

Fifty-five Years with Dad!

First of all, I have to tell that we would have been engaged earlier than we did (April 20, 1945). Soon after we met for the first time, Jan was in the underground forces and was in hiding many times. Even though it was the normal procedure to officially engage when you were sure of each other to share your life together. During the war you could not do this because it could bring Jan's life in danger. Some of the soldiers knew that Jan was my friend and they asked me in a far from friendly way, more than once, if I was engaged to him. I told them that I had many friends and that he was one of them.

The first months began with double dating which consisted of walks on Sunday afternoons after church. Bertha, (my friend since grade one,) and I were often together on Sunday afternoon. In the morning I was in charge of cooking the noon meal since I had reached the age of sweet 16 and that brought me the freedom to stay with my friend for a couple of hours on Sunday. One of these afternoons we were walking toward my home, bike in hand, on a narrow road flanked by a river and a ditch below on the other side. It was not very comfortable I admit, but I could not leave my bike elsewhere. It was then that we met Jan Moerman and his friend Pieter Van de Burgh, they asked if they could join us and we both liked the idea especially when Jan took the bike out of my hand! So it happened that we start talking together, and since the road was so narrow, we walked two by two and Pieter and Bertha had no objections either! This became a pattern for the summer and fall.

I see this as the leading of the Lord, to bring me to the afternoon service, to give me an opportunity to meet other young people. When you live so isolated as we did, I met only one young man who was working for our neighbor. He came on Sunday nights and liked me too much, if you know what I mean and I was uncomfortable at times. But my Mom made him so welcome, as she did with everyone, that he seldom missed coming on Sunday.

During that winter Jan had permission from my parents to bring me home from girls club at six in the evening. The reason was that I was bothered twice that fall, by a man on a bike and once a truck driver, who stopped and want to put my bike in his truck. I still get the creeps if I think about this. I

was so glad that my parents saw the need because I did not dare to go to my sewing lessons and girls club any more during winter.

The following summer, Bertha and I were invited to canoe for an evening. We enjoyed it very much, it was a good thing that we did not know that Jan or Pieter were not able to swim! We took hours to go to the big river back and forth and took it for granted that they both could swim.

Next was the wedding of my second sister and Jan was invited as well. I just had my 18th birthday. The episode of struggle after that wedding I have written about in my first memoirs.

It took at least all summer until I realized that this was the man I loved and could trust to share my life with. His sister's wedding was in the fall of 1943, to which I was invited as well and that became the official beginning of our engagement even though it was not celebrated until April 20, 1945.

When Jan was in the underground forces he was not sleeping home any more for his safety but had several places where he was welcome. I refer you to my husband's memoirs to read up on those years. Our home was not safe for him either. In the summer we would walk in my Father's field and at night the doors were locked so that every one could hide in time. If there was a "razzia" (soldiers surrounding the farm) I had to open the doors, being the only girl, when every one was safe. Needless to say that we had many stressful moments, especially the last two years. And if soldiers came on the yard while we were in the field at my home or his home, some one came to warn us that Jan should stay away. As a cover up, I would bring the cows home for milking. In these last two years there was much danger, people were shot at random sometimes. Especially the last winter and spring when the soldiers took off, many were killed. I can not tell you how relieved we felt when it was all over on May 5, 1945.

There was much celebration but it was bittersweet for the many that lost loved ones. Even we, who had not lost any of our families, could not find the joy to celebrate at first. War is so cruel and no respecter of people. Many died from hunger and cold, and what happened in the concentration camps, I don't want to repeat.

As time went on we became our own selves again; that's the best way to describe it, and we began to talk about our own future. Many ways we

explored to find work and a place to live but in fall 1947 it became clear that emigration was going to be our way to start a family of our own. With the help of my cousin Peter Lugtigheid we could immigrate to Canada, April 3, 1948.

Our Wedding Day was set on March 10, 1948.

We were very busy to get every thing ready for our big day. Five cousins came to cook most of the meal for the 40 guests and were serving until past midnight. Mom had done her homework the day before and every thing went perfect. The puzzle to find a wedding dress for me was solved by borrowing a dress, it fitted very nice and I was glad that I could wear a white dress. The ceremony in the town hall and the service in the Church we have always treasured. These special events you can never forget. When we came home we were more then spoiled with food and drink, what we had not seen during the war. Our parents went all out to make it a feast indeed!

After a delicious meal, we were entertained with songs and poems made by sisters and brothers and also with skits. When we came home from the wedding ceremony and the church service it was almost dark and when my Dad closed the evening after midnight with the reading of Psalm 121, I could not believe that this special day was over.

I knew that he was going to speak to us, as he always did on special days. I braced myself against my tears, holding Jan's hand tight. My nerves were stretched to the limit. I could have let my tears roll because every one was fighting their tears. Not that my Dad was sentimental or emotional but he used this Psalm as a prayer of protection and Gods guiding hand upon us: on the ocean, in our marriage and in our new land, far from loved ones, friends and familiar surroundings. We have never forgotten this day. Even the details were clear when we talked about it with our 50th anniversary. To say good bye to every one was the part I never got used to. After changing my clothes, we went on our bikes to Jan's home which was a good remedy to bring our emotions under control again.

The next weeks were very busy with gathering all the things from our homes to pack in a wooden box or crate. Three weeks was not much time to do all this, especially for our Moms. They were still busy finding a bed and bedding as that took more time then just going to a store and buying it. There was still very little in the stores yet even after almost three years.

When all was gathered we found that the box was not altogether full. As a result we took some older winter clothing along so that all was packed tight which was a real blessing in the cold winters in Ontario.

When the box was shipped we had a few days to take it easy before the big trip. I loved to be with Jan every day. I was so sure and had such peace about leaving, in spite of the pain it brought. Even though it felt like we were leaving for good, humanly speaking, Jan felt the same way. We loved our parents more than I can express and we loved Holland. You can only measure that when you are leaving for good but there was no other way for us.

April 3rd, we went home for our last goodbye. I whispered in my Mom and Dad's ear "With my God I can crush a troop and with my God I can leap over a wall" Ps. 18: 29. I felt that God alone could bring us over that ocean, in that 2000 ton freight boat. Seasickness was my companion for the whole trip. Jan brought me meals in our cabin and later drinks when I was carried outside for the daytime on deck.

What a terrible honeymoon for my dear husband! When we were closed in by fog, we waited for 24 hours for the fog to lift. The mist horn was blowing every two or three minutes, as we were very close to Newfoundland. For me it was a great blessing that the storm had died down; the sea had become quiet and so was my stomach! I began to eat all my meals and my interest in everything and my strength returned. We were so thankful that we were coming to the end of our trip. I felt alive again and my husband had his bride back!

A couple of days later after a stop in Quebec City and a beautiful day on the Saint Lawrence River we went on the train in Montreal early in the morning. We were excited that we finally had arrived in Canada. I am sure we have looked like a pair of turtle doves to some but we were so glad that we were together after all the stress and sea sickness and that I was feeling well again. We looked at every thing we could lay our eyes on until it was dark. We saw much but nothing that appealed to us yet. We passed a lot of farming area when it was dark we found out afterwards. It was close to midnight when we heard the name "Chatham". We were waiting for this name all day, so to speak.

We were tired but still excited when we arrived. There was no cousin to meet

us as our letter did not arrive until after Sunday. We were led to a taxi driver who knew where Peter Lugtigheid was living. One other immigrant couple was in our taxi as well and they were brought home first. Later we discovered that Peter lived six miles from the train station and we were in the taxi for about one hour. We were taken by the nose and paid too much but we were so glad when we met our cousin. The Lord guided us to the very end of our trip!

As immigrants we could not take more than 100 dollars per person from home and our wages were going to be 80 dollars per month our cousin had written. That was the reason why our parents were so eager to find as much as possible for us to take along. I was glad that we knew all these things. Some immigrants had unpleasant surprises in that respect. The cost of our train trip from Montreal to Chatham, Ont. was 60 dollars and the taxi to Peter and Ediths', 25 dollars. Oh yes, and we bought one dozen large oranges for two dollars in Quebec City, to celebrate our safe arrival and also to enjoy on the train. Our honeymoon on the ocean began in Antwerp, Belgium on April 5 and came to a joyful end on April 25, 1948 when we landed in Montreal, Quebec.

It was so good to be in the home of Peter and his wife Edith. They had three children, 10, 8 and 6 years old. We had never met them before. Peter was eager to help us and spoke his Dutch very well for being twenty years in Canada. This made it very easy to communicate, as he translated our questions to his wife.

We had six hours of sleep before our big breakfast and our first church service on Canadian soil. A delicious lunch after church, and then a very welcome nap. After that it was time to be introduced to our farmer and his family and to our home which was one half mile from the farm. It was wise of Peter that he told us several things in advance so it was not too much of a shock. There was no electricity he had written so we had brought candles along to solve that. We had a (leaking) gas cooking stove in the kitchen plus water from a water well which was dark brown. As to the leaking the answer was that the stove was getting old. This was obvious! And as to the water we heard that well water was healthy. Later we talked about these things and my dear husband had hoped for a better kitchen for me. But I felt that I could make do, for the simple reason that every one had to start on the bottom of the ladder, as Peter told us.

I cooked every drop of water for eating, drinking and for the laundry as well. The water was good to drink if I left it over night in a jar, so that all the rusty stuff went to the bottom. As to the gas smell, we had the windows and the door open in the kitchen day and night and Jan had peace with that. We also kept the living room door and bedroom door closed (I thank you Lord for the doors!) and our bedroom window open except when we had severe thunderstorms.

It sounds a bit complicated to keep those rules but only with the two of us there was nothing to it, during the hot summer. It was April 27 that we moved in our own first “home sweet home” as I have called every house we lived in over the 50 years. The story about our eight months at the Giffen farm has been written already by both of us.

After 47 days of being married we were delighted to begin our life together in our new land. With all the preparations behind us plus the emotional good-byes and the strenuous trip over the ocean, we were so glad that we could rest from all the things we did to find a place to live and work. We found total peace and contentment in the way the Lord had led us. We trusted Him to lead us on, through the difficult years of learning and adjusting because every thing was new and different.

It was a feast for both of us when our box came with our furniture. It was so good to see all our familiar things from home. That made life so much more comfortable and it began to feel like home!

Of course our bed was put up first. What joy to put the old dusty couch on the front porch again! It was fun to roll out our rug, put the table on it with the six chairs my Uncle and Aunt gave us, who had lived with us with their five children for more then two years during the war.

We also brought our fancy chair and tea cupboard along that was made by a friend of John’s brother Andrew, to pour tea for our guests. Dad brought a lazy chair and his desk as well and some pictures and paintings from our parent’s farms and the coo-coo clock made it “gezellig” (cozy)! We could not bring many dishes along but enough to cook; a frying pan, two cooking pans, just three plates, cutlery, two wooden spoons, a strainer, few mugs and a tea kettle. So our borrowed kettle could return to the little chickens again as well! I felt rich and I learned to cook ahead of time and boiling water endlessly!

As far as adjusting to each other was concerned that went very slow and smooth, for the simple reason that we saw each other just a few hours a day. John came home for breakfast 30 minutes, for lunch 40 minutes and in the evening he came home between 7-8 PM. This was for six days and doing chores on Sundays was three times per month, morning and evening for two hours each at least. We did not have time to disagree with each other, even if we wanted too! We were too busy finding out what we did all day and learning new words that John (as my husband was called now) brought along. The oldest son and his wife of our boss were helping us in several things. I visited her every week the first months and Marianne taught me the names of every item in their home. She wrote them down and told me how to pronounce them. It was of great help and their friendship was even of more value to both of us.

We also received much mail from Holland the first years which always was a highlight for us and a priority.

To go to Church by bus, full with immigrants, was a blessing in many ways as well. We learned fast to understand some of the sermon every Sunday morning because we followed the reading in our Dutch Bible and we asked others about words like grace, mercy, faith, salvation and so on. The immigrants who came a year before taught the newcomers. After eating our lunch together, we went to the Dutch service in the afternoon.

Many new families came to the Christian Reformed Church were Peter was an elder but also people stopped coming because they were "Reformed" in Holland or never went to church before. We were happy in the church and received what we needed but those who went to the United Church were not. Some began to ask John if he could contact some Reformed pastors in the States for advice.

John talked much with these people during our lunch hour in church and his pastoral heart began to tick over time already! First we talked with Peter who was well aware of this problem. He told us to go to a field man. I have never followed all the details but this problem was all over Ontario we were told. What I learned soon about my husband was that he was a man who cared for the spiritual well being of others, and that he was a man of action.

The result of the preliminary work of several immigrants was, that on Oct 11

& Oct.12, 1949, two Reformed Churches where born; one in Chatham Ontario (we were one of the five families as well as two single men, who put their shoulders under this task and the other church was in Hamilton, Ontario.

I want to add that it was very painful for us to leave the church where we had begun to feel at home. We lost most of our friends from that church. One thing that made it easier was, that we had Peter's blessing.

Standing on this cross road, it was for John like saying "Here I stand I cannot do other wise." He could not stand the thought that new immigrants could not find a church home like we were blessed with. I did agree with the decision wholeheartedly but I had not counted on this type of "immigrant pain". It was hurting both of us.

I realize now that when this happened I was overly sensitive to these changes. They interfered with what I longed for; to feel at home in this new land as soon as possible. Every thing that begins to feel like home, you want to hang on too and not let it slip out of your fingers again. That's where the pain originated.

The Joy of Expecting our First Child

In the meantime we were rejoicing in the fact that it was confirmed for a few months already that our first baby was on the way! Our Church difficulties, the farm where John worked plus the adjusting to the new language etc. did not over rule or over shadow our home life. We enjoyed the hours we had together immensely and planned all kind of things to welcome our baby. John created a dresser from our furniture box for the babies clothes and it was low enough to change diapers on since we had only one table! This work was done mostly with candle light in the evenings and every nail was straightened out to be used again. I was busy with taking apart a home knit sweater to make little outfits for our baby. I was often thinking how we would get all the things together for our baby but soon the answers came, one by one.

One of our neighbors came to ask if I was willing to help him out with pulling the tops out of his seed corn. I was willing enough but told him that I was pregnant. He knew that and said that every hour would help. I started working eight hours a day but later I did just as many hours as I could

handle. The farmer was happy and I was more than thankful that I could help John a bit. I never made more than one dollar per hour in those days whether I did house work or worked outside but it meant much more to me than I made! Now I could buy material for diapers and a few other things and make what was needed most for the baby. We moved from our first farmer on November 30 because our boss was demanding us to go to a local church so that John could look after more cattle on Sunday that he had bought. Of course the boss had rattled the wrong cage and he came to apologize a few days later but John was hired by a fruit farmer already. December 22 was my due date and at the first week of that month, when we just had moved to the Broadwood farm, we got a big surprise.

I was invited to a home of a Canadian family in Chatham, for a visit. We had never met these people before and no explanation was given, except that it was a fun evening. I had no idea what the fun could be all about, to sit with my extra 25 pounds on a chair all evening! When we came to the door, I told John to stay with me and see first what they were up to because I was scared. I did not need to ask him to stay close but I was depending on him in every thing. It took us only a few minutes to see some familiar faces from our own Church who were there already and my heart was at ease even though I still had no clue what it was all about. I knew what a shower of rain was but a baby shower was new to me. There were more than twenty ladies to surprise and spoil me with every thing that the baby needed; also sheets and blankets for the crib. It was a great evening with lots of fun indeed and full of love & gifts. I can still picture everything and we have never forgotten this special event. Up until today I do not know if John knew about this. If he did, he played his roll perfectly! One thing I do know, that we thanked God from the bottom of our hearts for His provision.

When the day came to go to the hospital it was bitterly cold. The foreman from the Broadwood farm, as he was called, had promised to bring us to the hospital. It was now only 12 miles from where we lived.

When John came for lunch I knew that I had to get ready to leave. I made sandwiches for him and we took off as soon as he came home at six o'clock (a little too fast to my liking). I have noticed that drivers are always in a hurry with pregnant women! I never had seen so many stars as that evening and it never had been so very cold as I could remember. The sky was clear and it was full moon. We talked little, held hands and prayed. It was a very long difficult night for my dear husband. He only could stay

with me for one hour. Then the Doctor came in and put me out until breakfast time, January 13, 1949.

This must have been the darkest hours in John's life in our 50 years; when he became a Father. When I woke up I began to realize that some thing had happened but it was not until Dad told me that our son was born that it began to dawn on me that I was in the hospital. Yet I could not respond in any way what so ever, I just looked at him and felt sorry for him. Of course he understood but I did not know yet that he had been wrestling on his knees for five hours until he heard the good news that all was well with both of us. He did not tell me until later that the Doctor and also a nurse came in the waiting room to tell him that my life was in danger and that he should not count on a baby. Dad said that he kept on pleading for our lives and promised to give our child to the Lord where ever He wanted him to go; to Africa or Russia. When he left the hospital for work that morning, I realized where I had left off with my thoughts and that was 12 hours ago.

After work Dad came back again and I was more or less my own self again and we began to celebrate the birth of our son. The nurse brought our baby and Dad said that his color was not as dark blue as in the morning when he had seen him first. In the evening I held our baby for the first time, what a glorious feeling, that all was well. I could hardly believe it yet, that the baby was our very own. It took three days before our son Murray became a pink baby and two days later we left the hospital. For five days, a former midwife took care of us in her home which was a great help. Dad took us home on a weekend and our rejoicing began for us together! I mean for the three of us but Murray was not aware of it yet.

It stayed very cold for six weeks and we had a hard time to keep our little living room warm with our small coal stove. We were so thankful for the extra blankets our Moms had bought. Murray was always warm in his home made sleeping bag and under all the blankets that were given to us. It was just a feast to take care of him. I always had much pleasure taking care of them all. It did not matter how old they were. As far as that goes I would love to have had twelve just as my Mom had but we were more then thankful for what the Lord gave us.

That year on the fruit farm was such a happy year, Dad was always home at 6 o'clock already. By that time Murray was moved from his crib to Dad's lazy chair while we were having supper. And of course afterwards Murray

was on Dad's lap together in his chair. This has always been the pattern. Every evening when Dad was home, he had the youngest one on his lap, just as my Dad did and no doubt his Dad as well.

