

Elly Beintema

The Autobiography

The Tales
of
Elly



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THE TALES OF ELLY

BY
ELLY BEINTEMA



“Being cared for like this was so rare that the clarity of the memory astonishes me to this day”

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Pake Hendrik and
Beppe Wietske- my
father's parents



Pake Dirk and
Beppe
Antje de
Graaf-Kamma
my mothers
parents

1. FAMILY – FRISIAN CALVINISTIC SOBRIETY

Always dressed in black, whenever I met my grandparents, there were only the dark colours, not once did I see a dress with flowers or any form of brightness. Both my parents were born in Friesland, a province in the northern part of the Netherlands, worldwide known for its Frisian black and white cows and agriculture.

My father's dad, named Hendrik, was a labourer working at a local windmill where flour was ground. From stories I learned that his face used to be covered with the white flour. Recently my nephew Henk sent me a photograph of him sitting on a horsedrawn cart with flour bags stacked behind him. Apparently, he worked for a firm called Banga. Although my Pake, Frisian for granddad, had no brothers and sisters, he and his wife Wietske, my Beppe, Frisian for grandmother, were to give birth to twelve children of which four died. My father, named Jelle, was the eldest growing up with six brothers and one sister, thereby getting used to male company.

Tragically four of the children died at a young age. Although this seemed to be quite common in those days it still came as a shock to learn about this recently from my nephew, Henk, who still lives in Dokkum, the place where my father was born.

Three little girls, all named Aaltje died, one was only 1 month old, another died after 15 days, and the last little girl made it to 8 years. A baby boy Pieter was born in July 1913 and died in May 1914. The little girls, the Aaltjes, were all named after my Pake's mother: Aaltje Bekker. Apparently the nearly 8-year-old girl was lovely. What she died of I do not know but I was told that little Aaltje made life difficult for my aunt Berber, the only surviving girl in the family, because she was forever being compared with this lovely girl. It is quite amazing how history repeats itself, as I was named after Aaltje, and became my father's favourite daughter, which in turn made life hard for my sister Annie who became very jealous of me. It caused enormous friction in our relationship. It appeared that my father blamed himself for not getting to the doctor on time to save his little sister's life.

I think that he transferred his love and guilt feelings to me.



My great-great grandmother,
Pake Hendrik's mother

But lucky me!

So I became daddy's darling little girl and had such fun when I clamped myself to his legs and stood with my tiny stockinged feet on his feet whereupon he marched me with huge steps through the room. I shrieked with laughter. On a Sunday with my little hand safely tucked into his big hand, we walked to our church, the Maranatha church on the Mosplein. I looked up at him ever so proudly as he was wearing his Sunday best suit with on his head, a grey posh hat. It was so different from his daily working clothes which he had to wear painting the interiors of ocean liners in the local shipyard. In the afternoon after church, we often played dominoes together or a game of draughts. Those were still peaceful times, which I fondly remember.

My mother's father, Pake Dirk, was a farm labourer and apparently at the age of 11 he was sent out to a farmer in Germany to work there. Just imagine: an 11-year-old! He met his wife, Beppe (Antje) who came from Wierum and as she got pregnant by him, they quickly married. They had four daughters, of which my mother was the eldest. She got used, therefore, to only female company.

Pake and Beppe's last years were spent in a small village called Nes, in a small cottage which had a thatched roof. When later we visited them, I often pulled a straw from the roof to drink my lemonade with. The bedstead in which I slept was so snug; the doors were left slightly ajar so that I could hear the soft murmured talk and on one of the inside shelves stood a pot to pee in. I cannot remember if anyone came to join me later as I must have been fast asleep.

They were hard working people and photographs of them in old age show how worn out they were. But Pake Dirk always had a gentle smile and was a kind man. He was deeply religious, and it is ironic that just before Beppe died, he had to pray fervently to ask God for forgiveness because she was swearing like a trooper! Her lips were always pressed together thinly, in a face which showed dissatisfaction and hardly ever smiled. Maybe she had been depressed and became dement towards the end of her life. It is something I will never know as everyone I could ask has died and then just remembered that my eldest brother Henk, is the only one still alive, aged 94!

