don't remember what the sermon was about.

It is remarkable that a person only seems to remember the odd and funny things of life.

The Emigration

As mentioned before, the economic situation in Holland was not very good after the war and a lot of people emigrated and wrote letters back to Holland, which were mostly positive. We also

got letters from Canada and since we had a big family on a small farm the idea of emigration slowly became stronger. We attended information meetings and some of us took English lessons. We all were in favour of emigrating, some more than others. Bertha had a boyfriend, Alberta Hosmar, who also later came to Canada. My dad was heavily involved in different societies, church, school, agriculture etc., was not too keen at first, and it was my mother who was the driving force to emigrate.

A lot of preparation was made, warm clothing bought, tools etc. and we even took a small organ and motorized bicycle, blankets etc. All put in three big boxes and shipped to the boat in Rotterdam. Since we were not allowed to take too much money out of Holland (which we did not have already) we bought a lot of stuff, most of which was not necessary as we found out later on.

Then came the time to say goodbye to neighbours, friends, and family, who all came and surrounded the big bus which took us to the boat in Rotterdam. This saying goodbye was very painful and a lot of crying was going on. Also when the boat slowly left the coast of Holland, we were all very emotional and the people on board were singing:

Varewell myn dierbaar fader land
Lief fader land Varewell etc.

Which means goodbye my dear mother country etc. etc. The trip on the boat took about 7 days. A lot of people were seasick and looked somewhat green, and puked overboard.

The first thing we saw was Sable Island in the fog, just off the coast of Nova Scotia, and then we arrived in Halifax at Pier 21, which is now a museum and well worth a visit, where all the emigrant ships were unloaded. A few years ago I visited the museum. We arrived in the Spring of 1953 by a boat called "De Grote Beer". You can see the passenger list, trunks, and luggage brought by the emigrants from the various countries.

We were supposed to go to Alberta to work to harvest sugar beets on farms, a lousy job, not very much liked by the Canadians. However, last minute changes were made and we were now to go to Cape Breton Island. We arrived late and there was no room for us in the inn, and we could sleep for free on our first night in Canada in an unused part of a prison together with other emigrants.

Okay, so far I have written about personal experiences in Holland etc., but it does not mean that everybody feels and looks at things the same way. Life in the cities was quite different than living in the countryside in small towns or villages and it also depends on which province of Holland you lived in, and how you were brought up and educated.

My sister Jenny wrote a book "Opa's Story" based on a lot of research showing also a lot of interesting pictures. It is a very good book, far better than what I am writing here and I gave each of my children a copy, so kids if you're interested ask your parents. The book is written in english, gives a lot of history of the war, emigration, etc. And should be required reading for all my children, grandchildren, and their descendants.

"Lest we forget"

My sister interviewed my dad in Dutch and put it on tapes, and these tapes and other important papers, are now in the possession of Emily Flim, who loves history, made a trip to the Netherlands, France, etc. She is the only one so far who has shown an interest in our history, but that hopefully will change, and I'm sure that you can borrow some of these tapes to learn Dutch for a small fee. Enabling her to become a famous writer and historian.

I want to back up a little now. As you know we emigrated in the Spring of 1953, just after a big flood in Holland when about 2000 people drowned. The eastern part, including Nijverdal, is fairly high, but the western part is low, some below sea level and protected by dykes, which have to be continually repaired and reinforced and made higher because of higher water levels due to global warming and the melting of ice. The Dutch emigrants are the best in the world for their experience and have constructed huge dams, polders etc. and are active throughout the world if there are water problems. It also started with the little boy who put his finger in a hole in the dyke to prevent a flood.

Well I am proud of this little country where I was born

"Where my cradle stood"

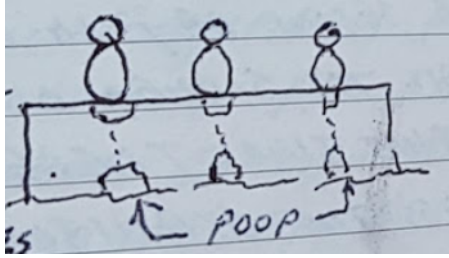
"My father land"

I will stop now before I become too emotional and the tears start to flow. Canada has been good to us and it now has become our country.