In my memory those evenings were priceless. We were blessed with electricity and clean water on this fruit farm. As well as a lot less work with no more cooking of water. The winter went too fast to my liking. It was so cozy and so good in our little house that used to be a chicken coop!

But the summer brought many blessings too. Our boss came to visit us with the question if I wanted to do some work for him now spring was here. I could take the baby along, he said. This was new to us to take a three months old baby to work. I found it fun to try and see how it would work out. Adjusting to these things was not difficult to us and what other immigrants had to say did not bother us either. The boss had a lot of rhubarb to be made ready for market. My job was to cut the leaves off and put them in bundles. It was a very easy job.

He also asked me if I wanted to pick fruit and was paid by the basket. I was delighted to give that a try too. I loved to do some more work than what was needed to be done at home. The sun was shining every day and we started as soon as we were ready. Murray loved the many hours outside under a tree, in his baby buggy, close to where I was working. After his bath we went out and he slept for two hours most of the time. Soon it was time to make lunch and Dad came home always the same time so we had lunch together. Then I took care of Murray and we went back again for a couple of hours or longer, if Murray agreed to it.

After the rhubarb was finished, the cherries were ready to be picked. That was a fun job with those low trees. On Sunday afternoon we went on walks together. We went through the whole orchard, it was huge. I had no idea that there were so many different fruit trees. The apple and pear trees were too high for me to pick but the peaches and plum trees I could handle. They were much smaller.

By the time the early apples were ready, friends from Dad came over from Holland to be with us until the boss could find a house for them. They were Joe and Coby Waardenburg with their son Arjo who was a few months older than Murray. We had a storage room that we made into a bedroom for them hoping that the boss could keep his promise. Coby was looking forward to

picking fruit and I became full time house wife again for a while. I did pick peaches and later plums when they were ready, then we took turns to stay home during these weeks.

A blessed result of the work I was able to do was that we could buy a wringer washer as it was called, to do the laundry. What a time saver! Before I did it by hand. I don't know who took more pride in this purchase, Dad or I, we both were delighted.

Starting on the bottom of the ladder as Cousin Peter called it, has more beauty in it, then just going to the store when ever there is a need. It must be the joy of accomplishment. We felt the same way when we bought our first little car, a Prefect, in that second year. I could hardly believe that we were able to do that. When Dad said that we were going to shop for it, I was so proud of my husband and it was so much fun to do these things together.

When spring came we were still living in our crowded conditions. You do learn many things during such times but we were longing to be with our own family again and so were our friends. The boss had not come with a solution until April, and we were not happy about that. At that time we were asked to move to a bigger house in Cedar Springs; our friends upstairs and we on the main floor. There was more room and in a good location but the house was in a bad shape. Murray was horsing around in his playpen by now and I tied the playpen on a big nail in the windowsill. When I came back from the kitchen Murray was on the other side of the room and the windowsill was trailing after him! Of course Dad fixed it again and I felt no guilt about that nail that I had put in because a "blind horse could not ruin any" as the saying goes. The next adventure was that the water heater boiled over and the room became full of steam and water. Our boss did not believe me when I told him. He took his time to come and see what was going on and provided a new one. What a scare and what a mess.

In the meantime Dad had his struggles at the job which he never had shared before with me.

He worked with nine men every day and really enjoyed the work he was doing. He never told me that the swearing was terrible and God's Name was used a lot, plus plenty of dirty talk. It got much worse after a letter came from the Reformed Church office, addressed to Rev. John Moerman. Our mail came to the home of our boss and after that there was no limit; a lot of swearing and spewing of dirty filth. Now I am writing this, I was reminded

of what a few men said to Dad when I was working in the sugar beets a couple years later. Dad was with me at first, but the boss needed him for few hours somewhere else. Some men were obscene, even though I was not understanding every thing. They said to John “do you trust your wife with all those men?” “No, he answered, I don’t trust you, but I sure trust my wife!” Before we all started a new row, they said to me “do you dare to work with us?” I answered, “yes, but you do sound like dirty pigs some times.” They said not one dirty word to me. They even helped me finish my row if I was not done yet. John told me later that this boss did not allowed any off color talk when a woman was around. I don’t know how I got the nerve to say what I said in my broken English language but they knew that I understood more or less what they were saying and they behaved. It was obvious that it was better for Dad to leave because this was going on as long as we were there. For me the fun was over when we were forced to move. I had decided to make the best of it but for Dad it was a different story. He had to live with this all day and I could not stand it now I knew what was going on. The boss must have understood him somehow too because we did not have to stay to the end of the month. As soon as he found another job he could leave.

The Joy of Expecting our Second Child.

Dad found work in a couple of days and we moved to Roy Warwick’s dairy farm, five minutes from where we lived. This man had heard that John was a “dairy man”. It was all Gods doing! It was the best house we had lived in these first years. A gas heater kept the house warm without effort. Every thing was complete; bathroom and all with a fenced in lawn. It was perfect for Murray. It also had a good size garden we both enjoyed. It was an ideal place to live. What a wonderful summer we had. I was dreaming about our second baby who was due on October 22 and enjoying our oldest son and Dad was happy and loved his work. He continued to read a sermon many times in Sunday services. I found it plenty since he had to start work so early now but he loved what he was doing.

He also did some calling on the sick plus go to the monthly board meeting as an elder. In the fall some clouds came on our horizon. Dad had been losing weight during this summer. I thought that the hot weather was the blame but there was more to it then that even though he ate and slept well. After a visit to our Doctor it came to light, that the lime he used in the cow stable was the culprit. We had to leave this place we loved so much. There was also a

warning (or advice) to slow down and let the church work go; be a preacher OR a farmer. This was a clear message but easier said than done.

At that time it was October and we decided to wait until the baby was born to make another move. Dad was going to drop the visits and leading most of the services. Soon there after we received a full time pastor which was a great joy to our steadily growing church. We found it sad that we had to leave this wonderful place but there was no other way then to ask God for wisdom and direction to find a house and work.

After a very good time of pregnancy a normal birth followed. In just a few hours we were blessed with great joy as we held our second son, Jack, in our arms! We thanked God that all went well even though Dad was not able to stay with me as the Doctor had promised; to deliver at home. He discovered that he needed someone else to help him so I had to go to the hospital after all. It was a big disappointment for Dad. Jack demanded more food than his older brother. At night, especially, he was eager to drink. After a few evenings of restless sleep I gave him a bottle on Dad's advice and every night a little more. He was six weeks when he was asking for it and slept indeed like a baby afterwards.

As we were praying for direction again, a girl whom we had met a couple months before came to our home to visit us. She had heard of our dilemma and talked with her Father about it. He had a house on the yard that was used for stripping tobacco but he was willing to rent it to us for fifteen dollars per month. If we could clean it he would be happy. We accepted the offer with both hands.

This house was on Highway Three, ten miles from where we lived. It had a big wood stove in it and we could help our self to wood, to warm the four good size rooms. There was good water, a gas stove for cooking and a water heater. We were more then thankful for Gods provision again.

Dad had visited a fruit farmer in Cedar Springs whom we knew and was hired on the spot. That too was an answer to prayer as well as the teenager who went with me to clean the house the first two weeks in January. The Mother of Cees, my right hand, took care of Murray and Jack. We were gone for seven hours and home before dark on Dad's orders which I gladly obeyed. I never liked driving in dark. We owned one car these 50 years and Dad did all the driving. It did come in handy that I could drive to get

groceries but that was about it! Cees did all the heavy work, getting wood and washing the ceilings etc. He was such a blessing!

The sixteenth of January, 1951 we moved in to our Merlin home. It was sad to leave. We loved it so much there and it was unfortunate for Roy as well because he was very happy with Dad's work. Yet we were thankful that Dad had a better job for his health and that we had a place to live for so little. Most of the time Jim McQuicken had work for him. He was fond of Dad and we always kept contact when we were in Ontario visiting. When Dad passed away (passed on) I received a beautiful letter from his widow.

We received a letter from Dad's brother Andrew that they were planning to come to Canada for good. They had talked about emigration before but it had sounded like they could not do this to Dad and Mom Moerman. They had four children now and they were the joy of their life. We found it sad for them and could hardly believe that they were coming soon. But Andrew thought of the future of his family and that was very understandable.

Oom Andries and Tante Nel come to Canada

The last day of February they arrived. Some of their belongings were stored in a barn and the beds for their four children were put in Murray's bedroom. Jack was still in our little bedroom.

Our house was very full because the place where Nell and Andrew were sleeping was in the front room on a pullout as it was called. A lot of adjustment had to be made but all went well. It was for Nell the most difficult to adjust. Andrew had a good job and bought the groceries. He was learning the English language fast.

In the evening it was very nice to visit when the children were in bed. We had to catch up on all the family news before it was spring. Dad and Andrew were making plans for the summer to have twelve acres tomatoes on share with our neighbor and that meant that every hand was needed when picking time came around. John and Andrew could get time off for planting etc. That made it very nice and hoeing they did every evening for a while. At picking time we all helped as much as possible.

The summer went fast with all the work and we were all looking for a slower pace. Dad was getting more active in the church again but now we had our own church and pastor. He did visit new immigrants most of the time and for me it was “gezellig” not to be alone in the winter all evening.

In February Dad came home from work, excited with the news that he had found a house for sale in Charing Cross, six miles from Chatham. Of course we had often talked about our crowded condition but did not know what to do about it. Andrew wanted to rent or buy a small farm but that takes time as well. We also had the family Cor van Atte in our home for six weeks during that winter until they found a house. Cor was the first mate on our boat when we came to Canada. His reason was to be with his family instead of often on the ocean for a long time. Two more beds were added and less room to make the beds! Their two boys fit right in with ours and it was only for a few weeks.

Dad was so happy when he found a house for sale that was under construction. He could hardly wait till Saturday to show me, when we could go there. When he saw the owner again, Dad was convinced that he was not able to finish the house and he told us the truth that it was his life style. We were able to buy it but I found it hard to believe. If ever any thing unexpected happened these first years, it was this time!

In a couple of weeks we moved in our unfinished house. We just loved it to be on our own again. I was so happy for Nell that she finally could unpack and make the home the way she liked it and run her own household.

We slept and lived in the finished master bedroom, until Dad finished another bedroom on his free day and evenings. The kitchen was more or less complete and that made our adventure a lot easier. We loved every moment of working on the house.

In March, 1952 we moved and on April 3, our Jack got sick. In the evening it was his turn to get the Bible at meal times. He was just promoted to share this job with Murray since he could walk well and was even “potty trained.” When it was his turn he held on to the Bible and tried to walk on one leg and on one knee with his other leg. We teased him and thought that he was showing off but we were so wrong. I don’t know if it was painful already but he did not express it in any way. It was midnight when we heard him scream and then we knew that we had a sick boy. When we walked with him

he calmed down a bit but he kept crying. By early morning we were on our way to the Hospital. It was Sunday morning and we stayed for several hours until two Doctors had looked him over but they were puzzled. When he was brought in his bed, he fell asleep exhausted and we were told to go home until the next day after two specialists from Ann Harbor had seen him.

We first went to Church and asked the Pastor and congregation for prayer. We realized how fast life can change from very pleasant to a deep concern for our little boy. The next day the doctors had no answer yet. It was torture to see our son with his legs up and only his little head was resting on his pillow. We found it terrible but it was the best for him. The third day they were thinking of polio but there after they said that it was a virus which destroys the bone where ever it settles down. It could settle in the knee or hip but also in his head and that would be fatal. These days where a nightmare to us even though we knew that his life was in God's Hand. When we saw him again he was in cast from his toes to under his arms. The virus had settled in his knee.

After three weeks we could take him home. We were glad that we could care for him again. Every thing was uncertain but now we could help and comfort him even though we felt helpless to see him suffer. He was afraid of all shiny objects and also of noises such as the vacuum, electric mixer etc. We had to learn what bothered him most and when to do things so that it would least upset him. Until October we went every month to the Hospital for measurement of his legs, putting salve on his body and new cast. That sixth month the Doctor told us that "the miracle had happened, his leg was growing!" That was the most wonderful words we could receive from these bone Specialists. I do not know how to express this. The stress broke and fell away from us. It was such good news that his cast came off for good and his sore spots could heal. He had no strength in his legs to walk the first days but he enjoyed his freedom from the cast, to the full. We learned that when a child is sick it is more difficult in that you feel so helpless. You just want to spare them the agony of suffering and fear and you are not able. Only daily prayer from others and your own gives you "strength for the day and bright hope for tomorrow." It was a great joy to see Jack healthy with sound sleeps all night and running through the house again, making up for lost time!

In August we did go to Merlin again to help pick tomatoes as was promised. With Jack in cast it took some effort but it also was a nice change from our routine and Murray was our helper. It was good for all of us.

When winter came Dad started a new job (in Blenheim, four miles from our home) in a factory where they cleaned seed corn. In the summer he helped Jim again. During the last year Dad was longing for an opportunity to study some years for a ministry in the Church. Twice he went to our Pastor but he thought that it would be a burden for the family.

Dad Starts His Studies and Our Daughter, Anne Arrives.

Then in early spring when we were sure that our third baby was on the way, we went together to the Pastor again. I could not stand the thought any longer that Dad was always hoping and longing. We had to come to a decision for him. I still am amazed that the Pastor's wife was used by God to persuade her husband, at least to give Dad an opportunity to try. I thought that the Pastor would say "John, you will soon have three children; forget it." These words he did use, but his wife said, "Herman, how do you know that this man is not called from God?" And this made him say "John, I am going to help you." It was a miracle. I was so glad that Dad could start. It was difficult but he gave all that God had given him.

Our pastor had served six churches in the past and he approached them all for financial help to pay rent for living quarters for five years. They agreed to do that. He also went with Dad to the College and Seminary in Holland, Michigan and Dad was accepted on a trial basis. College courses were a free trial because he did not have a high school education. The three years in Seminary we promised to pay after Dad had graduated. We were able to do so in our Galt/Cambridge years. My part was to put food on the table. I did four hours house cleaning three afternoons a week and Saturday evening we cleaned a big lumber office together.

When that decision was made there was a lot of planning to do before September 1st, when Dad was leaving for school. The first thing that fell in place was that we found a renter for our house, the Veenman family, who was one of our best friends. They looked forward to moving closer to Chatham and the best news for us was that we were invited to live with them until the baby was born and we were ready to join Dad. I found it difficult to let Dad go during that last month of pregnancy but knew that there was no other way.

It has amazed me many times how we were led in detail step by step by the Lord over and over again. It looked like a mountain at first; when you start a new job or have to move unexpectedly or what ever, but God is always there. He is an Everlasting Helper indeed. Dad's leaving was not as easy as I had hoped it would be. It was wonderful that we could stay in our own home and I loved to be with my friend Mary but I longed for Dad more then ever but told nobody! If I ever was wearing a mask it was than.

Of course the mountain of being alone when the baby was to be born did not shrink. It got higher as the day came closer. I tried to brace myself against these feelings but my blood pressure was most of the time very high and out of control. The last week of September, our Doctor who knew me well by now, suggested I go to the hospital until the baby was born.

For two days I walked the hall only to have lunch and a nap in bed. Walking was a must because I was more then a week past due time. Late afternoon our Doctor came in and said "Corrie, you have to do something for me." "I will do what ever you say, Doctor", I said and I meant. But I thought "What is he going to do this time to get the labor going?" He must have read my thoughts and smiled, "You will like this; you have to phone your husband right now and ask him to come for a day or two." That was the best trick ever. I called Dad and he was able to catch the Greyhound bus that night and stepped in my room at breakfast time on October 2. What a beautiful day this was going to be. To be all day together with Dad, walking and talking until noon hour and at six o'clock the birth of our daughter Anne. Our Doctor was all smiles when he saw that his advice was working and that we were more then just being together. I must have asked Dad dozens of questions that morning, about school, the house, church, his eating and a host of other things. When Anne was born I did not ask if we had a son or daughter. Our Doctor was talking about a big boy for two hours. I was totally taken by surprise when he said that we had a girl! Maybe it was my excitement but the Doctor left to tell Dad the good news before he put the finishing touches on me. I thought that was very nice of him. We had two more hours together to celebrate Anne's birth, then it was time for Dad to go to Charing Cross for a good sleep before going on the bus again next morning. On October 18 weekend, Dad would come back if he could borrow a car that weekend, to take us to Holland, Mich. We were so thankful that God had made all things well again.

The care of my friend was outstanding. I was not allowed to do any thing then rest and take care of our baby the first week.

After that good rest I started to make a list of all we needed to take along to our new home. Dad told us that there were beds for every one and only the baby crib was to be returned. Our kitchen was complete with a table and six chairs, fridge and stove. The front room was furnished with a couch, chair, coffee table and reading lamp. This was all given to us by people of the church. I found it overwhelming when Dad told me all this and so was he when he stepped in to the former soldier's dwelling who were in training, (barracks) as they were called. I had to take bedding, dishes, clothing, toys, books and a few things for the wall. All our furniture was stored in the attic when Dad was still home yet.

It all felt like one big adventure and it was! Dad came with a two door coupe. He needed all his skills to pile it all in. Our boys were sitting with their heads against the ceiling. They thought that this was fun because "they could see every thing." Of course a six-hour drive was tiresome for all of us.

In the morning we made our promises in Church with the baptism of Anne which was a beautiful closing of the five years in that church. There after the good byes from a church full of people during a luncheon who were very close. It had drained both of us.

Just when it got dark we reached our new home. We had a good trip, except crossing the border was scary with the boys "sitting high and dry." They did not see it or the Lord closed their eyes. Whatever it was we thanked Him for it. Dad had aimed to arrive before dark because there were no lights to read numbers of the homes. They all looked identical but were close to the buildings of college and seminary.

Dad brought me to the couch with the baby. To be honest I felt more tired then I ever was before. It was a wonderful feeling to be together again and just sit and take in the surroundings while Dad was unloading the car and brought it back to the owner.

Murray and Jack found their bed, no coaxing necessary. I made the baby ready and put her in the crib and Dad made our bed when he came back. We slept a long night except for the care of our daughter. Our first day I had

only strength to make the meals and take care of the children. I did not start with my cleaning job until Anne was six weeks old.

Four families asked me for help. I worked for all of them for the nine months of study in the two years while Dad was in College. Then we moved to a larger home where we could have two boarders and two students who rented rooms. I also took care of two children of students. That took care of our food and all that goes with it.

