

## Early Relationship with Jan Moerman

When I was nine years old, Jan Moerman (my future husband!) came to our home with other senior young people to rehearse a big play given each year in our church. It was an historic play of three hours long with two intermissions and singing and poems recited by those who were not in the play. The church was always full with more than three hundred people. It was a big event for young and old. I have never forgotten that evening when they came to rehearse. I was sick in bed, I think with chicken pox and in the living room. The bed I was in was called a "bedstead." It was like a large closet with doors in front which were closed when it was time to go to sleep. But that evening I was not going to sleep. I stood on two pillows peeking through a tiny opening where the doors came together and I saw Jan Moerman (twelve years old) close up in our house for the first time! My brothers had been talking about the play and told us that Jan was asked to play a boy's part because he had a good loud voice ( there was no sound system in 1934 ). I was listening for a long time while they were going through the whole play. I was told that the play pictured the happenings of the "80 years of war" when Spain ruled Holland with iron fist from 1568 to 1648. The Protestants were hiding their Bibles and if the soldiers would find them, the people were killed on the scaffolds. The cruelty of war was portrayed in the homes as well. We did not know that six years later war would come to Holland from 1940 to 1945.

---

Later I saw Dad often when he walked with his father to church. His sisters walked with their mother. Many times Dad's name was mentioned by my brothers as they were with him in the Young People group. After every meeting my mom would ask who was in charge of the Bible Study because they took turns with introducing the Bible subject and then leading the discussion. The answer mom received was, "it was Jan Moerman" and others such as, "he's always good" or "he should be a preacher." These positive remarks gave me the impression that this was a boy I could trust. Mom once told me (this was one of her counseling suggestions), "look always good in the boy's eyes and you can see what is in their mind." That time came a few years later! Jan's blue eyes were clean and honest. One Sunday afternoon I stayed with my friend, Bertha Klarenberg, after church in town. In the afternoon we went for a walk and sometimes we met Jan and Piet Van de Burgh who were big friends. This was during the months Jan could not milk because of the accident with his fingers. One afternoon we went again to Church with horse and buggy. It must have been a special Service because mom would ordinarily stay home with the smaller children. After the Service I asked my dad if I could start walking with Bertha toward our home while they went visiting. Soon we met Jan and Piet again and they joined us. When we were about half way the family caught

up to us. Dad stopped and asked, "Do you still want to ride along Corrie or will you walk home?" Of course I wanted to walk but felt that I had to help mom with preparing supper.

I do not know why I was with Bertha this one Saturday evening. It was in June, 1942 that we went canoeing with the four of us on those big rivers. I could not swim at all and I had no clue if Jan could. He was very careful and so I "endured" the canoeing. He brought me home in January, 1943 for the very first time after my catechism class and Girls Club, with my parents permission. He brought me home often during the winter time when it was dark. Twice a man bothered me on the way home. One tried to get me in his truck while on my bike and later a scary man on a bike pestered me. That was why my parents gave permission for Jan to bring me home. When the meeting was over I would go to his home which was the first farm out of town, with his sister Nel, and wait till the milking was nearly finished. His dad would say, "I will milk the last cow you just go and bring Corrie home." If there was time we would sometimes walk the long lane with bikes or bike to "het korenlaantje," a short lane close to our home, which I call our "Lover's Lane." This was the "famous" lane where several of my brothers and sisters were asked the BIG QUESTION! This special lane had old trees on both sides growing toward each other. That must have inspired us all in a very special way. Already before this, Jan had asked my parents permission to date me. The answer was, "she is so young yet." But Jan assured them that this was a problem that would get better by the day. Dad and mom must have smiled. In May, 1943 my second sister married Frank Poot, a farmer a few miles away. This was the first time that Jan and I were together at a family celebration.

In the mean time there was a strange battle going on in my life; the most difficult one of my teenage years. I find it hard to explain what the struggle really was. I was not absolutely sure if I should continue my relationship with Jan or not. I liked him very much and I trusted him fully, yet there was always this big decision which was in my mind. "This is for life!" It scared me to no end and I was not aware at that time, that communication could have prevented this painful period in our lives. If I only had been able to share this with him more completely. But I didn't. We both failed to see that communication was the word that could have pulled us through. In a few words I told my mom how I felt but she did not have any advice. She did not know how to communicate either; it just was not done during those days. Then I told my brother Klaas. He advised that since "I was so young yet" as he put it, that it would be better to break off the relationship. When I told mom that I had broken off our relationship she was very sad and said, "You should never have done this." That made me angry at her. It was the only time this ever happened. "Why did you

not tell me this earlier?" I cried. "Now it is too late." Of course after I felt terrible that I had hurt her too. The next five months were very difficult for both of us. I knew that I had to blame myself and no one else. Did I take things too seriously? Is there is such a thing? The battle was not over; it only was the beginning. As time went on I realized that I had made a big mistake. When our own children were teenagers and I noticed turmoil in their lives, I tried to talk with them when they were ready for it, remembering so well what I had experienced. I could not use any excuse that I came from a depressed family, even though my Opa van Vliet was a very depressed man the last six years of his life. I felt responsible for the decision I had made and it did not take very long to come to the conclusion that I loved Jan and prayed for an opportunity to tell him so. It was a blessing that I could talk about this with my friend Bertha and in October I talked with Jan's sister, Nel. I told her that I was sorry for what I had done in breaking our relationship so abruptly. I felt terrible for the pain it had caused him. I could hardly wait until Nel passed on the message to her brother, which I hoped and prayed she would. Soon "my Jan" brought me home again and I leave it to all of you who read this, to guess what happened when we were together again! Jan was welcomed back with open arms. Our whole family was glad we were back together again; my mom especially! She treated him, from the beginning, as a very welcome addition to the family. Now I knew for sure that he was the man with whom I wanted to share my entire life. The next month, Jan's oldest sister Maartje's marriage took place and I was invited to come to the wedding. From then on, Jan came every Saturday evening to our home and we took turns to go to each other's home on Sunday.