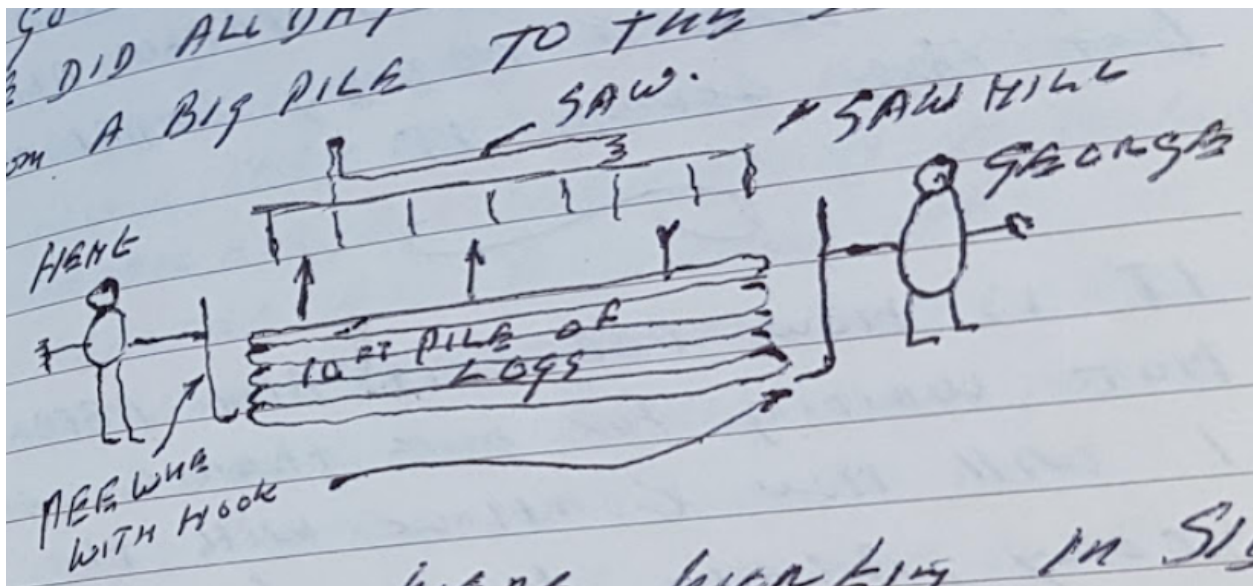
I will now write about our first time in Canada which is also in more detail described in "Opa's Story".

The second day in Canada we took a train to Sydney on Cape Breton Island at that time. There was no bridge across the Strait of Canso, and the whole train went on a boat. We arrived in Sydney, a mining town with coal in deep mines under the sea. From there we were picked up by a few cars for the drive to Marion Bridge along dirt roads (no paved roads here in 1953) and we got stuck a few times because of spring freeze up, but finally arrived and moved in a very old house, way in the country a few miles from Marion Bridge. Mother did not like it because the only bed in the house upstairs came partly through the ceiling while the rest of the kids slept on the floor in the kitchen.

We kids liked the adventure, especially since the outdoor outhouse had no plumbing and three holes which served three kids at the same time.



The farm was about 20 acres, not used for years, no fences, about 5 acres cleared, and the rest bush. Two horses which my dad used pulling the logs which he cut from the woods. Myself and Gerrit worked in the bush at a sawmill some 10 miles away, slept in small sheds on bunk beds. The work was very hard, the food very good, the days long, but we were allowed to go home on weekends. What we did all day was rolling logs from a big pile to the sawmill.



The girls were working in Sydney in the housekeeping and everybody was busy, but had to make a lot of adjustments.

The people, mostly from Scottish descent, some of which still spoke some gaelic, were fantastic, hospitable, friendly, we loved them. On Sundays we walked to their small presbyterian church in Marion Bridge (a very pretty town). After the service (little did we understand) we were also to sing Dutch hymns and we put on quite a performance, Bertha playing the organ. And the rest of us singing as loud as we could, Dutch songs and hymns which nobody understood, but they loved it.

It is now February 2014, and after not writing for more than a year, I will now continue with this story, again jumping from one subject to another. This morning, Sandra, Dean, Glenn, mum and me had breakfast at Shillings and Glenn wanted to know how we got the name Flim. Well, if you read the book "Opa's Story", you will find out that we got this name because we lived in an area

where there was a lot of peat and one of the tools used to work in the peat was a shovel known as "flim". Well I for one find this very flimsy evidence and I don't think the name suits us. Everybody who sees a Flim walking by is impressed by their stature, behavior, they are well dressed, polite, etc. etc., all indicating a noble character and high <?>. There are exceptions to this of course, as you all well know, and have gladly pointed this out to the person involved, but we will not mention names here for fear of reprisal.

The best thing to do would be to go on the internet, since there is a city called "Flim" in Switzerland, to find out how they got their name, and solve this issue once and for all.

February 18, 2014

We did not stay in Cape Breton very long because of little opportunity, but also because a church (CRC) could be started in Nova Scotia near Belmont where already a few emigrant families lived. We rented a house close to Belmont and on Sunday, a truck would come to pick up our small organ (brought from Holland) to bring it to the small barn where we had church with about 6 other families, followed each time by a potluck supper.

Everybody was very poor, some homesick and lonely in the beginning, but that changed soon. The kids were sitting in the hayloft with their feet swinging over the heads of the congregation and the minister and organ were going full blast praising the Lord. We had a minister once in a while but it was mostly reading a sermon.