Of course the Lord knows all our needs and I was amazed that He relieved me from going out to work. Most of all I was glad for Dad that he could come home for lunch and go back to the library to work again. He needed his time so much and now he could stay all day without interruption and I enjoyed being home immensely. I was just as busy as before with more cooking and baking, and the cleaning of a much bigger house. There was a lot more laundry too for seven persons but all this was joy to me.

The summers of 1954 & 1955 we were sent to Leamington, Ontario to pastor a group of immigrants. Both summers were very good except the hot weather was taking its toll on us. This place, not far from Detroit, is one of the hottest places in Canada we were told. The good thing was that people brought us lots of fruit that grew there in abundance, especially all kinds of melons.

These people came from all parts of Holland. As a result of that we often heard the words "we never did it this way." Dad was the first one who went there. They did have a board but I don't know if they were officially voted in or spoke the loudest. The first service which was held in a large room above a big garage. Half of the people stayed outside talking when it was time to start the service. Dad announced that it was time to begin. "But pastor we never start on time" was the reply from those who were there.

"From now on we will "my husband said and we sang our first hymn (so they could hear the service had begun.) Soon there was heavy traffic on the wooden stairway and as we were finished singing John brought them all to their chairs with his eyes! How many came late for the next Service? None. This first move of leadership was a good beginning. We all need people who teach us. Just think of our parents and all the teachers and pastors who showed us the way. Of course I was proud of my pastor in the making and also thankful that they were learning and appreciating what Dad did and

said. They asked for him the following summer again and even gave him “a call” after his graduation.

One more episode I have to mention from Dad’s ministry there and that is about his first funeral.

Two brothers came over for the funeral of their younger brother. Dad had led the service in Dutch as well as in the English language and put a lot of time and effort in it so that every one could understand what was said. The widow and her children were very thankful for that. We were invited to their home afterwards because we were soon returning to the States again. We had hoped that we could be of some help to her and we were but in a different way. As soon as we were there, these men from Holland began arguing about money. Never in my life have I seen or heard anything like this. They were so mad at each other that Dad stood in between them to keep them from fighting. It was a terrible situation for that widow. We felt so sorry for her. When they had calmed down we left but with a heavy heart. We were glad to hear that they went home the next day. I still wonder how such things can happen after the service we had. Did they hear any thing or were they unbelievers? We never got an answer to these questions; not even about whose money these men were fighting over. All that Dad accomplished was to rescue that family on this very sad day. They were only a few years in Canada.

As we returned from Canada, Dad was ready to take on another school year. This time seminary training. What a difference it made when he went to seminary. It was obvious that Dad had learned a lot in College even though his grades did not show it. It came easier to him but with two preaching assignments every month, he had seldom “time to smell the roses.” It was a heavy load and in the three summer months there was not much time for that either. I was well aware of this but I had my hands full at home as well. The days were just about always too short.

John, our Son, Arrives in Exeter

By Christmas time more joy was added to our lives. In July there would be a new baby added to our family, if all was going well. Summer, 1956 brought us to Exeter Ontario for three months, where our fourth baby was born.

We enjoyed that time very much. We had beautiful sunshine and it was not as hot as last year. We lived practically outside; eating and sleeping was all

we did in this empty manse. This was a church with new immigrants as well and in the beginning stage so we were learning much again.

A couple of weeks before Johnny's birth, my youngest sister Cathy came over from Holland for a visit. She made it so pleasant for all of us, especially for me. She did all the work and I watched the kids and did the cooking. We went for walks to show the kids where the hospital was; only two blocks away. We also went for rides to town so she knew where to pick up groceries, etc.

Dad was gone much of the time since she took care of all of us. The day that the baby was ready to look for an exit from his small compartment, Dad said, (as he had done for three weeks already,) "Mom can I go visiting this evening?" This time he added "are you really sure?" I started laughing and said "Dad, Cathy is here and the hospital is so close by!" This time I could not fool him (as I had done this with the last two babies who wanted to come on Sunday). He looked at me with that "you little rascal look" and said "I knew that you were close," and put the car in the garage.

I am so glad that I asked Dad in one of his last weeks he was with us, about my laughing habit (compared with Dads smile); whether I had irritated him or even aggravated him by being like this. This question came as a surprise to him. He answered after a pause, "Mom, I loved it; the way you have been and are." These words of Dad have become precious to me. I would have wondered the rest of my life if I had not been led by God Himself to ask several questions about death and other subjects in these last weeks we were together. Of course I would have asked much more if I had known that his leaving was so close but I have to believe that this was sufficient "and be still and know that He is God."

At midnight I was ready to leave for the hospital and after seven hours waiting and hard work for a while, we had our little Johnny in our arms! We felt so full of joy again. It is always such a miracle when all goes well, and a great joy.

So many times in all these years, we received blessing upon blessing. We have been talking about this every day of the last month when we were celebrating our 50th anniversary. We also looked back on the difficult times but we came to the conclusion that the blessings by far outweigh the hardships. That was how we saw it while together but also now as I am

alone “my cup still runs over.” I admit, sometimes with tears, but that too is still a part of our lives together.

We had five more weeks after the baby was born in Exeter before we went on our 400 mile trip back home to Michigan again. Cathy was looking forward to go with us and decided to stay for a few months in the States as well. She found work for a few months and liked it so much on this side of the ocean that she began dreaming about immigrating to Canada.

Dad was very happy to be in seminary. Not that his assignments were less but he could work much faster since he had learned the English grammar. Now he was busy with Hebrew and Greek and that was very interesting to him to learn the original language of the Bible. It was difficult and very time consuming. He also enjoyed his speech lessons that he was able to practice very often. Most students went to preach once a month but Dad always twice. I'm sure that had to do with our financial situation. Most of the seminary wives had jobs with good payment. There was one girl like me, who had no higher education. She too was doing house cleaning and our husbands were privileged to be sent out more often.

December, 1956 was full of surprises but not pleasant ones. Anne fell off the couch, broke her wrist and had it in a cast for a while. Then it was my turn to get some attention. I had an infection which was a result of the birth of Johnny. I did get not my full strength back after the baby was born but never felt any thing special. I was puzzled about that but I told myself that a fourth baby was different when you had three all ready to care for. I was in the hospital for treatment for a few days. When home again Murray and Jack both came down with a bad cold and a fever. Dad took them to our doctor and he wanted them in the hospital for a week. His reasoning was that I was in no shape to take care of them and their care could prevent pneumonia. It was a wonderful solution from our doctor. I should have hugged him for it! Why did I not do that when I had a chance? This way I was able to take care for Anne and the baby. Dad's school time was over when the boys came home. What a wonderful ending of the year when we were all home again. It was so good to see everyone happy and healthy. God answered our prayers!

In spring 1957 we did not hear where our assignment was to be until May. It did not matter that much since we knew what to take; it was a routine by now. Our chicken trailer, as we called it, was very easy to pack. It did not take much time. Every thing was gathered when we heard the news that

Guelph, Ontario was the first church for us to serve. For six weeks we lived in the manse, “house sitting” in the pastors home, who was on vacation. Then we moved to the farm of the Van Oostveen family in Galt that has been renamed as Cambridge. This was the best vacation for the children of course. We enjoyed it too. Our love of living on a farm has never left us.

We had our bedrooms upstairs and all our meals with the family. I think there were ten children. Only one was married and for me it was like our home during the time we were engaged. Dad felt the same way. It was very special. I never cooked, only helped with the washing of piles of dishes, did our own laundry and watched the kids.

I also went with Dad visiting our families to get acquainted with our little flock, as well as “house visitation”. This was the custom done once a year in Holland. Since we were here only six weeks we combined it, making it more worthwhile and inquiring about their spiritual life as well. We could go any time of the day because the family gladly took care of our children. For us it was a real treat being together so many days for several hours. We have always treasured going out visiting. You could call it “our date.”

Summer went fast and it was a very pleasant one for all but it was good to be home again. The last year of study for Dad was here and with it his graduation from Seminary would become a reality, the Lord willing. This year we had only one student pastor boarding with us and a few preschool children to care for. I was happy about less work and a little more time for our own family. With Johnny just one year old I was just as busy maybe but to my feelings it was good even though I missed the two students who had become like brothers. Pastor John Drost was rich in humor and since I loved laughing I missed it at first. It was a gift we enjoyed and it was of help with our busy schedules.

About half way December came a request from Winnipeg for a Dutch speaking Student Pastor. Dad was the only one to do this job and I, who had looked forward to being home for a couple of weeks with him, had to learn a lesson to enjoy and prepare for a long train trip and spend the weeks in an almost empty manse. Of course for Dad it was a huge job; preaching the two last Sundays of the year, on Christmas Day and the old and new year’s services. It sounded like a lot of work for him. It was good that we were going by train. We would be gone for three weeks.

Dad felt that we should go for different reasons. One was that we too found it difficult to go to church where you don't understand much on these special days. We had gone through these times too. Also It was all new immigrants and they had no pastor yet. We knew what that felt like; when you are homesick for the past. I was quickly done with "licking my own sores" when Dad felt we should go. In fact there was no time to do anything with this short notice except to get ready. We needed all the warm clothes we had and food and drink for the trip. Dad found it difficult to take what he needed most to make his sermons. There was nothing in the house but beds, table and chairs, dishes, pots and pans.

The less we could take the more we depended on the Lord. That is how I feel when such unexpected things come on our way. I have forgotten how many hours we were on the train but it took many hours from Holland, Michigan to the border where we turned west and then north to Winnipeg. I really liked the trip and the kids did too but my eyes were always on Johnny. Dad took most of his time for preparation. I was glad that he had so many hours. Driving would have been too much for him and also too risky with this unpredictable weather.

We were warmly welcomed in that cold country and it felt wonderful to dive in our ready made beds. The kitchen cupboards and the fridge were loaded with food. What a blessing. It was very thoughtful because we had no car these weeks; a helpless feeling when you are used to one. They picked us up for church and once we could borrow a car when our Christmas service was 60 km. Away where there was a new church planted. This was the day after Christmas (in Holland we had a second Christmas day with a morning service). After the service we were invited to a family for a Christmas dinner. We had a wonderful time and were not home until it was dark. It was a treat for all of us but especially for the children. It was not a pleasant time often for them because there was not much they could do in that empty home. The oldest could read but all day is too much and it was bitterly cold to go outside. For us it was a new experience, being with such an isolated group. There was much for them to adjust to, especially the very cold winters. These people were very thankful that we had come. For them it was indeed a feast that we were with them during these weeks.

Dad's Graduation

The following months were for me a bit of preparation for our move to Canada. But for Dad it was hard work to reach the end of his studies well, plus the preaching assignments quite often. I often wondered if his health would be sufficient. He suffered from tonsillitis and his tonsils needed to be removed. This happened close to his graduation which was very unfortunate to say the least. But after these clouds the beautiful day of his graduation came. Dad's toil of five years were over.

He received his diploma not as a reward for high marks but for his determination; to be equipped for the work he longed to do for several years. As always with highlights in our lives, I was moved to tears during this impressive service. The words that were spoken to Dad about his special achievement were true. They added that it was not accomplished in his mother tongue and without a high school education. This was said of Dad with the introduction of every student separately before they shook hands with the professors and received their diploma.

I have never forgotten the final song of "the prophet" as a benediction upon all these men who were sent out to bring Good News to where ever they were sent. Dad was very touched with the service as well. It was an awesome feeling now this part of our life had come to an end. We were standing on the threshold of taking on the great responsibility of pastoring a flock. I don't have to tell you that Dad has taken his calling seriously. He has lived it also in his retirement years. He loved to preach in every denomination when asked. One of his last was when he spoke in a World Day of Prayer meeting in the United Church in Mayerthorpe in the first week of March. The year before Dad was asked to lead a Good Friday service in the Roman Catholic Church. In the summer of 1997 we went a couple of times to Pentecostal Churches a good hour drive north on the Alaska Highway. We also worshiped in Whitecourt several times in different denominations.

When we came home that evening we both felt drained. Dad could control his feelings much better than I ever could. After I gave him one single rose in honor of his accomplishment he was moved and I burst out in tears. At that moment I could not see how I would fit in the work that Dad was going to do, without any education. But Dad in his quiet way assured me that I could. "Mom, just love the people as you always have done, and you will be able to do it," he said.

Serving our First Church in Cambridge.

It was time for moving to Cambridge, Ontario before we knew it. Dad had two other “calls” where they needed a pastor, Whitby and Leamington. For different reasons we decided that Cambridge was going to be our first church to serve. It was a decision we had to make several times in our lives and it is God who gives you the confirmation. Our task is only to see what is best for our family in every way and “wait on the Lord.” Our home was very close to the church, ideal for all of us to participate in church activities. Our street was lined with beautiful big trees. Their shade was a great blessing in the warm summers and also for walks.

Dad was quickly organized as to the work in church was concerned. The master bedroom was his office with lots of room for meetings. A smaller bedroom was plenty big for us, even though some ladies thought that I was not with it by doing so. I wanted Dad to have the best room for his work and he loved it. “The best was not good enough for Dad”, was always my slogan for him. He could see who was on our doorstep out of his two front windows. It even became practical at times!

Our First Trip Back to Holland

As soon as we were settled, there was an invitation for Dad to make a trip to Holland as a boat chaplain for the immigrants. Leaving July 26 from Montreal and coming back to New York on Sept.15. Of course this was opening a can of worms for us. We were just looking forward to a regular routine in the family after Dad’s study years and this news took us by surprise.

We first had to find out what the board of the Church thought about this. It took some time before they met. No doubt they had talked a lot before the meeting because they all agreed, being immigrants themselves, that Dad should go home now that he was given a chance. When we wrote this to Holland my parents wrote, “but we want Corrie to come along and we will pay for her trip.” That’s when the real excitement began!

Before I go on, I first have to give a little financial insight because now we were not going to rest until we could find a way for our children to go as well. We had bought a Volkswagon in Cambridge, also furniture for our front room that was a must as well. The cars we had used in the States were

not dependable. They stopped often at a stoplight, red or green! We had admired the Kleis family as they always found another car when one “gave up the ghost,” those five years. As you remember that fixing a car was not Dad’s “cup of tea”. It must have been difficult for him to say the least. Our new VW was a blessed gift and we puzzled with our payments until we had figured out how to do it.

This was our situation when this dream of going home came on the horizon. Besides getting our passports ready Dad and I talked a lot about this trip. We wanted our children to come to show our parents and family, our riches. I could not even bear the thought of leaving them here. Six weeks was such a long time. Neither could I think of letting Dad go home without me. We found out what the cost was for the children and since we were leaving on Johnny’s second birthday, he could travel for half of the price of the older children, which was not as much we thought. Then I started calculating our grocery bills of six weeks and when we added Dad’s salary of that period of time, we saw the possibility to go as a family. Maybe this story sounds unreal to some of you but at that time there were very few people who could help us. We were all living on a low income, starting on the bottom of the ladder. We all had to do the best we knew how.

Going home after ten years was like dreaming sometimes. We started out on this trip by car to Brockville and slept at a friends home, the Bons family. The next day we came in Montreal (where we had taken the train together to Ontario ten years before.) It was not hard to find my first cousin Nelly and Cees Ravensbergen whom we had never met in Canada yet. We felt so welcome. The next day it was time to go to the harbor and get on board of the boat “The Big Bear.” This ship was used to transport soldiers in the Second World War. It had no stabilizers we were told and was used to bring immigrants to Canada. It made sense to me because it was not a boat for pleasure.

When we showed our passports we discovered that Johnny’s name was not in there and he was not allowed to go with us. This was a nightmare for a while. We had to tell our whole story where and why we were going and so on. Nelly and Cees assured us that they would take care of our two year old son these weeks. That was very kind of them but we found it terrible to leave him behind. Up until today I have no clue how and why this was overlooked. After a long talk with those who had the last say in this those who were in authority gave us permission to take him provided that we

would go to the office in Rotterdam as soon as we arrived, to register Johnny's name. We were about the last one to go on board. What a relief that they were willing to bend the rules. We thanked the Lord that He made it possible.

Murray was my right hand to help watch the kids. I soon discovered that the children could slide under the railing into the sea. That meant that I stayed near until it was time to go to bed. Besides the waves that made me unstable, it was scary to see the kids close to the railing. That alone was putting a knot in my stomach. Indeed it was not a trip for pleasure. The weather was good compared with our first trip and we were very thankful for that. Dad was busy from the moment we came on board until night. Then we could relax. It was good that he needed time to prepare for evening messages and a service on Sunday. He started making appointments with people who asked for advice. There was no end to it especially on the way back to Canada.

I can not tell you how we felt when we saw Holland in a distance. I was glad to see all our loved ones and I was sad to go through the pain of parting again. Mixed feelings is the best word for it probably. When we had settled at our first farm I had said to John that I did not want to go home the first ten years. I simply made that statement because of that nagging pain of home sickness. John understood me completely and his answer put me at ease. He said "I know it is much harder for you; you were so close to your Mom the last ten years and with your big family you were close too." "It is best to root firmly first." This trip was not planned by us but by the Lord. It still amazes me that He gave that opportunity ten years later.

Those six weeks were beautiful. We enjoyed every visit to the fullest with all our brothers and sisters plus two receptions at our parent's homes for cousins and friends. But the very best was the time with our parents.

Dad's Father traveled back with us to Canada and stayed with Andrew's family and ours for eleven months. My sister Cathy came as an immigrant and married one year later. She was a great help again on the way home watching the kids. The ocean was not as quiet as in July but it still was a good trip. This time we arrived in New York and went by bus to Brockville. We were all spoiled to the core these weeks and now the kids had to go to school and lots of work was waiting for us. It was a big adjustment for all of us but the memories were many and we always have looked back on this

event with much joy; that it was possible to see all our loved ones. My Dad passed away in 1964 and my Mom came to visit us in 1965 in Edmonton.

As always when we had moved the first thing Dad did was to make a vegetable garden. Every thing was growing well before we left on our trip. We only put in potatoes, carrots, red beets and onions. This is what we always did, when we were going part of the summer. We did the same when we had planned for spring 1998 as we had hoped to go to Ontario. We had grown double corn, peas, beans and cauliflower the year before. That is why we had two freezers full. We also had grown our chickens in 1997 for the freezer which we did every other year.