I am not sure why it is that I have only some faint memories of my mother's parents and not my father's, possibly they died at a much earlier age or we never went to visit them when I was a little girl.



Pake de Graaf
With his Gentle Smile

2. MY FATHER, JELLE



My father,
squatting with pipe
in mouth

My father's name was Jelle, a real Frisian name. Born in 1898 in Dokkum, Friesland, he died in 1976 in Amsterdam Noord. So, he did reach the age of 78, and as I am writing this it astonishes me as I always thought he died soon after he reached pension age. Consequently, a feeling of guilt wells up in me: why did I not see my parents more often? But then I realize I was 36 years old at the time, living in London and at the height of my hectic television career. Also, we had never been a close family anyway and on top of that my father's death came quite unexpected.

After my mother died of bowel cancer at the age of 72 after a long-protracted illness during which time she was slowly wasting away, his daughter's death followed a few months later. My sister Annie was only aged 39 when she died of liver cancer and left behind an 8-year-old son, Fritsje.

Both died in the same year, it was 1976, and so my father just ran out of puff and died; his lungs giving up the struggle of breathing.

It is a year I am unlikely to forget because towards the end of it, in December, my then boyfriend, Steve, broke off our relationship.

It is a year I am unlikely to forget because towards the end of it, in December, my then boyfriend, Steve, broke off our relationship.

My intention had been to take my father on a Rhine River cruise after both my mother and sister had died but it was not to be. His lungs gave up on him and it is no wonder having spent a lifetime bend over paint pots which probably contained lead and working in the unventilated interiors of those luxury ocean liners where the dreaded asbestos would have been used. In those days, no attention was paid to this environmental issue as there was no awareness of the dangers to the health of the workers.

As a little girl I once was allowed to go with my father on the back of his bicycle to the shipyard and go aboard the ocean liner "s.s. Oranje ". My eyes popped out: what luxury, there was a swimming pool, comfortable lush furniture, and polished wood everywhere. For a little girl it was an unforgettable trip.

Now that I look back, it surprises me that I not once heard him complain. He seemed to be so stoic, taking all his duties in his stride. Getting up every morning of his life at 6 o'clock, in the winter he would get the stove in the kitchen going and then go to work on his bicycle to the shipyard. If it were very cold, he put layers of newspapers in between his clothes to cut out the biting winds. When he came back home at 5 o'clock, he peeled the potatoes for my mother for the evening meal, help with the washing up afterwards and only then was able to put his arms on the table resting his head on it for a few minutes. The few remaining hours were his own to enjoy his pipe, (the smell of that cheap tobacco!), when with pleasure glistening eyes he would sit back and listen to his pedigree canary in its cage singing its little heart out. That was his passion and it always amazed me how his big hands would catch this tiny bird with such gentleness after it had been allowed to fly round the living room. How he cut its tiny nails with much precision and care.

When it was my bedtime he would take me upstairs, waited for me to say my prayer on my knees and then tucked me up in bed putting some extra bedclothes or coats on top of me to keep me warm. I did not have my own bedroom or toy mobiles dangling above my head as so many kids have nowadays, no dolls, or teddy bears to hug and no one to read me bedtime stories.

Near his own bedtime at 10 o'clock he'd drink just a small glass of Bokma genever, undressing leaving the clothes behind him on a chair, I never saw him in pyamas, maybe he did not have any and then his final task of the day was pulling up the pinecone shaped weights of the cuckoo clock.

On Friday evenings he handed his wage packet to my mother, all of it, only putting a few dubbeltjes or ten cent pieces in a small green coloured metal tin hanging on a nail in his cupboard. It was such fun when we emptied the contents out on the table and counted all the tiny pieces. What he later used them for I shall never know.

Neither did he ever complain when we had to do the household chores on Saturday mornings, his only day off, as often just the two of us took the windows out of their frames, washed them, then polished the lino, the brass rods on the staircases and the doorknob. "Cleanliness is next to godliness"; a saying of the Victorian moralists advising hard work and moral diligence, it was the motto in our house too, be it a Calvinist principle.