It is now January 3, 2015, and I have not written for a long time. I had covered the story of my childhood and immigration, and now our life in Canada would be about the same as the life of our children. They can write their own story for the benefit of their offspring. However during Sandra's Birthday, where many were present, I was asked to read some of my story, and I think this became the highlight of the festivities, and I almost, but not quite, got a standing ovation.

This gave me the inspiration at least for a while, to continue also with the hope that in due time this book may become a bestseller, and I may become famous, despite the fact that Luke, in his poem, says that I came into this world by oozing out of a peat bog.

Well, here comes, see next page.

As mentioned before, this church had a big place in our lives, but we also had our young people's society. This was always held at our home, where my mother provided pancakes and cookies. We always had a full house, and there were a lot of single boys coming who were interested in studying scripture, or maybe in my five sisters, I don't know and who am I to judge?

I remember one meeting where after a long discussion, a Catholic boy was allowed to join our CRC society, since he could not help that he was Catholic.

I worked on a big dairy farm, located along the Bay of Fundy where you could see the big difference between high and low tide, and I came home on the weekends. To my shame, this was the first time in my life that I was fired since they caught me drinking milk from the cows. The work on the farm was heavy, I was always hungry, the food on the farm was good but never enough, and the pancakes I took with me from home were eaten by Thursday or turned sour.

Afterwards I went to Halifax where I had several jobs. This was in 1954 and Halifax was a booming city when immigrant ships from various countries arrived almost daily.

My brother George, Albert Hosmar, and some others also came and we rented some rooms and went home to Belmont every other weekend. We all had different jobs, not lasting very long for low pay. We were never without work for very long.

We just went from jobsite to jobsite asking for work, saying "Me no speak English, but need work to pay for food." The first job I had in Halifax was on a construction site where I worked with a crew of black men. We were digging holes with pick and shovel from the foundation of the front porches of homes, and sometimes had to use a little dynamite if the ground was too rocky.

They were nice guys, descendants of black slaves who had escaped via the underground railroad from the states many years ago and ended up in a settlement called "Bible Hill" close to Halifax.

Later, a more interesting job was working the night shift on a site close to the Halifax harbour where they were building these big and very high concrete grain silos. I was in the steel crew and we placed and tied steel rods in forms in which concrete was poured day and night in the silos which became slowly higher and higher. At times it was a bit dangerous but the pay was good. As we worked higher, we could see the immigration buildings, pier 21 (mentioned before), and the ships entering the harbour.

George, my brother, had also several jobs, one of which was working on a <?>. Albert Hosmar worked in a store and had a gallbladder infection in a Halifax hospital. In these months in Halifax we also learned to become more aggressive and started to bargain with our employers for higher wages, and were not afraid to quit jobs when better jobs became available.

Immigrants in those days, and even now, are sometimes being taken advantage of by getting low paying or dirty jobs which nobody else wants, or not being paid at all for work done. Canada welcomes many immigrants and refugees, and lawyers are available to protect their interests now. One of these lawyers is the future judge by the name of Luke Mc Rae, who strongly believes in freedom, equality, and brotherhood for all. Watch him perform in the courts of this nation in the near future.

Well after a little while we became dissatisfied in Halifax. We were not able to save lots of money and did not like hitchhiking back and forth to home, and sometimes not able to get a ride for a long time.

Our only entertainment in Halifax was pretty well going to Pier 21 in our free time and mingle with the immigrants who had just come off the ships and help them along a bit with the language amid all the confusion.

Now in coming to Canada my sister Dien had met a boy on the boat who was going to Oshawa and who now had a good paying job in GM. He wrote a letter suggesting we should also come for better jobs, and he would be able to get to know my sister better. Well after a lot of discussions, we decided to go. Alie, Dien, George, and myself went by train to Oshawa and the rest of the family would come later.

The 4 of us rented an upstairs apartment in a house on the corner of King and Park road. So here we were, two brothers and two sisters in a small apartment ready to start looking for jobs. We got along with each other apart from the odd argument. One source of irritation was that my brother and I had the habit of getting up in the middle of the night to drink quickly from the milk bottles which were kept in the window sill to keep cool since we had no fridge, leaving very little for my sisters to drink. I remember that one day we had a loud argument, overheard by our field pastor, Rev. Moes, where he came unexpected up the stairs to visit us. He pretended not having heard anything and he started voicing his satisfaction that we as brothers and sisters live so peacefully together.

These field pastors were very practical men, not only preaching but helping driving emigrants around since not many had cars in the beginning to find jobs and lodging etc. and were much admired.

More and more immigrants arrived, many from reformed backgrounds, and many churches, schools, etc. were constructed, mostly with free labour and financial help from long established CRC churches in the states.