A garden was some thing we both needed to relax and to enjoy and it was very much needed for years. I still look forward to starting every spring. Every day Dad would work a few minutes to keep the weeds out and enjoy some fresh air after lunch.

Thankful for our Unexpected Surprise.

While we were enjoying our work, we were also rejoicing in the fact that we were expecting a new member in our family! The date was Jan 22, 1960. This was a very pleasant surprise to us. I had a miscarriage twice since John was born and I was trying to be satisfied with our four children. I should have been thankful but I had said more then once to Dad that I would love to have six children.

And now our fifth miracle was on the way. I felt very good all along and soon I had to answer the questions from Dad again if he could go out to visit or to a meeting yet. I never had believed the myth that Pastor's kids like to be born on Sunday of course, as they told us in our seminary wives class. But on Sunday Jan 24, I woke up with the familiar feeling that our baby was looking for a way out! I did not spill the news yet and Dad, with his mind on the service, did not notice any thing special. I went to church but had a difficult time listening. Not that Jimmy was in a hurry to come but I had that "doing this and the other thing fever" like most if not all mothers have that last day. After lunch Dad recognized the signs before we went for a nap. I still took it slow so Dad could lead the evening service as well. But Mrs. Zantinga stayed with me that evening, on Dad's request, in case. I called her "a Mother in Israel." At midnight (again) we left for the hospital and instead of waiting for seven hours like his brother Johnny did, Jimmy decided to

give Mom and Dad a break and arrived at four thirty already! Do I have to tell you again that our joy was complete? Yes I do. I cannot keep quiet about what the Lord has done in our lives. We have been so blessed. We were so happy together. Our cup has been running over so often, for us together and with all our children. I have many times called it a feast to care for the children and also when we were together on the farm. That was the time that we could catch up and be together after many busy years. It was like a crown on our lives. We have not taken it for granted. Many people have not been blessed like we were.

Edmonton, Alberta.

Dad liked his work very much and the church doubled in numbers in less than three years. There was no reason to move to Edmonton as was the urgent advice from the New York Reformed head office. This disturbance came in our lives in Nov. 1960. Dad had spaded the garden for a winter rest and had added a piece to it. When I saw this, I knocked on the window and asked “are you sure that we are still here next summer?” (just for fun!) Dad said “don’t you worry Mom, I feel like a roosting chick on her nest.”

You might not be able to realize what we were thinking a couple weeks later when that phone call came with the request to move to Alberta. I was stunned. There was no reason to move my rebellious nature said. I thought, do we have to move and move some more? I did not want to show my restlessness to influence Dad. He first had to come to grips with it himself. He was wrestling with it for weeks and after a visit to Edmonton he still did not see that he was the man to go. He asked for one more week to decide and the last night at two o’clock he woke up with the conviction that we had to go. It was almost Christmas by that time. He promised to come during Easter vacation, so that he could finish the winter program in Cambridge. On April 5, 1961 we arrived in Edmonton, Alberta.

My restlessness melted as snow on a warm day. I had peace with it and also looked forward to the new assignment. I knew that Dad had “waited on the Lord” and got the answer from Him and all I had to do was to submit to His will. First it felt like a mini immigration but that left me as soon as the good byes were said. It was plain fear of the unknown. I had been striving to feel at home in this land and with success all by the grace of God. And now I was uprooted again a few thousand miles away from my known territory. I realized that this was my problem at that time.

Dad was driving the VW to Alberta and Jack was his companion. It must have been a long and even boring trip for a ten year old boy. Murray was my helper, on the train, to watch Jimmy now 15 months old. I was delegating the work to take care of each other for a happy reason. I was pregnant with our sixth child. I sound like a broken record to some but I say it again, we were amazed that God gave us six children. My 55 hours on the train consisted of drinking juice, milk and sucking ice cubes. I was proud of how Anne and John took care of each other and Murray kept an eye on our porter to have Jimmy's bottles filled and took care of him. Only the diaper changing was my job.

We were welcomed by 15 people at the train station. I looked and felt worn out and after shaking hands with every one, our wise hostess, Mrs. Hoogenberg, rescued me and the children and took us to their basement suite. There we could stay until Dad and Jack arrived two days later. Soon it was time to eat and she served a big meal that perked me up and I began to feel my normal self again. They excused themselves to go to a church meeting and we were all in bed as soon as we were ready. It was the best place to be for all of us!

The next day we went to our new home with their son Henry, I was happy with the house and quickly went through it, to show the kids where their bedrooms were going to be. There was room for all of us to sleep down stairs, that made me very happy indeed! I found it so easy to be close to the children, no running down stairs when some one was sick or had a nightmare for that matter. The master bedroom was going to be our family room, this time next to the kitchen ideal to watch TV after school together, have snacks close by and make supper while we were watching. Upstairs was a room for Dad's study, away from all distraction of the family. There was also a quest room that came in handy too. I was delighted with such a complete home for us.

After lunch we heard the news that our moving van had arrived and Henry went with us to our home again. His Mother was so kind to watch Jimmy who was having his nap. It was good that we were there already, now it was so easy to tell the men where every thing had to go. They rolled the carpet out in the front room and put the furniture where I wanted it to be, what an easy move this time. I felt sorry for Henry who carried dozens of boxes books upstairs to Dad's study all by himself. After the movers were gone,

we went downstairs to put all the beds together and made the beds, what a jewel!

It was time for a delicious supper again, and the evening we used to get better acquainted with each other. The next day Henry wanted to go to our home again, this time to hang every thing on the wall. And we unpacked the dishes and fill the cupboards, it began to look like home more and more. I could hardly believe that so much was in place already, he kept on working 'till noon and we returned after lunch. I was glad about this, because I had a strong feeling that Dad and Jack were coming soon. The only address Dad had with him was our new home, we had no contact with each other since early Monday morning when they brought us to the train, and now it was Friday afternoon!

Late afternoon I heard a VW stop, when I opened the door before the bell rang Jack ran passed me and asked "where is my bedroom," he must have been very happy that his trip was finished it was a very long sit for a ten year old. Dad was standing in the doorway and was very surprised when he saw the living room all in place. "Mom, did we really move?" where his first words, which I could well understand I was surprised too that we had so much help to get settled. Dad was very happy with his study upstairs, he has left the choice of rooms up to me with every move we made. He did the same when we were planning our gardens, he asked me to buy the seed and plan where to sow it. Our front room was identical to the one in Cambridge, the same picture of the Lords Supper above the couch and the picture in the hall with the black and white children "all equal before Christ," and a few other things that were in that room before.

What a happy reunion for the kids and for us, Henry invited us to there home for dinner and of course to get our Jimmy and other belongings. And we had to thank that family for all there love and help in so many ways. It was so good that beds were made and things were in place that we could be comfortable in our own home again. Dad was tired from five days on the road and we all longed to be together in our own home. We had been taken care off in a wonderful way these few days and we thanked God that we all were safely home again.

Dad brought some order in his study on Saturday, Sunday we met our "flock" and soon followed his first board meeting which was an eye opener. Dad started his work with 200 names on his list to be visited in search for

the cause of what had gone wrong in the church. When he shared a bit of some of his visits he made, it sounded to me that he could use some knowledge of a lawyer as well. It was a huge job but in the fall the picture became clear to him what needed to be done. An evening of forgiveness and reconciliation took place as soon as Dad had time to visit all involved to invite them to come to this meeting. None of the leaders were even willing to do this, when Dad told me that, I could taste the bitterness plus other feelings from the people Dad was up too.

We had to rely on God more then ever before, as we all do in such critical situations. As I say this I realize that I have learned through the years to lean on Jesus for every thing, big and small. Only His Spirit could heal the people of what had happened these last years. Dad began the meeting with reading Psalm 32 & 51, followed by a short prayer, asking and pleading for Gods way and will to be done in every life. Then he invited the people to go to each other as needed, and he sat down. As I think of those moments of deadly silence I start crying, for the people it was a fight to come loose from all they where trapped in. Then the first person stood up and walked to the other side of the table and the miracle of forgiveness and reconciliation began to happen! Forgiveness is indeed the key to peace and happiness. There were 70 persons present, most couples, we were glad that so many wives stood with there husbands, it was a unforgettable evening for all of us and a total new beginning for our church. Needless to say that the evening ended with thanksgiving in the hearts of many if not all, these where healing miracles. One man was not able to come, because of a heart condition, he had an fatal attack while driving and died, very soon after this meeting was held, this was so sad. It was a call to all of us to make right while we can, as Jesus said, “ not to let the sun go down before a dispute is healed.” Dad had a special tender spot in his heart for this widow, she needed a lot of healing in many areas, it was such a tragedy.

In the mean time our children were settled in school and I had found a groceries store to my liking in our neighborhood a few blocks away. Dad had made a garden again and kept it clean and I enjoyed put the seeds in and of course did the harvesting.

Summer vacation was a wonderful time with the children home, I thought of the summers during Dads study years as we had to pack and leave after school was over. I was well able to keep up with all what needed to be done and went with Dad some evenings to visit.

In the fall I had to slow down, my veins in my left leg rebelled and needed more rest, I had six more weeks to go until our baby was coming and I was told to sit with my leg up, as often as I could. This was a difficult thing to me but with every one helping we managed.

Even then time went fast and it was Sunday Oct 22 when I realized early morning that this could be the day that our baby was close to coming. I also knew that Dad had his eye trouble but was still able to go to church in the morning. I did not tell him any thing until we went for a nap after lunch. I was wondering how to go about this, I was progressing and Dads eyes were getting worse. Of course someone else could bring me to the hospital but it was going to be at least midnight before I was ready to go. Dad has suffered a lot with these painful eyes for years, in every place we lived he been to doctors and specialists. They all knew what it was but had no cure or relieve for it. The third day was always the worse, when he came home from the evening service, his eyes where red and watery.

He went to bed immediately and I put things together to leave soon. Dad was dozing from the aspirins he took when I came to bed. At midnight I felt that it was wise to go to the University Hospital on the south side which was not next door. I woke Dad and told him that I was going to call a taxi. Dad could not stand the thought to let me go alone, but he knew that he could not drive at night. It was not only torture for him but also forbidden, it could damage his eyes.

We agreed that I would take a taxi and we prayed that Dad would be able to come as soon as the children were in school. It was a lonely night for me without him, but for Dad it was worst, he did not know how I was doing, but we both knew that in prayer we were constantly connected. The nurses felt sorry for me, at that time not many mothers came at midnight by taxi to have their baby delivered, they paid a lot of attention to me and the Doctor came earlier then usual.

At seven O'clock our son Andy made his entrance in this world, one other miracle had happened in our lives. I find it difficult to describe our joy to have a baby again, by the standards of many people I might not be normal, but all of them where treasures and some of them, even surprises. By time I was in my bed cleaned up and eating breakfast, Dad stepped in my room and our joy was more then complete! Dad looked very tired after a sleepless

night and the pain took always a lot out of him, but he was overjoyed when our son was placed in his arms. John and Jimmy were taken care off by our neighbors until noon so Dad could stay for two hours. How we thanked the Lord again that all went well as we received our son Andy!

Coming home with a new baby is always a feast in it self, every one had done his (her) share under Dads leadership no doubt, to have the house in order. Andy's bed was ready waiting since I had left, but now a hot water bottle was added to make his little nest cozy warm. On doctors orders I was to walk as little as possible because of my veins in my left leg. I made the meals and took care of the baby. Betty Postma came in our home for a few weeks, she was a great help and after she left a lady came on Friday to clean the whole house for a couple of months.

Summer 1962 brought us several excitements, we went to Ontario to visit our relatives Andrew Moerman and family. Dad bought a used camper just big enough for all to sleep in and make our meals. This was the only time we made a big trip with our family, in Canada. I have very pleasant memories of this time together on the road. Dad enjoyed it as well to be with the family for three weeks, away from all the work. For Dad it must have been an effort being the only driver, he never said any thing about it, except that it took much more to pull a camper then just drive a car. I remember most all our stops for the night at camping places, rinsing our babies diapers and hanging them on a line between the trees. Even Jimmy must have enjoyed himself, singing while he was exploring our new territory. He was holding a little book as if it was a hymn book, singing along. The oldest three had more freedom to explore out and for Dad and me it was a blessed time of change and rest.

We all where excited when we arrived at Uncle Andrew and Aunt Nell's farm, and the kids were let loose as it were, after this long trip. They were roaming the yard with their cousins to see every thing, which was new to them. Dad and I had a wonderful time catching up on the news of the last year we had not seen each other, and of course we were showing off our nine months old baby!

After we had seen the beauty from the North Ontario route we went home the shorter way, through Michigan as we crossed the border we went over the five miles long M.....bridge. it was making a difference of about one thousand KM on the way home, this was all new to us as well.

We had a very good trip home as well and were thankful that we could do this. We were sad to hear that one of our members had died suddenly while we were gone, but glad that we had a student pastor in our church for three months, who was well able to take care of every thing.

Dad had one more week of his vacation left and took a day to hunt for a permanent place to go next year as a family. He came home with the happy news that he found some crown land, it was a "bush quarter" at the time we bought it. After much work over the years it became forty acres bush and one hundred acres cleared land. Dad was very happy, he had been dreaming about this and now he found it, even though it was further north than he had planned. I know that he has worked hard to make it what it became, but I think that he enjoyed every minute of the progress. The planning we did together, the basement, the little house we had moved from Edmonton in the summer of the year 1968, and later the pole barn and the woodshed.

The third excitement was the visit from my first cousin Pastor Piet Lugtigheid, in the fall of 1962. He was a missionary in the city "the Hague", and retired after twenty five years working in that city with the "down and out." He is the only church planter I have ever known when I was home. His church grew steady to 1500 members plus others who came to his church. He was always using the Saint Jacobs church, first in the morning only and later in the afternoon as well as in the evening. We have been in his church in 1958 and could hardly believe our eyes how full that church was, people were sitting on the six step which led to the place he stood to preach (the preekstoel) He has led several times youth services in our church in Schipluiden while we were still home. Dad, who was one of the youth leaders for seven year, invited my cousin already before we were going together. And now he was coming with his wife to visit us, we were both excited to meet this special couple! He was planning to visit and preach in as many immigrant churches as possible in Canada.

They came later in the evening as we thought and had a late supper, I can still hear him pray when their meal was ready. For us this close relationship with Jesus we had never felt before. It was as if Jesus was sitting at the table too, I opened my eyes to see if He was there. Later I told Dad about it, guess what he said " Mom, I did the same, it was so beautiful." It was very personal and so down to earth we both have learned much in those few days. We had heard him preach several times as a teenager and we loved to listen

to him, but now I now began to understand that this close relationship attracted hundreds of people to his church. We all have met people in our lives who were instrumental in bringing us closer to Jesus besides our own parents. He was one of them plus a pastor who was with us for the last four years we lived in Holland. I can mention a few more of such saints (which means forgiven sinners) the Father of my friend Bertha and the Mother of my twin friends. She was suddenly a widow when her eleventh baby was born (from two marriages). Ten years later they came again, while we lived in Monarch and visited all the churches, besides his wife Corrie, one of their daughters came along as well. For them it was also a wonderful time to be with his brother Peter in Chatham who helped us when we arrived in Canada. Again we had a wonderful time of fellowship with them.

Our church was growing and we needed more room. Sunday school was held in a school next door and so was the care of babies and the preschoolers. It was decided to build a church in two stages, in the North East part of the city on the very outskirts of Edmonton, they bought about three acre land, were some cows where grazing yet.

In 1965 the first stage was ready to move in, a social hall for services where more then three hundred chairs could be placed. Also a kitchen and ten rooms for different purposes and a office for Dad was included too, it was ideal for all the appointments he had. Then a manse was build across the parking lot, which was completed January 16, 1966, ready for us to move in. You might think that I was happy to get a new house, but I was not. I loved the home we had, of course I saw this move coming but my only happiness consisted of being next to the church, so that we would have no more problems with transportation. How blind I was for the blessings of having Dad close by in his office, I could even bring him his coffee most of the mornings! And three of our children could come home for lunch, I just loved it.

It was the same old thing again, I had rooted were I was planted for more then five years. I like to think that I could call it after pain from the emigration, but this could be used as an excuse too, stubborn to move, was maybe a better word. Moving has never been a big deal as far as the work was concerned I liked to make it home sweet home again. I felt at home where we were living and now I had to move to the unknown again. Besides that, I had seen that in our new home was more work, I felt that I was on my limit as far as that was concerned. Sometimes you do not know were

thoughts and feelings originate, may be it was more work that was the culprit. The down stairs floors were all tiles and every scratch was visible, upstairs the front room had a rug and the bedrooms linoleum. I had never seen increased work as a problem, all this was nonsense there were more ways to skin a cat, as Dad use to say, and there was! We bought runners for the hall ways upstairs and downstairs and the old front room rug we put in the family room that covered all the tiles. We also had a room for church meetings that was tiled as well, and Dads study too. A bathroom and a bedroom plus the laundry completed the down stairs, it was a big house. Upstairs we had a kitchen with dining room, front room, three bedrooms and a bathroom. For me it was a matter of dividing the cleaning over the six days, that way I could keep it up. For the children there was the adjusting to their new schools, Anne in Junior High close by, and Murray and Jack in Senior High in Surrey.

Dad loved to be close to the church, but it brought him lots of counseling appointments in a short time. Also our VBS grew close to two hundred children in the summer and our church attendance went up in 1968, our church room was full every Sunday morning. Dad got some help from a secretary part time and a summer student, which was a great help for VBS and camp work. But not enough for the work all winter, it was endless. That year the possibility of a second pastor was discussed but no action came out of it. Summers were busy as well but pleasant to be outside a lot, also in the garden. For Dad one month of vacation was enough, the church gave him two more months in '68, this time on the farm did him a lot of good. Yet I saw him go to work with a heavy heart, he made it to the next summer and then Dad got some help again which was wonderful.

In the meantime our whole family was as busy as a bee too. Murray and Jack had part time jobs after school and Saturdays, they were also active in young people groups. Anne loved to go with Dad after school, to visit the elderly and the sick, she was in junior choir as well. John was in 'scouts' and had paper routes, I believe that Jim was helping him.

Our vacations were spent in the fresh air in Mayerthorpe where they could climb trees and dig holes to their hearts desire. A cement basement was our room to eat, sleep and stay warm and dry on rainy days. Dad was always making improvements inside and outside, little by little in the first years, that's all we could afford in time and money.