Afterward all the cleaning I had to go to the small grocery shop "Smalen" which always took ages, as everything had to be weighed and put in separate little paper bags. The shopkeeper was of the same church as us and my parents felt obliged to do our shopping there instead of using the little Spar supermarket. This was out of loyalty as he had sometimes helped us with coupons during the war.

On Sunday mornings my father could never have a lie-in as he had to be in the Maranatha church for the service at 10 o'clock. So, he dressed up in his Sunday best clothes and wearing his big grey hat I often accompanied him to church, a walk of at least 20 to 30 minutes. When I walked beside him trying to keep up with his big steps, his eyes were permanently focused on the pavement in case he would spot a little coin. Inside the church I felt proud of him when he walked around the congregation collecting money in the little black bag dangling at the end of a long stick.

On top of all these duties and work he was also a church elder and often had to go out in the evenings to visit the various families of our church. This is how he met a particular family which he found far too bohemian and freethinking. When as a teenager I started going out with one of their sons it was not approved of. Actually, it was more dramatic than that because it led to me leaving my parental home in a most violent and traumatic way.

Now I ask myself: when did he ever have fun, or have a sleep-in? Was it all work and no play apart from sporadic visits to the family in Friesland or a few days in the newly acclaimed Noord Oost polder where he could do some fishing in the canal at the end of my uncle's farm? Or in his later years when visiting my brother in Canada. I remember a photo of him in a boat on the lake there holding up a huge fish he just caught.

His was a hard-working life, mainly filled with duties and responsibilities. The Calvinistic hard working discipline and working-class principles. If I could find fault with him it would be his total lack of communication skills. Neither of my parents knew how to handle their adolescent children or had insight into how they underwent biological changes. And so, when my father and all of us were older he only knew how to rule with the rod and the fist. Perhaps he was driven to it by his nagging wife; but his temperament became as explosive as dynamite. At mealtimes the brush would lay near his plate and if my brother became impatient because of the tedious long Bible readings or the same dreary unfelt prayers, he would hit out.

He once nearly strangled my mother, his hands around her neck, pushing her up against the kitchen wall, but fortunately my aunt Dirkje, my mother's youngest sister, was there to separate the two of them. I remember it clearly, frightened as I was, but my mother drove him mad with her constant nagging. We never learned to talk about our emotions or how to handle them.

He told me to always turn the lights off, or to close all the doors, as he was not keeping the outside world warm, he would shout, or he asked me: did you have some bread with nothing on it yet? Out of sheer necessity he had learned to be very frugal and taught us to be the same way.

The only decent conversation I had with him was when I interviewed him for the book I was working on about the Spanish Influenza of 1918. He told me about his experiences as a young soldier and that as he was standing in a queue waiting for a hot drink, he looked round and saw some soldiers behind him fall dead to the ground, it was as sudden as that. His story with mention of his name was published in the book.

My eldest brother Henk told me about them once getting drunk together and having some fun when my father was still a bit younger. Later, whenever he did have a good laugh, it was stifled and criticized by my mother for being too loud: there was always that damn criticism of hers!

some fun when my father was still a bit younger. Later, whenever he did have a good laugh, it was stifled and criticized by my mother for being too loud: there was always that damn criticism of hers!

I feel that I have inherited from him my love of nature from and sheer enjoyment of the beauty of this planet. This feeling was ascertained when I visited one of my father's brothers, uncle Hielke, who possessed a whole collection of DVDs of David Attenborough's BBC nature films. This came as a lovely surprise when I visited him and Aunt Berber not knowing he was so fond of this series. It was to be my last visit to them and as I was staying with my favourite aunt, tante Dirkje and uncle, oom Frits they had driven me there from their home in Witmarsum.

Once as a young girl I spent a short holiday in Dokkum and remember that in the evening I had to put salt on the snails in their garden. Looking for them the next day I found just little heaps of froth. I would never do that now!