We first went to Bowmanville and had church in the basement of the church which was under construction on Scugog road. Then we had church in the Free Mason hall on Center Street on Oshawa, but not after long discussions, if it was proper to do so since the CRC is against lodges.

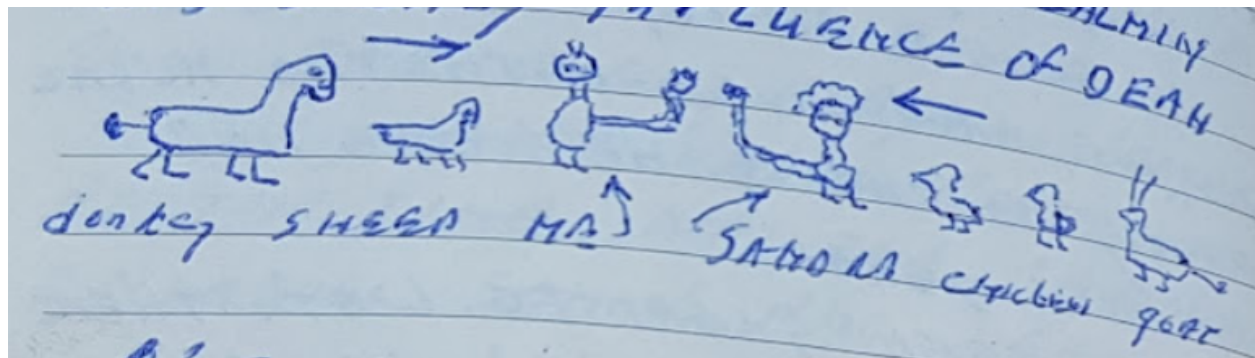
Under construction at that time was the parsonage, Emmanuel School, and Hebron CRC in Whitby, mostly with free labour and we joined the small but fast growing congregation in Hebron church.

The church was very active, women's society, men's society, young people's etc., elders and deacons sitting in separate pews, no women allowed as deacons and elders. Yes, those were

the days when elders, smoking heavily during council meetings, made decisions, did home visitations, and warned the youth not to dance etc. What happened to the CRC??

I am writing this sitting at my desk on a cold day in January 2015. Sandra just walked by me to do some washing in the mudroom. Yes, we have lived with the Mc Rae family in the same house now for some years.

It has been great to watch their children growing up from helpless, innocent cute little babies to young adults, very tall and usually but not always well behaved, and are enjoying living together. This does not mean that we have not had the odd disagreement. This often started between my oldest daughter and myself, both strong-minded and fiercely defending and protecting the rights of our animals. It had to do with animal poop deposited at odd places and escaping chickens. I still don't know whether her kids secretly enjoyed and encouraged these flare ups. However, very soon peace was restored in the valley thanks to the calming and steady influence of Dean.



Okay, back to Oshawa and jobs.

I first tried to get a job at GM, but they were not hiring. I then worked for a little while as a tin smith helper at the construction of a new post office building in Oshawa at Simcoe Street. After that I worked as a labourer for a construction company in Ajax, mixing mortar and lifting concrete blocks on the scaffold, all in the old fashioned way. Finally I got a job as a night watch man for a lumber yard in Whitby, and I also had to clean the buildings. For the second time in my life, I got fired from the job because by moving a truck I got a small dent in the front fender.

Now when I look back on these first 2 years in Canada, I am amazed how many jobs we all had including my sisters and my dad, who was about 55 years old. He had jobs on an apple orchard, worked in a garage and on a farm attached to the Whitby mental hospital, where he picked up garbage from the various buildings with horse and wagon assisted by patients.

We all saved our wages and put it all in the same pot in order to buy our first car, a Plymouth for \$1700 and later on a house on Palace Street in Whitby. We each kept a small amount of money to buy cigarettes etc.

After my parents and the rest of the kids left Nova Scotia, we rented an old farm house with some acres on Highway #2 just west of Whitby where my dad kept a cow and cultivated some potatoes and tomatoes which us kids sold to people living in apartments in Whitby and Ajax.

When I was fired from my job at the lumber yard in Whitby, I did some soul searching since I did not get anywhere, and what should I become in the future? I am sure that all my grandchildren know what I am talking about since all of them are or were facing the same frustrating problem. At school I liked chemistry and math, and I liked the outdoors and travelling, so one day I talked with a survey crew who were employed with the Department of Highways. This sounded very interesting and I applied for a job with the highway department. While I was waiting for their reply, I got a job for a few weeks by a local surveyor, Mr. Donovan, and we did a few jobs in Cobourg, and Oshawa, and Bowmanville.

After a few weeks I was accepted to be articled by the Department of Highways and had to report for work in Toronto, and finally after 5 years I was sworn in as an Ontario Land Surveyor on April 29, 1959. But that is an other story, which I may tell later.