I used my time well with making groceries lists for a camp with seventy kids and fifteen leaders for a week on Edmonton beach, and of course planned the twenty meals. I was asked to cook as well with the help of a professional baker who baked hundreds of cookies! We all loved him for it, he also made perfect gravy and helped with the pancake mornings. We did this for seven summers and had fun doing the job. Dad had every thing perfectly organized and had enough help for teaching and recreation. It was a lot of work but we both enjoyed every bit of it.

In 1968 our family began to experience what it is like when our first one flying the “ coop.” Murray went to Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, USA. I don’t know if Dad was prepared for it at that time, but I sure was not. Later I found out that Dad was not either, when Murray came home for the summer months he had a hard time to let him go too. I noticed that Dad was just as busy as I was with coping with this new phase of life. Two years later Jack left for RCMP training in Regina and so we went down the line, from the oldest to the youngest!

The next winter Dad began talking about his feeling of being over loaded with his work, I was waiting for that and was glad he did. I don’t know if I did the right thing or not, but since I had surgery early that year, (hysterectomy and bladder repair) he was concerned about my health as well. I know that it is easy to see things on the dark side when you feel weak, for six months I was not aloud to answer the phone because of high blood pressure. My strength was returning very slowly and I did not have the courage to bring up the subject of Dad being over worked. I can not remember many details of what we talked about but for me it was a relief, and I think for Dad as well, but he never mentioned it. We could not come up with another solution then to take a smaller church. Dad had some call’s from other churches a few times, but now since we were looking for another church we gave it more thought and prayer then before. It was good that he came to the point to share this, now we could pray more about it together. “ A shared load always becomes a half load, ”and some how it brought us trough the last year in Edmonton, of course in the strength the Lord gave us.

Dad would seldom share things from his own live unless there was a great need, he wanted to spare me from it as long as possible. There where a few times that I would not let go until he shared what was on his mind. This happened more then once while we lived in Mayerthorpe. I would stand at the entrance of our front room and say jokingly, “ Dad, I don’t let you go,

until you tell me what is on your mind.“ A few times he said that nothing was bothering him, but most of the time he shared what was on his heart. I always knew about his aches and pains but other problems were not easy for him to share.

I remember what Dad said about his Mother when she was with us “ she never shared any thing with us about her self.” And she didn’t, when she was with us for eleven months, she looked sick, ate very little and lost weight and we never where able to talk about it. She was diagnosed with cancer, soon after she was home and suffered for two years before the Lord took her Home. The last months she was sharing what the Lord had done in her life and wrote this in her last letters to us.

When a “call” came from the Monarch, a smaller church on South Alberta’s prairies, we both felt that it was wise to go there, even though I knew that this was not a solution which would bring strength for full time service. We had hoped it would be less work but several things began to happen in rapid succession and Dad had the same heavy schedule again.

Aug four, 1970, we moved to Monarch and at that same day Jack moved to Regina for training. Of course we both found it difficult to leave Edmonton and for the children as well. To me it was of comfort to know that at least we tried to do some thing for Dad to make it a bit easier for him in the future. To uproot our kids have always pained both of us but our moves were practical always a must which we did not have in our hands. When we were driving to the prairies, I told Dad that I had a dream to fill the two empty beds we had now, with two children who needed care. Dad looked at me with his peculiar “Mom were are you up to, look” and said “we have to pray about that Mom.” When I threw some thing in his hopper I was sure that he would come back on it, sooner or later.

It did not take long to settle down in our roomy manse, it was a beautiful place with a thick windbreak of spruces and lilacs, for the howling wind, that I called, “prairie music”.

First we were surprised that our church start growing to double size, of course we were glad that people where responding. As a result of this Dad had two catechism classes on Saturday morning for the whole winter. Also a class for new members was needed every winter and a day to the blood reserve every month for a service and counseling. The next thing was work

in the Lethbridge Reformed Church who wanted to join the Presbyterian Church. Dad spent several evenings there because twenty-two families were not in agreement with this decision.

Dad's "peace-making abilities" were stretched to the limit. The end of this was that these families came under Dad's care, four families came to our church and the rest came for counseling, marrying, and visiting their sick and a few times a funeral. If you add to this making two sermons every week, the regular board meetings and the care of the elderly who were in the majority, we had not moved to a lighter workload.

This was my own observation and I never mentioned any of this to Dad or others, but talked to the Lord about it. I watched him more than ever before, and was so glad when Dad made it through the winter again. In the summer there was a break from teaching the kids, teenagers and new members class plus the annual "house visitation" as it was called, in every home.

His vacation on the farm was a great joy, I saw Dad perking up but it did not last through the whole year. In spite of the ups and downs of Dad's health, we enjoyed our stay on the prairies, it was so quiet and beautiful and our garden was a pleasure to work in. I had a few troubles as well with my health, especially that labyrinthitis in 1971 (a virus in the ear) which upset my balance for several months. I could get help when I needed it, but for Dad it was different he always went on, weak or strong.

I never have forgotten the Sunday that my Mom was with us and stayed for several weeks until Jack and Grace were married. One Sunday morning in church, Mom was reading in her Dutch Bible the chapter Dad was going to preach about as she always did. During the prayer she touched me and whispered "is John okay?" I had heard what she heard too, Dad had repeated three times the same sentence, it had shocked me. But I was more upset with the way Dad looked, his color was gray, since then I have seen this many times in Monarch. While preaching his normal color returned, I am sure that you understand that I have peaked every Sunday at Dad while he was praying these years. Now I think that his low blood pressure had something to do with it and of course at the border of being over worked.

It was a wonderful time when Oma Van Leeuwen came to celebrate Jack and Grace's wedding. This was the second time she was with us, the first time was shortly after Opa Van Leeuwen had died in 1965. Jack had traveled

then with Oma by train to Ontario to visit Cathy and Fred in Cambridge and Jack went to work for Uncle Andrew for the summer months. Oma was longing to be at Jacks wedding and they changed their wedding date to the fall instead the next spring. Uncle Klaas and Tante Annie came along and they went to their son in Onoway after the wedding.

March 19, 1972 our family was enlarged with five Holloway children, this came as a result of my dream to fill our two empty beds. Dad had not forgotten to pray about the dream and gave our names to be foster parents to the social services the second year, we where accepted in the spring. Our first child spent a six weeks vacation (for him) with us, he went to relatives in Sask. as soon as they had moved there. Our second one was a teenager, Jennifer from Across the Mountain, she was with us for six months. We were told that she was running away often, this was her last chance. I promised the social worker to keep her until she played her trick ten times and that happened in September. She was easy at home, her favorite answer was when called for a meal, or time for bed or to get up, for that matter,“ do I have to? “ She ran away from home, school, church, store and dentist office more then once. We had to call the police and Dad had to go along the first times to find her on the reserve, it was too bad. We had asked for small children and now they brought five children, the oldest was seven. They found a place for the three oldest girls on a farm in Taber, we promised to shop in Lethbridge the same time as that family did, so they could meet each other weekly.

So Stacy and Donald became part of our family, it seems to me that Dad took more time off to just finish a project like making a swing or a sand box. Or he took them along to get sand and get the mail and so on. One thing was sure he was happy and it did him good that our beds where full again. It was too bad that the promises where not kept in Taber, we often waited for them and had to go home without them seeing each other, that was a disappointment. That was the reason that we took their sisters in our home for a year to get reacquainted with each other in 1975.

This year reminds me, of the marriage of our oldest son Murray and Carol on December 20. Dad’s gall bladder surgery was not the only thing what took his strength, I think that when he was involved in that suicide that took place, was hard on him too. We just had dinner with that lady and had not noticed any thing. She talked about her husband that he was gone often and that she missed praying with him, as they held hands and so on. It was a

good visit and a couple weeks later we stood at her grave. We both needed time to work this through, Dad used much from what she had said to us that day, in his sermon. We were asked to visit her by one of our church members, it is amazing that God directed us to go there at this time.

When the day came that we had to leave for their wedding in Holland Michigan, Dads health was not up to it. He could not bear the thought of missing this event, and neither could I, we left by faith. Early morning we were brought to the train in Montana, just over the border. The first thing we heard about our train was that there was a derailment, which brought several hours delay. My heart sank because of Dad and also for Murray who was coming for us to Chicago. It was not pleasant for any of us, for John and Jeanne, Jim, Andy and the five Holloway children, but they all made the best of it. It was very unfortunate to say the least that the trip was prolonged for Dad and that Murray was waiting for hours. I am glad that we were not aware of the snowstorm Murray was in. In spite of the blizzard we arrived safely at two thirty in a home with lots of places to sleep. What a blessing! We did not have a long night, because the wedding was at noon, but we were grateful that the Lord brought us there in time. We have always treasured the fact that God gave us the strength to be part of this beautiful event. To me this was a prayer trip just like the one from Mayerthorpe to Surrey in 1978, and I am sure that Dad would say AMEN to that.

After the trip Dad gave his all, to lead the Christmas services, and also the Old & New Year services. He must have used all his reserves there was, because in the first week of January we had to bring him to the hospital. I was relieved in spite of what was coming next, I saw it come and yet felt helpless.

Now it was my turn to protect Dad in every way possibly, as he has done for me so many years to the very end of his life. The verdict was a year rest, I asked the board if we could stay in our home until school was over. This privilege was granted they also were paying the utility bills as well, which helped much. Dad left all the decisions to me, it was for me a sign that he was totally worn out. On Sunday he could not stand it to see the people coming to church, we had to close the drapes. It was in the month of May that Dad came out his depression somewhat and began to ask question about certain things.

When the day came to leave for the wedding Dad was not up to it, but he

could not bear the thought of missing it, and neither could I. We were brought to the train in Montana, just over the border early morning. Soon we heard the news that there was a derailment, which could stretch in several hours delay. This was not pleasant for any of us for our five Indian children it was boring as well. I was glad that John and Jeanne were traveling with us too and Jim & Andy. Two things bothered me most, that Murray was waiting for us for hours in Chicago and that our traveling was prolonged for Dad. We were very happy to see Murray at midnight and in spite of a blizzard, we arrived at two thirty in a home with lots of places to sleep, what a blessing!

It was not a long rest but it good break before the festivities of their marriage at noon. We have always treasured the fact that God gave us the strength to be part of this beautiful event!

Another disappointment came on the horizon was, that I could not keep up with all it takes to care for all the children. It was forbidden by our doctor to take the girls to the farm when Dad had his breakdown in January 1976. In retrospect it showed that we were willing to do what we thought was best. I failed to see at that time yet that both of us were limited in our strength. I think the lesson I was to learn, that my pride was hurt, and that we felt sorry for the girls, but there was no other way. We were more than thankful that we could keep Stacy and Donald. It was against our Doctors wishes but I would have never been able to forgive my self and Dad agreed with his whole heart, that we would take that responsibility.

Now back to some happy events, we celebrated our twenty fifth wedding anniversary in March 1973 with an "open house" in Monarch which was done in a festive way by the ladies of the church. We also made (our second) trip to Holland to celebrate with our family and friends, which was very special. It did bring all the home sickness to the surface again, but it was worth it! With my dear husband on my side I could keep the tears for later when we were alone. That was the promise I always had to keep if possible, I tried hard when it was time for the good byes, remembering that our loved ones found it difficult as well to let us go again. I was glad when we were home and it has always been a very happy memory for us.

Two more happy occasions in 1975 and 1976, the weddings of Anne and Henry & John and Jeanne. Dad and I have always seen the marriages from all our children as special highlights in our lives. It was a great joy for him with Murray together to officiate and give them part of Gods Word along as

they were starting their lives together. Both of the weddings were a feast for us from beginning to end in spite of my depressed state during John and Jeanne's special day. When the children were baptized and our oldest grandson David, we counted that too as high lights, the children will remember if Dad had baptized more grandchildren, because of distance I think very few. Other high lights were the days when our children publicly confessed their faith in Jesus Christ. I have never seen Dad so moved as when he was laying hands on our daughter Stacy, he was unable to go on for a moment, the scripture he was reading was for her Colossians one from nine to fourteen.

Murray and Carol's wedding was about three weeks before Dad had his breakdown and could not go on with his work, he was totally fatigued, anxiety had taken over. When John came home from work we went to a clinic in Lethbridge. From there he went to the hospital for five days observation. I was not shocked when it came to this, I had seen it come and Dad of course too, but we did not have the answer. After his gall bladder surgery he had no time to recuperate. About ten days later there was a suicide in a family where we recently made a visit. Dad was asked to go there and lead the service as well. Christmas was close and Dad was expected to do all the services, old and new years included. I had heard some remarks from a leader, which I will not repeat and never mentioned to Dad. When I heard this I was ready to protect Dad more than ever whatever it would take, because in both statements was no truth at all. It was not necessary, God took care of it in every detail on the last Sunday we were there.

Early June the chairman of the board came and talked with Dad at length to ask him if he was able to give a fare well message on our last Sunday. Dad felt that he should give a short sermon, and celebrate the Lords Supper together. This happened and made a lasting impression on all of us, it was a healing experience for many. Dad and me were included and many have expressed this to us, the adjacent meeting room was full as well. There had been ignorance and not enough communication at times. "A pastor does all the work because he is paid for it," attitude and they were not aware of the load Dad was carrying. This has been one of the most moving days in my life, I could hardly bear it. Dad spoke with so much love, from heart to heart about forgiveness and much more. During the luncheon afterwards many people came to talk and there were tears of joy and sadness. For me a crisis had passed and for Dad there was a breakthrough as well. How we thanked God for the love and understanding we received.

After this final service I finished the packing and Dad did his, in the study. We were grateful to Jeanne's Father who moved us to the farm in Mayerthorpe. Jeanne, who had been a great help for months on Saturdays, came to help with the final cleaning as well, so the whole house was left clean behind. In one of these last hours Hillegonda, one of our neighbors came over to pray for and with us, it was like God's approval stamp and His blessing upon all the work Dad had done in those six years.

Mayerthorpe, June 29, 1976-- Sept. 4, 1978.

It took a while until our house was ready to live in comfortably. Some renovations were made, and cleaning and painting made all the difference. Young and old were very happy and we saw clearly that this place was God directed, years ago and now we were in need of it.

It was very obvious that Dad and I both were enjoying the fresh air and were recuperating from the stress in the past. It was such joy to see Dad returning to normal life so to speak, to be for a length of time on the farm, was exactly what he needed. It took months until his full strength was back and I found out that I felt a different person too while we lived there. I had not even noticed that I was ready for a break, a tired feeling can creep up on you without realizing it. And if it does at times you tell yourself that you have passed the twenties a long time ago! I was always trying to pull Dad through his difficult time, keeping away things from him which were not of any help. I am glad that God gave me everything to take over more or less, when Dad's health failed. But it shows that we don't know always what we need and are ignorant of what is best for us.

These two years went by so fast, even though we did very little besides making a garden and some little improvements here and there. We did everything at ease, went to church on Sunday and on Wednesday to a Bible study in Sangudo the second year. Every other day to the mail and once a week we went for groceries. I never heard the word "bored" we all enjoyed what we were doing.

Andy was busy with his pigs after school, Stacy would cuddle a nest with little mice and Russ had fun climbing in the tree house Andy had made. Jim was in grade twelve and graduated in Mayerthorpe. Then he moved to Edmonton, found a boarding place and went to the University.

The second year we began to be more active, planning to do things outside and wondering if we should. We start having the same thoughts like, “but how long do we stay here?” Dad was thinking and longing to have one more church to serve before his retirement years. This was good news he must have felt up to it again, I felt the same but did not want to be the first one to speak. I was so glad that he had come this far again, and we decided to start praying about a church. When you start dreaming together about the future again you also begin to think about the family. They loved it on the farm and the changes would be difficult, I think that is the hardest time being a PK. Living in a manse or not, we always have to be a witness for Christ where ever we live. To part with friends and go to another school with new teachers that’s a different story.

In June 1978 Dad received a call from Surrey BC, and we took it as the last church we were to serve, for Dad it was known territory but for us it was new. Dad has been going to classes meetings by car to BC for fifteen years, with other pastors from Alberta twice a year. When we drove to Surrey I asked Dad when we were through the mountains, I always thought that passed the Rocky Mountains, it was just hilly country. Dad answered with a smile that there was no end to it! What a surprise, it was time for me to live there for a while. As I look back on these two years I see it as a fore taste of our retirement, of course at that time I had never given it a thought to retire there yet, maybe Dad did, but he never said it. One thought I remember, was that I was lonesome and longing for the people of the church at first. It made all the difference when we had to decide in 1988, Our Doctors advice was to go to the farm, “she needs fresh air for her lungs desperately, “ he said and that settled it. Since we had enjoyed these years so much it was so much easier to make that decision.

So it was time to pack again and to pray for dry weather for the forty miles gravel road we were to take to highway sixteen. It was a heart ache to Andy to sell his five pregnant sows, I always felt pain for every child to go through this process again, each one in his or her own way and Dad & I were included. We were glad that Jim was going to live with us again, Dad and I where wondering what the church would be like. What we were told was that it was a church on “the decline,” but this was not the first time Dad took a challenge.

The trip was eventful, the moving van came one day late in the afternoon at four O’clock the fourth of September. Rain had come after the long weekend

as promised. At nine thirty we were ready to leave. The first part of the muddy road was not too bad yet, but after that Dad and Jim needed all their skills to stay on the road. All what Dad said on that road was, “keep on praying Mom.” With more then a sigh of relieve and a prayer of thanksgiving we entered highway sixteen. I could sing for joy, maybe I did, I don’t remember but it would not have been the first time.

The next prayer was “Lord we need to rest, please give us a room.” We passed several motels with no vacancies, because of the long weekend. In Hinton we found one room with two double beds for the six of us. Guess what Dad said “ Glory, Glory Halleluja! That saying came over his lips a long time before we worshiped in the Pentecostal Church! After six hours sleep we got ready to go again, all day we lived on our leftovers, for the simple reason that people were waiting for us in our home, to unload. So it was a trip for “ gassen and plassen” those who know a little of the Dutch language will understand what I am saying.(taking gas and going to the washroom) that’s all the time we had.