My uncle, Hielke, worked at the local tobacco or cigar factory and had the habit of always putting the clock ten minutes forward to deceive himself in having a little bit of extra lunchtime. He never married and lived with his sister, aunt Berber in Dokkum until the end of their lives. She was constantly in pain due to hip replacements which were made of old-fashioned steel and as a result was always grinding her teeth.

My father's other brothers were sort of pioneers emigrating to Alaska looking for gold or trying to make their fortune, and another one emigrated to Canada, but I never met them and am not sure what the story is here.

But I did meet another of my father's brothers, uncle Dirk and his wife, aunt Bauk as they lived not too far away from us on the Pekplein or Lupinestraat. Aunt Bauk was a cheerful person, always ready to laugh, and calling you "schat" or darling which for my mother was always a bit over the top. She was a relative of my mother's father, Pake Dirk, he with that gentle smile, which it seems my younger aunt Dirkje also inherited but upon consideration I can see that her comfortable middleclass life with just two daughters were so different from our wartime working class family with six children.



My father with
his brother Dirk

It was quite a feast whenever my other uncle Piet from Dokkum turned up in our narrow street with his huge lorry carrying refrigerated meat from the Frisian butchers. He came across as a cheerful man, a smile on his face as he let me crawl into that huge cabin. Fortunately, I am in touch with his son, Henk, in Dokkum who sent me several photographs and once came to visit with his other brother bringing their wives too.

This inheritance of temperament I find quite interesting as I can clearly see how our DNA inheritance is of great influence in our lives. By writing my life story it was an important discovery for me that the love of the outdoor life and pioneering spirit came from my father's side of the family.

3. MY MOTHER, AAFKE.



My mother as a nurse

My mother was born in 1904, the eldest of four girls and was, therefore, used to only female company. She grew up in Nes, a tiny village in the North of Friesland. From an early photo I can see that she was a beautiful young woman, who liked walking and got her first job working as a nurse auxiliary in Ermelo, a town in Holland or rather The Netherlands. I was told that whilst working there she probably fancied one of the doctors, I think a lot of young nurses do. It is quite a coincidence that I too went abroad to work as a nurse auxiliary in England in 1960. At the time it was the only way to get a working permit but more of that later.

For my mother too it was like going to a country where a foreign language was spoken because her native Frisian is entirely different from the Dutch language. During social gatherings they had to remind themselves: "Speak in Dutch", whenever non-Frisian speaking people came to visit or when my brothers became engaged to Dutch girls.

It must, therefore, have been a huge comfort for her to meet my father, also a Frisian and speaking the same language. They met in Amsterdam-North at the house of her father's sister, Baukje, who was married to my father's brother Dirk. It meant that Aunt Bauk became both her aunt and sister-in-law.

In the twenties many young people left their local communities to look for work near or in the big cities during the economic depression which was due to the stock market crash of 1927. My father moved to Amsterdam and got himself a job as a housepainter and visiting his brother Dirk, he met my mother there. Superficially they seemed to have a lot in common: there were the relatives, the Frisian language, and the same strictly disciplined Calvinist religious upbringing.

Being so young and attracted to each other and as contraception was nonexistent, or was taboo in their circle, she apparently gave my father an ultimatum: either we marry, or I go back to Nes. And so they married on Wednesday, the 17th of March 1926 in the Keizersgracht Kerk, he was 28 and she was just 22 years old. The wedding announcement came from the Marnixstraat 290. I do not know who was living there at the time, may be my father had a room there.



Marriage Picture
March 26,
Father 28,
Mother 22



Mother with Henk, first born March, 1927

Their first son, Henk, was born a year later in 1927. Thereafter, from the age of 23 onwards, my mother was faced with a lifetime of raising children, washing nappies, doing household chores, cooking and so on.

Her life was hard, and her health did not seem to be particularly good. She complained of tiredness, headaches, and tinnitus. Making herself a cup of warm milk at night helped her to sleep better. She had a miscarriage; apparently the baby's scalp was half open and I cannot imagine how traumatic that must have been.