About noon Jim asked us to pull off the road, another prayer request came from him. We had noticed that he was not as close behind us as before, but did not pay much attention to it. Jim told us that he hardly could make the hills any more, and asked Dad to lay hands on the car and pray with him. So they did, this was the third time that we needed help. Of course Dad reminded me to keep on praying, it was serious business. The miracle we asked for was happening, Jim could keep up with us ever since. By now we were on the new highway to Hope, he came next to us and said “ Dad it works, the miracle is happening, keep on praying! “

When we were on Highway One, Dad said “ Mom, I have no directions about how to find our home in Surrey, and we have little time left to get there in time. Pray that something ring a bell that we will be in time, it was about seven thirty when he said this. This was the last prayer request for that trip, we prayed for a sign that we would find the way in time. (You all know that being late was not Dads cup of tea! Soon we stopped for a stop light on 140th Street and 96 Ave. I believe, we all saw this miracle happen at the same time, none of us could have missed it! At our right hand was our moving Van with the name “Jack” on it, waiting for the light to turn, we had not seen the Van since it left the farm at nine O’clock, the evening before. All we had to do was to follow him and thank the Lord for His intervention again. We arrived right on time as promised, but we could not have done it

without the help of our Almighty God. Do you hear Dad say again “ Glory, Glory Halleluja? I do! I am sure he said it in his heart. This saying and others like that, has often come over his lips in the last twenty years, and now in Eternity! Indeed, “ Our help does come from the Lord, the Creator from heaven and earth”(Psalm 121)

Every one was waiting to unload, they must have expected much more, as I heard someone whisper a little too loud “ is that all they have? “ Soon it was coffee and donut time and while I was making the beds, a “great “ supper in every way, was delivered, did that ever hit the spot! With all the help we were in time in beds, sleeping in your own bed count double! As soon as I woke up, it was time to explore the features of our new home, in the evening I was too tired for such a fun job. I fell in love with our house from the start, in fact I still think that it was the “gezelligste’ manse we ever had.

When every one was awake except our youngest two, we had breakfast and Andy took off to register in Queen Elizabeth High School for grade twelve, a five minutes walk from home. Jim went to a garage because he wanted his car to be checked out, the verdict was that his car was on the end, and that it was impossible to believe for them that he drove it across BC, the day before. It shows that what is impossible with us, is possible with God, we were privileged to witness that. Jim went to Simon Fraser University for further study. Dad was busy to get some order in his study downstairs and I took care of the boxes upstairs, and soon it felt and looked like “home sweet home” again. The next day it was time for Stacy and Russ to be enrolled in AHT Matthew school, a twenty minutes walk from home and later Russ went for a couple of years to Prince Charles school, this must have been a big adjustment for both of them.

It was not hard for Dad to go back to work, I was amazed how quick he was organized. It reminded me of the start in Edmonton, here too was a lot of investigation to be done, but on a smaller scale. There was not much in place when we came, I thought it was good for Dad to do things the way he thought was best. When Dad came home from his first board meeting he told me that two deacons had resigned. They were overwhelmed with the work what needed to be done and did not see that devotions and prayer was a must for business meetings. One of the elders came early for prayer before the service, and the other one joined us later, this was the beginning of a different direction for all of them and us as well.

I had to get use to the fact that the church was not next to our home as it was in our last two churches. But now I could walk to a shopping centre in about twenty minutes, what I did quite often. I went as soon as every one had left, and found it relaxing just to walk through the stores and pick up what was needed, at eleven I was in the groceries store, so that I was ready with my weekly shopping when Dad came to pick me up, as he came for lunch. It saved time for Dad, that he did not have to go with me shopping that week, and for me it was a nice outing.

When we were in Surrey for the second year we had the opportunity to go to Christian Reformed services in Burnaby on Saturday evening, where we learned much about worship and the work of the Holy Spirit. We often had heard about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and began to read about it especially in what the Bible had to say on the subject. Dad made notes of what he learned and later used it to teach others. We also went to a seminar in Holland, Mich. but that was earlier, I believe in 1974.

When I began to see that this baptism was for greater witness, which Dad had received in fall 1980 already, I went to the meetings of “ Women Aglow.” There I learned more about this gift and I received it as well. From then on I could love people more then I ever did before, I mean other people, I have loved my own more then I can express, and the love for God’s Word has much increased and still is. To say it in other words I have a closer walk with the Lord, it is priceless and it influence your whole life in bringing everything in prayer. I was shy as a child, timid as a teenager and as an adult I have been longing to talk to others about the Lord, and now I am still learning!

I don’t know if I ever told you that Dad has teased me why he would marry me and take care of that shy girl he found on that farm, in the middle of nowhere. He felt sorry for me, nobody would have ever found me out there, so he rescued me! I told him that we had something in common, because I felt sorry for him too since he lost most of his hair during the war, no girl would have EVER married him! I am thankful until this day that the Lord has put us together, in spite of different interest and ways we were raised, looked, spoke, sang, smiled and laughed, real love has bound us together and will never die. I have been proud of him as long as I have known him and still are!

In 1981, we made our third trip to Holland, my Mom was 88 years old and

we felt the urge to go. We stayed for three weeks and visited all our brothers and sisters for a day, from both side. We were sleeping in my Mom's apartment and had breakfast with her and Uncle John every day, he died on cancer after five years, which was very sudden and difficult to over come for Mom. We had a wonderful time, Mom was so healthy and strong yet, the last day that we were home Uncle Frank took us to Zeeland, the province where the dyke broke in 1953 and several thousand people drowned. They showed a film from the enormous job how they had fixed the dyke again. It was a long day, but very interesting and also very sad at times, to see some graveyards where whole families were buried, from one small town only one person had survived. We were so glad that we could have this beautiful time with Mom (Oma van Leeuwen). She had a stroke while visiting my sister on Jim's wedding day, and went to be with the Lord during her sleep on July 28, 1986, 93 years old.

1983 was a year of anniversaries, first we were blessed with our thirty fifth wedding celebration in March. In June we remembered that Dad was ordained as a Pastor, twenty five years ago. For that occasion all the children came home, it was a total surprise for him. Dad and I had a meeting in our church that evening, Stacy and Russ were home to receive them when they arrived and there was plenty time to hide their cars out of side. I came upstairs first and Dad went to the garage for a moment. I can still see him stand on the first step of the stairs, when he saw them all in the front room, he was speechless. It must have been a sort of shock to him because later he said to me "Mom, I could not move, I thought that some thing was wrong with me."

It did not take him long before he began enjoying this unexpected surprise, it was just wonderful to be together again, what a high light this was for both of us.

The third celebration was the twenty fifth anniversary of our Church, this was organized by a group of people who did a wonderful job, we enjoyed it to the full. The church was growing slowly but surely, Jim was our worship leader and Dad was very happy about that, I am sure that it was appreciated double by Dad, since he had no talent in that area. It was a difficult time for Dad to lead the people through all the changes of the transition, the change in worship was well received by most, except a few older couples, they would not even try and left. If you don't understand the words and can not sing along, as was the case with them, I found it understandable, but

also sad, it was difficult to let go what had been dear to us. It felt like a sacrifice at times and I wondered how far we had to go, before we would reach the worship style that spoke to young and old. I have never talked about my own struggles to Dad, I know that he have noticed it, but I just could not add this to his load. When we were in Mayerthorpe Dad caught up on his love for singing hymns, but his love for worship songs was always there as well. Even though he could not sing them often, he would memorize the words.

A few people left because of his preaching, but others came because of the way he brought Gods Word he tried to bring the whole counsel of God. The time went fast, too fast, Dad enjoyed everything what came on his path, I was so thankful that his health was so much better since the last couple of years. Jim graduated in 1985 and took a big part in our church work, youth and worship in both services were his responsibility. Jim taught Andy how to play the bass guitar as well, somehow I always had an ear for the bass, I just love it!

In the spring of 1986, telephone calls began to come from our former Church in Edmonton concerning difficulties. Soon it became clear that they desired us to come back helping them on their feet again. It came as a surprise, as long as we were in Surrey, Dad never had a call. I just loved that peaceful time when there were no decisions to make. Now we were disturbed with a call to Edmonton, the church we have been for more than nine years. (I was disturbed) I can not speak for Dad, it seems to me that if he was, he was not showing it to me, I could always lean on him in every situation. His calmness and his evaluating pro's and con's etc put me often back where I should have been in the first place. We were almost ready to retire, was this the right time to accept another challenge? Jim expressed his feelings some what like this, "Dad, my mind says that you are crazy when you go there, but my heart seem to say something else. Staying here would be far less complicated." Yet, in the end it became clear that this is where God was leading us. What I have seen in Dad's life was, that he choose to go to where it was most necessary.

Dad was one year from retirement age and we had not even talked where and when to retire. It threw me totally off my daily routine and schedule that I was enjoying. Now I had landed in that decision making time again, even though Dad made always the final decision. As far as that goes I could go on until he knew the answer, right? Dad always wanted to know where I stood

in every thing and I am very thankful for that. I detected and recognized that same old word “chance” again and I made up my mind not to say any more to Dad, then he asked about this subject. I would not like to influence him in any way what so ever on the call. Our retirement was a different story, but the Lord directed us in that too.

After some time Dad was ready to talk about it, this was always the same pattern with big decisions. He started with our retirement, and said that he had often been thinking about it and ended up in a circle. He would love to retire in Alberta, he never did like the wet climate in BC. The problem was that he had seen over the years, that my coughing spasms (as Dr, Taylor called it) were less severe in BC then in AB. Dad was right, it did made a difference and I was aware of that, but the climate in BC was not his cup of tea, so to speak. Next, he talked about the call and I found out that he would love to take the challenge for this last year in his ministry.

As last we talked a long time about the children, that became our main concern. We where aware that Jim and Babette would like to marry soon, They knew each other for five years already, Jim’s eyes saw and heard Babette speaking at a youth meeting, and could never get her out of his mind any more! We did not have any problem with leaving Jim in the care of Babette and of course visa, versa. Andy would stay behind alone, that was a difficult thing to accept for us. Even though he was 24 years old and had started his own business! When it came clear that he might be able to buy the manse, that gave us some comfort, at least he could stay in his own surroundings. Then we talked about the well being of our two youngest, Stacy and Russ, they were teenagers by now. How would effect this move their lives? We did not have any answers to that question, as was the case with the other moves we made. But one thing we knew that we would bring them to the Lord and ask for His guidance, He is faithful and will lead us all, in Edmonton as well. Yet it was with a heavy heart for our teenagers that Dad decided to go. I know that my health had something to do with it as well. Dad has shown that over and over again since my health was dwindling in 1969 after that surgery, it took a long time before I had my strength back.

Grace community church came together after Dad had made known that we were leaving and Jim was voted in to continue as their pastor after we had left. This possibility had not even dawned on me, I was thinking to much about the wedding of Jim and Babette that was set on June 28 and on the

moving which was four weeks there after. Besides that I had slipped in a period that every thing was overwhelming to me and the high blood pressure was evidence of that. This had been the case several times over the years and I always heard the same advice from our Doctors, “take it easy and rest more.” I was hoping that I could make it till Dad’s retirement, but now I was wondering how to climb this mountain. I was looking forward to the wedding and forgot that all our children were going to help, how blind can you get when exhaustion takes over! It also was of comfort to us, that Jim and Andy would live close to each other, I know that Dad had said this several times as well. As always Dad finished off his work to the very last so that every thing was found in order.

I remember that Jim had a big struggle when he was asked to step in his Fathers shoes so to speak. I am so glad that the Lord Himself confirmed through His Word that he was able to take up the task.(psalm 6 verse 9). It was a joy for Dad, again together with Murray to officiate at Jim and Babettes wedding. Jim singing and playing to his bride has made a permanent picture in my mind. And family and friends where touched by these moments of beauty as well, with many eyes brimming with tears, it was so special to witness this. Every wedding has something that brings a moment of the service that stays with me for good. In a life time there are many rich moments, if we only take time to remember. The Lord reminded me of this just a few days ago when Murray and Carol went out for a breakfast date. I thought, “ why did we do that more often, during our time in Mayerthorpe? ”

Immediately another thought came tumbling in, to give me the answer,” but you had many dates too with Dad, in your chairs talking and holding hands.” It was like Someone said this to me, I am sure it came from the Lord to remind me. I have no idea why this thought popped up in my mind, because I have heard them say this many times in the last years, and I was happy when they were able to go out. Of course the longing for the past with Dad stays. It must have been to remind me to count my many blessings every day and they are still too many to count. I was thinking of Jim what he said at Dad’s Home going celebration, when he was “ highlighting every thing Dad had done in his life, that he also finished marrying all his children and even a couple of his grant children. Many don’t reach that age to see that and I am still enjoying our big family.

After the beautiful wedding and all the children and the quests from Holland had left, it was time to start packing. Jim had taken his belongings home and now I had to select things for Andy to make home for himself. Stacy and Russ did there own rooms and Dad did his office. Son John was coming on a Friday so that we had all Saturday to load the truck. Sunday morning was our "fare well service " and luncheon. I was looking forward to the official part, but even more so to when it had passed. I sure had rooted deep in those eight years. Dad shared my feelings more then before, I think it had to do with the fact that his long term of shepherding a flock had passed. Stacy and Russ had grown here into a teenager it was very hard for them to leave. We all had our own feelings like always and had to work them through. For Andy it was the most difficult as to get use to living by him self and later with others.

I did enjoy the service and the fellowship there after, it was not half as emotional as in Monarch. It had a lot to do with Dad's health, he was so much stronger now he had a wonderful message. The people were very content with the son of their pastor, for them it was not much of a fare well. The program after lunch was up-beat as well, just what I needed. Coming home we had nothing to do any more then change our clothes and take some food along. Then we had to say our goodbye to Andy, Jim and Babette and we where on our way. We were planning to drive to the first place past Kamloops, John was following us till we came to Barriere where we slept. We had come to the end of eight years in Surrey, for which we thanked the Lord, we were enriched in spite of a difficult transition at first. God gave us every thing we needed, and even more, my gastritis was healed as well in Sept. 1981. We began to look fore ward to move in the house were we had lived until Aug. 1970.

Edmonton Aug. 1986 -- June 1988

We arrived with the four of us in Edmonton, our family got smaller with every move we made, which is normal in most families. It all looked familiar to Dad and me but for Stacy and Russ it was new. We let them pick their own bedrooms, there was a choice with the few of us. We were finished unloading in a short time. John was on his truck and a few helpers brought every thing inside. Dad put the beds together and as always I had the easy task of directing where things should go. A hot meal and dessert was delivered by one of the families as soon as we were unloaded.

Three rooms we did not need at all, Stacy and Russ fixed up their own rooms and Dad took care of his study. I was thankful for all the help and the hot meal for us, I did feel better after that. But I loved to go to bed when Dad told me that it was the best place for me to be, after this long day. By then it was getting dark already, I was so glad that John helped us so much that whole weekend, it is so more pleasant to work with your own children.

The time went just as fast as in BC, Dad's days were full with work in the church but it was pleasant to have him close by again. I was slow in making meals but at least I did something what Dad and Stacy did not have to do, and that was important. They did the shopping for the meals etc. Stacy was a great help to find every thing and she did all the vacuuming too. And so we went through the winter, I rested much and went for a walk, most of the days. Often I visited elderly people in Emmanuel Home once a week that was enjoyable.

In the spring Dad spaded the garden just like he did years ago and I had the fun of putting the seeds in. We had plenty vegetables for the whole year again, the summer was very warm with enough showers. At noon when Dad came home for lunch he always went to the garden to keep the weeds out and in the evening he went often for a long walk. I am sure that Dad was glad to work in the church again, there were difficulties off and on, but he could handle it well as far as I could see.

In July of our first summer, I woke up after a few hours sleep with a severe sore left arm. Dad took me to a hospital where I stayed almost for two weeks observation for high blood pressure. Dad left a few days later with David from Jack to a world Congress in Louisiana as was planned for weeks already. Dad did not want to leave me, but when the Doctor told him that I was to stay for a while, he went. I was glad, it would have been such a disappointment for David. I did not feel at ease at first when Dad had left, I must admit, but I was sure that he was with me in prayer.

July 31, on the day when a tornado hit Edmonton in the north east section of the city, I came home at noon, for a whole week it had been above 30 degrees Celsius and now we were in for a break. We decided that Dad and Stacy would go to Safeway for food for the weekend before a storm came over which was brooding. Dad put me in his easy chair with food and drink and they took off. Soon Jack was on the phone telling me that a tornado was heading our way. Dad had kept it away from me, of course for a reason, I

felt very weak and was short of breath. He told me to go down stairs as soon as possible and sit under the front steps. I was grateful for that call, now I could sit at the right place because I had no clue where the storm came from, or was heading for. In 1958 in Holland Mich. we had learned some safety tips when a small town Hudsonville was destroyed, very close to where we lived.

It took me a while until I had installed my self with pillows to sit on and behind me, plus a blanket to keep warm on that cold cement floor. A flashlight and a glass of water and I felt literally ready to weather the storm, constantly asking the Lord for protection. By than big pieces of ice were hitting the windows, it was dark with lots of lightning but the noise was more from the terrible wind and the ice against the windows then from thunder. These couple of hours were very long hours, but the Lord kept me from being overly fearful. I think that Dad had been very worried about me, when they where trapped in the store.

His booming voice gave it away when they called that they were home, it was a fearful day for many and also of deep sorrow. Dad came to get me first and put me in bed, what a wonderful feeling to be home again and be in our own bed. Then he made arrangement with the police to go to the area were the tornado struck, to see some people from our church who lived there. I remember what Dad said when he came home that evening “ Mom, it looked like a war zone and seventeen people have lost their lives, as far as they know.”

Stacy stayed with me and took care of me as much as she could. I was not able to do any thing in these months, she kept busy after she came home from work too. All I did was making the meals, hopping from one little stool to the other in the kitchen. My heart was skipping often and I was out of breath many times and feeling helpless. There was nothing what they could do in the hospital we were told, only a diet to regulate cholesterol and sugar, was all they gave me.

But as you know your Dad, he would never give up and start looking for alternatives and made a appointment with a ND, a Naturopathic Doctor. He encouraged us to do all the things faithfully that he advised. A diet, vitamins and some herbs, and lots of rest plus walking every day starting with a few minutes. Some vitamins were good for my heart, it made me easier to breath after some months, he said that it would take a long time before improvement would take place.

One year later we found another Doctor who was a MD as well as a ND. That was good news because now we were paid by the medical service, before we had to pay all the visits every month. We found that this Doctor was more knowledgeable, of course he had more years of study behind him, we were very thankful that this man was brought on our path by a friend. And he became our friend over the years as well, he took a whole hour for our appointment, half of the time he talked with Dad about the Church, politics and always asked for his writings. We even had tea with them sometimes, it was a pleasant outing for us to Stony Plain, first every month and then every three months.

As a result from our visits to Dr. Taylor, he began to ask Dad how long he planned to work yet. He rather would see us move today then tomorrow to the farm, he said, for the simple reason that my health has more chance to improve in the bush air than in the city. In no time Dad talked with the leaders of the church and asked them if he could work three days on the weekend. This was spring 1988 and the first week of April, we moved most of our furniture to the farm. We had told our renters what was in the making and they felt bad about leaving, but the Lord made it happen that they had to move to Whitecourt for their work during that time!

It was wonderful to be there from Monday evening till Friday evening, instead of one day per week. We did not do much in the house until we moved there for good. We only got rid of things that were worn out and dirty and of course Dad did all the cleaning upstairs. This was the beginning of our ten years retirement” honeymoon in Mayerthorpe.” We celebrated our fortieth wedding anniversary on Dad’s birthday in Emmanuel Church, I think that this was the weekend that Dads ministry came officially to a close.

The three days were not busy, Stacy “was holding the fort” so to speak, and we had the kitchen still complete, she did the shopping and I did the cooking. Two lazy chairs and our TV were still there too, and we had every thing for over night. I had a lot of rest and walked a little with Dad in the evening. On the farm we were mostly outside Dad was putting a new face on the yard, with destroying nettles and weeds, he was creating vegetables and fruit gardens, and we enjoyed every moment of it. Dad and I would have never dreamed that this piece of “crown land” could bring us so much pleasure and satisfaction and even more health to my lungs!

When we were there full time I start dreaming about improvements, that's what Dad wanted me to do, and he took care that it would be done. This was a total new ball game for me because this had never happened when we lived in church homes. I had never given it a thought, to ask for any thing that could stand some improvement, we just used every thing the way it was and the best we knew how. The first thing I came up with, was to break out that old closet in the kitchen, that would give us a second entrance to our build on front room. Dad agreed and suggested to have some shelves made on the right side. David, a man from town came and that first job was done quickly. Later it became a slower process, he was always busy etc. (nieuwe bezems vegen schoon.) new brooms sweep very clean! One of our many saying, translated literally in our. Dad asked for the middle shelf to put all his keys there, car keys included, his ring and glasses and the like. The top shelf held all the picture books we received over the years from Holland, on the bottom my health books that Dad had given since I was on the path of recuperation since 1987. We were delighted that it had worked out so well and of course I kept on dreaming. In the kitchen we had some more cupboard space made (with small shelves for our mugs) plus a new double sink, which was pure joy to me.

So our little castle became more and more enjoyable, the painting and the rugs in all the rooms did wonders too. The second summer we had the basement walls insulated and a wooden floor as well, where the old rugs found a place which we used in other homes, what a difference that made in the winter. This job was done by Harm and Ann Haak while we took a vacation, we were glad to have them, and they enjoyed being on the farm to do this work. Then one more dream came to pass and that was the sun porch! This room we used every day in one way or another. We had our noon meal there and coffee time during early spring sometimes, we often opened a door to the porch, when it was too warm in the front room to our liking, and then we settled down on our favorite spot. Every vegetable or fruit was prepared in the sun porch, before it found its way to the freezer.

When our home was all fixed up, Dad was itching to fence in our quarter, I believe that he has written about these things in detail. He also wrote about when the barns were build etc. We always went together to the field, my place was in the bucket of our beloved John Deer tractor, ofcourse Dad found ways that I was sitting comfortable. Nobody knows better then I do, how Dad took care of me and spoiled me, I was his "greenhouse plant" (kas plantje) as he called me sometimes. We never stayed in the field more then a

few hours per day, we brought Chris Krabbe's slogan into practice, he often said "John what's the hurry" and we did take it easy. I even got a job to do during fencing time, I helped a bit with stretching the barbwire (just holding on mostly) and move the tractor when one part was finished. I was also responsible that every thing was picked up and nothing got lost, which is easy to do when the grass is tall.

Beside gardening and keeping up the yard we visited all the children once or twice a year. In March and October we went faithfully to board meetings from the Reformed Church. Dad also attended monthly board meetings from the Pentecostal Church in Mayerthorpe.

And then there was also a year (1993) that there were six weddings in our family, and to top it all off we enjoyed a three-week visit from my brother Jaap and his wife Maartje van Leeuwen.

The first wedding was Stacy and Murk Post in Emmanuel Community Reformed Church. It was very special for both of us, as Stacy had requested to bring her together in Church to Murk.

I have mentioned before that I had some special memories of every wedding of our children. We both had cared for Stacy since her second year and now she wanted both of us to walk the aisle with her, as she began this new phase of live. I found it meaning full and for both of us, it was much more than an honor to do this together. It was a beautiful service and the rest of the day as well with the whole family together. In July was the wedding of our oldest granddaughter Linda, she married Mark Klassen, that too was a wonderful celebration. I think that it was rather hard for her Dad Jack, to give his daughter away, a normal feeling for most Dads as far as I have seen. But it was a joyful occasion in church as well at the rest of the day. In Aug. our oldest grandson David took the step to marry Sarah-Lynn, again there was much joy all day. The communion, which their Grandpa Moerman served at their service and his prayer for them, touched my heart in a special way. My brother and his wife were present at this feast as well, they were very happy to be part of it.

Soon it was time for Dad to get ready for another wedding this time in Texas, this was for a son of his brother Jaap, who lived a good hour drive from Dallas. His son Wayne phoned Uncle John to come over to officiate at his wedding if he had time. Even if he did not have time, Dad said he would

make time, so to speak. Dad just loved to do that and of course see his brother and the rest of the family as well. Since my brother stayed for ten days yet, it worked out very well. Jaap and Maartje were a great help and we also had lots of fun. Dad was very happy that I could stay home because I could never talk him in to going some where, unless I was well cared for, during the last twelve years. That is a picture of Dad, I know that you have seen this many times over the years, but unless you have missed it, you heard it now, or again!

Now we have come to the last wedding in the family and that was the celebration from Andy and Terri in Surrey BC. Their lives can tell the story that they met for the first time in April 1993 in Church, and married that same year on the second of October.

Dad and I were very happy when we heard that news and we were not the only one, our whole family rejoiced! It might sound like a broken record by now, but for us it was again a day that was very special from beginning to end. I believe that Dad, Murray, Jim and Stacy had all a part in the service, and in the evening many more, I am sure. Such days were not only pleasant for us, but also emotional, I know that it was the same with Dad when he got older. I had never given that much thought, but when Andy married I was well aware of it. Highlights in our children's lives were always touching, but some how you realize it more when you get older. That year was full of celebrations, it was unique!

In Nov. of that same year there was sorrow in Jack and Graces family, Mr. Kaptein died after suffering a stroke a couple of years before. About a month later Anne and Henry were suddenly bereaved of Father van deVliert. It shows that joy and sorrow are often close together and it is a blessing that we do not know what tomorrow will brings. The suddenness of their departure touched us but we were comforted when we heard the message again that there are many rooms in Heaven for all who believed. December 15, we went to Lethbridge to take part in the wedding ceremony of Jeanne's Father, Herman who married Corrie, after five years being a widower. This too, was a day of rejoicing again for both families, it was the sixth wedding for Dad that year.

In Jan. 1994, we went to our Doctor in Stony Plain, this was a routine visit every three months. When we were ready to go home I said to him, “

Doctor, when are you giving me permission to go to Holland for a few weeks?" He answered "right now, I think you are as good as you will ever be. "I could not believe that he allowed me to go. I had almost given up on going, but had often said to Dad, if I only could go once more to see my brothers and sisters and say my goodbyes." I told Dad that I was not going to tell them that this was my last time, and he agreed on that. This was going to be our fourth time since we had left home. I had two reasons for not going any more, I was very uncomfortable in the plane, short of breath mainly and my blood pressure abnormal high. The other reason was that I had been homesick after every trip, I went through the same ordeal as in 1948, not as long but too long. I had a difficult time shaking it. Dad deserved better than to have a cry baby on his hands after such a wonderful time in Holland.

I have enjoyed these four visits more than I can ever tell and have total peace and rest with this decision ever since. I know that it is better for my health and I am thankful, that I could go home three times while our parents were still alive. I also felt that I had chosen for Dad and since my health was not the best that it was better to stay home. It was not a "so called sacrifice" I have never doubted one minute that I should not go to Canada with Dad, after the war was over. It was difficult for Dad too, to leave his Home land, together we went through this painful experience. I have always loved him with my whole being and I thank God for every day we had together. After this trip home, I felt very happy and satisfied that my mission was completed.

In 1995 Dad was asked to come to Holland to celebrate its 50th anniversary of freedom in May. He was asked to lay a wreath with his friend Piet at a monument in Schipluiden, in honor of those who had served in the underground forces. This was the only friend of Dad who was still living, we had visited him when we were home a few times. This man, had never been able to work since the war, because of heart trouble, he died just before the festivities began. His wife was laying a wreath in honor of her husband as well. Dad relived the time that he was in the underground forces with these sixteen men who died, as he walked with his friend's widow. I know that such celebrations bring also tears, I call these days of remembrance "bitter sweet." His wife had shown so much courage during all these years in caring for her husband and children, It was meant as an honor to honor those men who had risked their lives for others, but very emotional for Dad and for the widow especially.

I was glad that Andy and Terri went along with Dad to Holland, it made the trip so much more pleasant for him. Of course Dad asked me too, if I was sure that I was not coming along. My heart said no, I am not sure, I was tempted to go, yet I was convinced that it was not good for my health. When Dad came home he said “Mom, it was so emotional at times that I was almost glad that you were not there.” I did have peace all along, but I was glad, that it was confirmed, by what Dad shared. He was glad that he went and it helped him much, to show Andy and Terri our roots. Dad loved to do these things especially to our children. That was also one of the reasons that he went to Holland with John and Jeanne in Sept. 1997 because of the Van Leeuwen’s reunion. When that invitation came Dad said “ Mom, since you are not going anymore, I am getting homesick when I go, I am just longing to be with you. Maybe I had to learn what homesickness was, but now I know. You were longing for those whom you loved most, but I never had that when I left.”

I believe with all my heart that there was a purpose for Dad to go once more, now I look back. His brother and sisters have often said that they were so glad, that he came with John and Jeanne, Inviting their whole family and cousins was more then prove of it, they still mention it in their letters and talk about pictures that were taken with Dad at that time.

In 1996 we were blessed to have another brother of mine visiting us, this time Nico and his wife Jannie, this was the third brother who came to see us during our retirement years. My brother Piet and Maartje came for our 40th anniversary in 1988. This was so much more valuable now Dad was home, he missed so much with the visits of his Father in 1959 and 1966 and others over the years I was glad that Opa Moerman stayed eleven months both times, in the winter he was mostly with Andrew and Nell on the farm. In the summer Dad had a little more time for him. Opa loved making vegetables ready for the freezer. Every day he would ask me if he could peel potatoes, cut rhubarb, etc. he was happy that we had a garden and pleasant to have around. He could not go down the stairs alone, Dad had to be home to help him with several things. He was also a good reader, he often got mail from his children and also their local weekly paper. He shared the news with us and was never bored. He also red the “Sunday newspaper, about all the services and other things, from a couple dozen communities around his home. In 1966 we took him one day to our vacation place, he was watching Dad planting some small trees he got from our bush. He was glad that he now could see and understand what we were writing about.

Nico and Jannie were with us for two weeks in 1996, after a wonderful time together, they traveled by Greyhound bus to BC, to see Vancouver Island as well. And of course a visit to our children and their families in Surrey and Maple Ridge, then they flew to Ontario, to visit my sister Cathy in Cambridge.

When Dad came home from Holland with John and Jeanne in the last week of Sept. we made our yearly trip to BC again. Before we left, we dug most of our winter carrots and potatoes, in case snow and frost would surprise us before we were back. As always we enjoyed this fall trip very much and especially the visits with our children and grandchildren.

This was our last trip together to B.C, I can hear Dad still say, “ Mom, this is the last time that we go this late in October to the children, I don’t want to be caught in a snow storm any more.” That snowstorm was indeed bad, especially from Blue River until the turn off to Jasper, it was very difficult driving since a large part of the road was broken up, and no people in side. The work crew must have been taken by surprise as well. When we came home, we had two days to harvest the rest in the gardens, and made it ready for the winter. We took it easy for a couple of days, while Dad did some of his homework for the fall semi board meeting in Calgary. The day before the meeting, we drove to Rebekah and Greg to visit and stay over night, this must have been our first time to see them in their own home. It was a very pleasant and relaxing time for us. The meeting was good as well, Dad found it always interesting to hear and to participate in all the discussions. These meetings and also the ones from the board of our local Church, filled a need in his life during the years on the farm. We also enjoyed seeing the pastors and elders again, most of them we had known for years already.

Snow had not reached Alberta yet during our trip, I was happy about that. While we were driving home I said “ that I could hardly wait to get home and settle in for the winter on the farm. Dad answered something like (since I was his dreamer)” Mom, that is going to be a dream for now, I long for that too, but I have other plans. We are going twice a week to Edmonton for your chelation treatments, if all possible.” I said,“ are you sure Dad, but what about the risk of bad winter roads? ”Yes, in spite of that, it is more then time, to see if this treatment will help your heart, this summer we were too busy.” In Aug all the preliminary tests were taken, so I was ready to go, but we could not go even once a week, which is best for good results.

I could hardly believe what Dad was saying at first, it was a sacrifice for him to do this during the winter, he was not much for winter driving anymore. Even though the Explorer we bought was a great help in the snow with the four wheel drive. It still was a two hour trip and we had to leave at six O'clock in the morning. As soon as we were home, Dad made appointments for every Wednesday and Friday, except for the last two weeks of the year. We could cancel two hours before the appointment, reason be that the content of what was used for chelation, was only good for me and for nobody else. They had to throw it out if I could not make it, and of course we had to pay for it, without having the benefit. This was no problem since it took us almost two hours to get there, so our winter adventure of thirty treatments began, November one, 1997.

God was hearing and answering our prayers daily for good weather, Twice we had icy roads in the morning and twice a heavy fog. These mornings we went later and could still make it before the ten O'clock deadline. We never had a heavy snowfall that winter, just a few inches at the time, I still see it as a miracle that we could do this. After three months of chelation treatments, my heart was beating regular, with no more skipping or racing. I don't know who was thrilled most, we were both overjoyed. It was years ago that I had felt so normal, before Jim and Babette married I had trouble already. This was the end of January and we continued the treatments until March 27, 1998.

January first, we were blessed with a visit of Anne and Henry, they surprised us, because special days like this every one spent in their own family. I believe that none of their children were home that day. We enjoyed it to the full and talked about staying on the farm, or taking some help for Dad when it became too much work for Dad, and so on. We had talked before about these things but always came to the conclusion that it was not necessary yet. Dad longed to stay on the farm as long as he lived and God has granted him that wish. I was totally in agreement with Dad, but I was well aware, that most people have to move for their final days, and I am more then thankful, that Dad did not have to do that, he could go to his Heavenly Home from his own "land," he loved so much!

I have walked through the 50 years with my dear husband and your dear Dad and Opa. I have also given a few hints how and when we met each other and survived together the years of occupation in Holland. God has spared our

lives many times during the war. I have enjoyed this writing more than I can tell, Dad's memory is just as clear as ever. Yes, it has caused tears at times but there was also much joy and gratitude, as well.

Dad's life is still intact in my mind, it is not hard at all to bring out different things from him. I thought that the memory of Dad's life would fade some after a few years, but I am glad that it has not happened yet. I would not do justice to Dad's life, if I not record the things he had said the last month of his life even though I have told some of it already and even written about it, but since I remember it still so well, I do it again.

I found that Dad was very quiet in the evenings, more than he was before in the last winter. He also read his Bible much more, besides reading our devotions after every meal. He took more often his blood pressure than before, when I asked if he was not feeling well, he always said that every thing was good. After Dad was gone I began to think that he spared me the pain of knowing that all was not well. He has protected me from anything that could hinder my recuperation since 1987. But one thing was a puzzle to me, that Dad never went to our Doctor if he needed advice, or did he think that this was the best for both of us? He could have gone with me as well, which we did not do, because of my chelation treatments. Our Doctor was very happy that I was doing this, so we could wait to see him later when I was finished.

As I can see it now, the Lord has been more than gracious, in the way He took Dad Home. It was just as Jim said, "we lived our last day with joy, doing what we both loved to do". It was Dad's longing to die on the farm, so this was the fulfillment of Dad's wish and the best way for me, I am convinced of that. God has given proof of this by sustaining me through His Word, from the moment I found him "asleep in Jesus," as one of the older hymn says.

The text which was given to me, more than several times during the month of March when I woke up, came immediately in my mind, when I saw that Dad had moved to his Heavenly Home." Be still and know that I am God (Psalm 46 : 10.)" Even though I heard these words, I still screamed "Lord, you know that I can not live without him," when I stumbled home. In answer to this, another word of Him came, " My ways are not your ways and My thoughts are not your thoughts,"(says the Lord. Because I was said straight by the Lord him self, I found the strength, to do what I had to do, and that

was to phone our children. I must add that I felt guilty and asked forgiveness before Ruth came. If it was not for our neighbor Ruth, who came to pray with me, before every call we made, I don't know how this most difficult job I have ever done, was accomplished. But again God directed every call, Jack was to be called first and then Murray. Why? I don't know but I remember that Henry just came inside when I phoned Anne. Coincidence? No, the Lord was in it, I do not remember in what order every thing happened. But I do know that God was in control in these very disturbing hours, days, weeks and months, and still is, at times. Of course " the pain of our loss I have given a place in my life,"as my sister in law Annie taught me to do.

Leaving home for good in Mayerthorpe without Dad, after fifty wonderful years with him, was an experience that can not be compared with leaving our home land, when we where just married. The first uprooting was healed by Dad's love and our children, the second time I felt homeless, in spite of knowing that there was a home waiting at Murray and Carol. With Dad gone so suddenly I felt helpless, all security was gone in one moment, in spite of all our loving children and grand children. It was a long struggle, before I found my new way of live, but God gave me His Word many mornings, when I was too tired to read because of little sleep. These words I have typed separately, and later I added the texts that spoke to me in my daily devotions.

On Sunday morning after a night of walking through the loss of Dad over and over again, which was like trying to walk on water, like Peter did. Every time I was sinking in my grief and it felt that I was not able to come up any more. When morning came I could concentrate on the words " be still and know that I am God," I had to learn to depend on Him and Him alone. These words never left me for days. On Tuesday morning I was comforted with Hebrew 11:4, " He died, but through his faith he is still speaking." The next day was the funeral, which I thought would be the darkest day of all." But God," (Dad used these words as a topic for one of his sermon) " took care of me in a special way, and no doubt of our whole mourning family as well. First thing that morning, His Word came from Nehemiah 8:10," Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord will be your strength." And He was, I wanted to sing even at Dad's grave, " the sting of death had lost its sting, "our God is a God of miracles.

On April 2, I opened my Bible at random and my eyes saw Psalm 71:14 especially. Still drained from the long day before, I needed these words “ But as for me, I will always have Hope, I will praise you more and more.” And the last day on the farm, I was reminded of the 18th verse of the same Psalm.” Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare Your power to the next generation, Your might to all who are to come.” It was Dad’s longing to do this by prayer and counsel, now this task was resting on me. It was confirmed when Andy told us in Church that he saw that huge umbrella folding, when he heard that Dad went Home suddenly, and smaller umbrellas were taking over. I thought “ I have to take over Dad’s intercession for the family and others, it brought me a purpose and comfort.

I have grown closer to the Lord in the days and years since Dad went Home, because the one who cared for me had fallen away. It might sound strange to some of you, but I found the answer to my question, during the first months Dad was gone, why Dad had to die so suddenly. Even now after four years I realize more and more, that I depended on him in every thing.

I had leaned on Dad spiritually more than I was aware of, his prayers, his answers to my questions, his insight and wisdom and so much more. I know that God makes no mistakes, He calls us Home when we have filled our days on this earth, even though I asked an explanation in my desperation. So, now God gives me some years to mature and lean on Him alone. Dad was so ready to go Home I have noticed that, and I also know that he has sown many spiritual seeds in my life all these years.

I thank God that he was the priest of our home, full of love for all our children, grand and great grand children. I found this saying of a loving grand Dad, in one of Dad’s “ planner “ books, this week. “Someone has said, if they had known that grand children were that cute and such a blessing, they would have started out with them!” I am sure that Dad would hasten to say “ that he would not have missed our children for any thing in this world (if that were possible) who have given us the riches of all our off spring!”

In the early part of March, Dad was taking a nap in his chair, after we had our noon meal, as usual. As soon as I had washed the dishes, I joined him in my chair next to him, and dozed a bit too and often Dad had left, by time I was finished. But this time I stood in front of him, just looking at him and one thought came after the other. The first one was” this is the way Dad looks when he has been taken Home.” Then another thought came, “ now we

are fifty years married, it will be not that long any more, before one of us will be taken Home.” It was not until that moment, that I had given it much thought or been aware of the fact, that we had reached the age that our life together could end any time, as far as our age was concerned. I have been thinking of this when we were celebrating but then it left me and I never shared it with Dad.

When we were walking on the path of our bush (it could well be that it was the last time, in March) I stopped and said to Dad “ if you are not walking here with me any more, this bush does not mean any thing to me without you.” Dad answered, “ Mom, I feel the same way about this, without you the farm means nothing to me either.”

One morning early March, we learned a new worship song in the Pentecostal Church, Dad went to Ruth (our pastors wife) and got a copy of it. As soon as he was home he went downstairs to get his preparations for our funerals, he read his songs and we sang some of them. He said “ this new song I want to add too, it is so beautiful I would dance if I could.” I said ”Dad, we are thinking alike again, I love to have that song in my service as well, and I am sure that we can dance together when we are with the Lord! Dad also said that he would be jealous if I was the one who would be at his service, singing all these beautiful songs. We laughed about this funny thought and I had to think about Peter Marchell who said to his wife,” Catherine, if you cry much during my final service, I am going to sit straight up in the coffin!” Even with this kind of strange discussion I was so sure, that Dad was not going to miss out on my service, all based on Dad’s perfect health. The first thing I learned when Dad died was that God calls us, sick or healthy, it is His timing! Here is the song we were talking about:

THE RIVER IS HERE.

Down the mountain the river flows, and it brings refreshing wherever it goes.
Through the valleys and over the fields, the river is rushing and the river is here.
The river of God is teeming with life, and all who touch it can be revived.
And those who linger on this river’s shore, will come back thirsting for more of the Lord
Up to the mountain we love to go, to find the presence of the Lord.
Along the banks of the river we run, we dance with laughter giving Praise to the Son.

Chorus.

The river of God set our feet to dancing. The river of God fills our hearts with cheer.
The river oh God fills our mouths with laughter, and we rejoice for the River is here.

As I left the farm with Jack and Grace on that Friday evening, six days after

Dad had died, I felt so emotional drained, that I did not know what to do with myself. I had never felt like this before, it was like many thoughts were coming in my mind all at the same time. I was praying for some sleep so that I could think normal again and I was sure that our family remembered me as well. I did sleep that night more restful for a few hours, that was the first time that week and I felt more normal in my head. It also gave me hope that this would continue, now I had left the farm. My Mother's advice was often in my mind too, that the best thing she did was to visit the children when my Father died. It was indeed the best for me too, to come to grips with the sudden loss of Dad, and my life on the farm, which was broken off so abruptly. When I was with Jack, I must have been staring at one place when Jack asked, "Mom, what are you thinking?" Of course I was thinking about Dad and Jack knew this too, but I am thankful that he asked, because there is no other way out, then to talk about your grief.

I had asked Dad, if he ever was irritated when I was laughing so often, while you mostly smiled. Dad's answer was that he has always loved me the way I was, and I could say that of him as well. Again I must say that I don't know why I asked these questions during the month of March. The only reason I can think of is that we were going over our 50 years together almost daily during these weeks. I have come to the conclusion, soon after Dad died that God had led us to do all this sharing, and I see it as part of my preparation for the days of Dad's Home going.

A few days later, Dad was sitting in his lazy chair in the evening, his favorite place with his Bible open, I can still picture this. It was one of his last days that he was with us, all at once he said, "Mom, I love you so much." He repeated this twice or three times, it struck me to the core it felt so very special, but I did not know why it struck me, this was different. Now I understand and take it as his final greeting to me, since he did not have time to say anything on the day he was called to his Eternal Home.

I have found a few things from Dad that I like to write down, it is a mixture of things he had written down at different places:
"What we will not face, we can not deal with and what we deal with, we can never control until we face it!"
He also wrote a saying, "Company in distress makes sorrow less, and a shared burden is half a burden."

A poem of Mark Welch.

I am the one to blame, I caused all His pain, He wore my crown
I gave Him cause to cry. He taught me how to live and He taught me how to die.
He gave Himself the day He died for me, and wore my crown for Eternity!

-----What we did together the last month of Dad's life.-----

- February 25, we remembered the day we went to the town hall for our marriage license.
- We also wrote in an anniversary card to each other (which is in Dad's memorial album) what it meant to us to celebrate our Golden feast.
- March 14, we had "Open House" for our friends in Mayerthorpe, in the Pentecostal Church.
- March 15, we went to the morning service as well as to he combined evening service
- March 16, Dad wrote two articles for the local news paper, in the afternoon he worked outside.
- March 17, Dad wrote two more for the paper, because of our planned trip to Ontario, and we went for a long walk.
- March 18, Chelation treatment in the morning in Edmonton, Dad put cut wood in the wood shed.
- March 19, Classis meeting in Emmanuel Church, Edmonton.
- March 20, Travel home to Mayerthorpe.
- March 21, Get ready for "Open House" in Edmonton Church. At supertime, Andy and Terri surprised us with their daughter Katie and their 25 days old son John Andrew! Dad has been sitting with Johnny on his lap all evening. This was the first time we saw our new grandson, it was so special, Dad was very happy and proud to see his little John Moerman!
- March 22, We left early for the morning service in Edmonton and Open House " in the afternoon. We came home at our bedtime, after a wonderful day meeting with a couple hundred of friends plus family. Besides grandchildren who were not able to come, Stacy Murk and children were missing they were still in Cili yet. I remember that at family reunions Dad and I always talked the most about the ones who were not able to come, our thoughts and prayers where whit them. That Stacy's family could not be there with our "golden anniversary" and Jim's family was missing, (even though for a very happy reason) when Dad's 75 th birthday was celebrated and the marriage of Greg and Rebekah was celebrated, stands out the most, and that is of course that

it where the last high lights when Dad was still with us. When we came home from that wonderful event with our family and many friends. Andy and Terri treated us with a late Kentucky fried chicken meal, a unforgettable celebration!

- March 23, Andy and Terri spent the whole day with us, Dad went for a walk in the bush with Andy and I had more time to be with Terri and the family, with our little Johnny especially!
- March 24, After breakfast, Andy and Terri were ready to start out for their home, and we left for a board meeting in Mayerthorpe. I was the baby sitter of a little boy of a board member, were the meeting was held. During the afternoon Dad carried most of the wood which was cut, in the shed and spent most of his energy in the morning on the word processer.
- March 25, We went early for my chelation treatment in Edmonton.
- March 26, We worked together raking and cleaning the yard, to make it look like spring again. Dad wrote his last two articles for the “Town and Country” paper which were needed, while we were gone to Ontario.
- March 27, We went for my 28th treatment to Edmonton and on the way home we attended a funeral in Sangudo. In the evening we had a visit from people, by the name of Moerman, inquiring if we were related to each other, which was not the case.
- March 28, Dad brought me to Church to help with clothing exchange, because it was too much work for our pastors wife, there were always helpers needed. Dad was helping too as a rule, but we just found out that this was the only day we could buy chickens in Barrhead this spring. I still regret that I did not go with Dad and still wonder what the purpose was, there are many things to reflect on without an answer. But I believe with all my heart that God was in it from beginning to end. My part is” to be still and know that He is God. “

I was brought home at 2 O’clock and Dad came home at the same time, as he had promised. I was still outside and he turned down the window and said,” Mom, I am not coming in, because I brought two ducks as well and I want to fix the duck house, so that the crows can’t pick on their eggs like before.”

I made some food and drink for him and helped until 4.30, I am still glad that we worked together those last hours. We always loved to be

outside, especially in the spring to cleaning the yard after along winter, it feels like summer is around the corner. When the duck house was almost done, Dad asked me to make dinner early if possible, because he was hungry already. The chicken coop was not much work, it had not been in use since two years ago.. I heard him hammer on the duck house for ten minutes yet and then he went to the chicken coop.

He only made a start with the cleaning when the Lord took him Home, while I was hanging the angel with the trumpet in its place, under the cross of Jesus. This was a gift from John and Ina Van Leeuwen, made by Ina, presented to us at our "Open House" six days before. Dad had put it that evening when we came home on top of a calendar, and said " Mom, will you find a place for it, when you have time? " Our days were full and that had not happened yet. I looked at it when dinner was in the oven, and all at once knew the place where it would look beautiful, under the cross, flanked by the two pictures of Jesus in Gethsemane and Jesus knocking at the door, given by Jack when he was 15 years old. The angel was blowing the trumpet for Dad one of these moments when I was thinking where to hang it, and put it in place. I remember clearly my thought when I went outside to tell him, " I am sure that Dad likes the place I choose,s" but he never confirmed it. I still find it a beautiful symbol of Dad's departure.

First I questioned why the Lord did not take Dad Home, while I was working with him. But Murray gave me the answer, that it might have been too much for me, to see when it happened and not be able to do any thing. This gave me peace, and now I can add that I know that is was better, finding him sleeping peacefully then seeing it happen, that picture would have stayed with me for ever. God has been gracious in many more ways then we realize at the time, but later discover.

I remember that we were sitting in our easy chairs after we had our devotions I believe, that I said to Dad, " what does it show about our faith, if we loose each other and we are not able to get over it? " Let us promise to each other, that as soon as we are able, to try to be a Dad or Mom again to our children. Can we promise this to each other Dad, what do you think? Dad looked at me with that special look, as Anne called it, and said " Mom, you have a point I never thought about, I promise to do my utmost, to be a Father and Mother to our children as soon as I am able, if I am the one who have to go on alone."

I have often thought about that promise these last four years, it does take more then I thought it would be, for the simple reason that I never have walked this path before. And I always thought that time does heal but only to a certain extend, I have learned so far. Longing for what was, is still strong and to realize that it belongs to the past, is still difficult. It shows to me, that real love never dies, but I hasten to say that I am more then thankful to God for his healing through His Word, and also through the wonderful love of all our children and grandchildren. We where, and I still am amazed and always will, about the many blessings we have received as a family over the years.

I don't know the origin of this writing, the question is, "How do we dwell in the shelter of the Almighty God?" Psalm 91:1.

By total surrender to Him, feeding on His Word and conversing in prayer.
By being aware of His presence with in us, and be aware that His power is available to us.
As we walk and talk daily with Him, His direction will become clear in our lives.
Those who abides in Him (John 15) will say to the Lord,
" my refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.
Trusting is one of the secrets of abiding in Him.
We have to trust Him in all things and at all times,
in joy and in sorrow, in abundance and adversity.

This prayer came from Dad's study, it was typed recently.

"And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and dept of insight, so that you may be able to do what is best, and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ-to the glory and praise of God."

This is our prayer for all our children, grand children, great grand children, and all after them " until the Day of Christ."

Thanks to God for our Redeemer,
Thanks for all Thou has provide
Thanks for time now but memory,
Thanks for Jesus on our side,
Thanks for pleasant, balmy springtime,
Thanks for dark and dreary fall,
Thanks for tears by now forgotten,
Thanks for peace within our soul,
Thanks for prayers that Thou has answered,

Thanks for what Thou does deny,
Thanks for storms that we have weathered,
Thanks for all Thou does supply,
Thanks for pain, and thanks for pleasure,
Thanks for comfort in despair,
Thanks for grace that none can measure,
Thanks for love beyond compare,
Thanks for roses by the wayside,
Thanks for thorns their stems contain,
Thanks for home, and thanks for fireside,
Thanks for hope, that sweet refrain,
Thanks for joy, and thanks for sorrow,
Thanks for Heavenly peace with Thee,
Thanks for hope in the tomorrow,
Thanks through all Eternity!

I have seen Dad's thankfulness in his life in the ten years we lived on the farm more than before. It was so clear that he enjoyed his retirement and that his "land" was his sweet home. He often said some thing in the line of "It is no where as good as here!"

In conclusion, I like to give you a short insight on our differences, lest you get the impression that our life was a fairytale, of course it was not. Was our life easy? I have never taken it as easy, every thing you want to accomplish takes effort, marriage included. "All beginnings are difficult" as the saying goes, whatever you undertake. I have seen in other marriages that it took a long time to adjust to each other, to learn to give in and please each other. I thank God that our process of adjusting was not a big effort. Maybe through our circumstances of immigration had something to do with it. We depended on each other in every thing, whatever it was, God alone is the answer and giver of all we received and He has protected us from pitfalls.

We did have different opinions over a couple of things, mainly how to discipline our children. I was not brought up with spanking and as a result of that, put some of our pre-schoolers in the corner for a while instead.

I remember that one of them found it hard to look at the wall and asked often "how long yet," until I said that for every question I would add one minute. Of course this only worked when they were small but I still thought that I was mean! Dad had set several rules as you all know, "don't argue, don't raise your voice to Mom, do what Mom says, be in time for meals and devotions, no body leaves without our morning prayer, etc, may be you can add some more which I have forgotten. I never felt that Dad had to change because he was brought up different. I was and felt protected by Dad, even

before I married him, and I have respected and trusted him from the first week I met him. You all know the rule I had set for him, “The best is not good enough for Dad and (Father) “Dad knows best.”

How did we solve our problems? By talking, praying and putting it on the “back burner for awhile.” My prayer came down mainly to, “Lord, if Dad is right will you help me to change if needed and show Dad how to go about this as well. Yes it did work, to give each other time is the key and prayer brings the answer. These things are stepping stones of learning to know each other better in daily life, melting and molding us together in unbreakable love.

We have learned to hang in there, when money was very scarce and work was too much for both of us. By the grace of God, difficulties have never damaged our relationship, but we grew together in our faith and love for each other. As our blood pressure regulates the well being of our health, so the circumstances in our lives bring ups and downs, joy and sorrow, abundance and adversity, and even times of war and peace, that is the reality of life. The last year on the farm we often said to each other in the evening: “One day closer to Home” When Dad said this I added sometimes “And one day shorter alone, when one has been called Home!”

I like to write or sing the song “My Redeemer” that I had chosen to be on my grave stone, which covers the place where I never will be residing. But where you celebrate my Home Going, unless Jesus’ Coming is taking place before that day.

I will sing of my Redeemer and His wondrous Love for me.
On the cruel Cross He suffered, from the curse He set me free.

I will tell the wondrous story, how my lost estate to save,
In His boundless Love and Mercy, He the ransom freely gave!

I will praise my dear Redeemer, His triumphant Power I’ll tell.
How the Victory He giveth, Over sin and death and hell.

I will sing of my Redeemer and His heavenly Love to me;
He from death to life had brought me, Son of God, with Him to dwell!

Sing, oh sing of my Redeemer, with His blood He purchased me,
On the Cross, He sealed my pardon, paid the debt and made me free!

My heart can sing when I pause to remember:

A heart ache here is but a stepping stone. Along a trail that's always winding
upward, This troubled world is not my final home.

The things an earth will dim and lose their value, if we recall they're borrowed for
a while;
And things on earth that cause the heart to tremble, remembered there, will only
bring a smile.

This weary world with all its toil and struggle, may take its toll of misery and
strife.
The soul of man is like a waiting falcon, When it's released, it's destined for the
skies.

But until then my heart will go on singing. Until then with joy I'll carry on.
Until my eyes behold the City, until the day God calls me Home!

There is always comfort, when we know that our Redeemer Lives, keep on
singing about Him, until He comes!