She sat in a tub with hot water to prevent herself from being pregnant again and when later on she gave birth to my brother Dick in 1931, who turned out to be mentally handicapped, she regarded this as a punishment from God. It seems she did not want to have too many children. Always this fear of getting pregnant must have turned sex into a tiresome affair. After Dick came Wim, then Annie and me and she even gave birth in 1948 to another little boy, Frits, when she was already 44 years old!



My parents with
The three oldest children
Henk, Dick and Wim

My eldest brother Henk was 21 at the time and told me he was often teased by his mates when he had to take the baby out in the pram. It was so embarrassing for him.

My mother endured 40 years of washing urine-stained bedsheets, and nappies, apart from doing the other household chores without any of the commodities we are now so used to, for example, washing machines. It is no wonder I developed an early sense of claustrophobia with all those sheets drying in the kitchen, when it rained, and the balcony could not be used. There was only one water tap in the kitchen where everyone had to get washed and get ready for work or school. Absolute mayhem.

Unfortunately, my mother died when I was still a young woman aged 36, having lived in England by that time for about 16 years and did not have the opportunity to talk with her about her early life. Looking at a photograph of her, when out on a walk with other young women, how was she to know what her future life would be?

But the question which reoccurs to me often is: why did she become so embittered?

She once said: “You don’t have to come and cry on my grave”, in other words, you don’t care about me now so don’t come crying when I am dead. My parents’ graves were cleared many years ago, so this is now no option anyway. Did she suffer from post-natal depression, or did she inherit depressive tendencies from her own mother? As written earlier her mother, my Beppe, was always tightlipped with discontentment written all over her face.

Mother on left ,with
her sisters



Mother with walking
group
second on the left

My mother was certainly a negative influence on my life and on her other children. There were never any words of encouragement or support, she only had destructive comments. Sewing a skirt, she would snarl that the fabric looked like peasant material.

My brother Henk's engagement to a farmer's daughter was not good enough and when my brother Wim converted to Roman Catholicism to marry the love of his life Tiny, she started an intensive smear campaign to try and prevent the marriage. At the time she was not to know that Tiny would be the one who would assist her on her deathbed caring for her until the last breath, admitting that she could not have wished for a better daughter in law.

Her negativity also impacted on my younger brother Frits: he was disbelieved when he came home showing her a beautiful bookcase he had made, nor on another occasion telling her he had been able to get a house through his work with the Draka company. He once told me he had thrown an axe at my father, why I don't know and as he has recently died, I can no longer ask him, but it illustrates the tension in our household. Often it seemed like total war, and one never knew when the next outburst would erupt. When later in my life and living in London I was in therapy the psychiatrist mentioned it was like my own little Vietnam.

In order to save the peace at home I would run around trying to make her happy and lighten her load a little, she would say: Ali, as I was still called then, is humming even when she is unhappy. That was quite observant of her!

She also acknowledged some time later that I was the only one in the household who had to get her own breakfast before going to school whereas she always made it for the others. So, I learned to be independent from an early age.

Before the turbulent adolescence of my siblings, Henk was 12 years older which is a huge age difference, I remember some peaceful times with my mother. As a small child I could play with a toy stove with tiny saucepans on two small burners whilst she stood at the kitchen sink. The smell of the turpentine of the two small burners filled my nostrils, I helped her to bake a cake and was allowed to lick the remainder of the delicious batter from the bowl.

Once a week we walked to the Mosveld square market during which she would use me as her confidante. Also, just at the end of the war we strolled through the park to the clinic where the sunray lamps straightened my O-shaped little legs, this was due to the lack of vitamins during the hunger winter of the war.

On another occasion we went to the Damrak cinema to watch the black and white newsreels, just the two of us, and visited the Anne Frank house, where in those days you could still walk about the place unhindered. However, I cannot recall ever sitting on her lap, being kissed, cuddled, or lovingly regarded. Frisians are supposedly 'nuchter' sober, or matter of fact or may be showing affection was not done in those days. I suspect her own mother never cuddled her and she was not used to it.

She did like to talk endlessly with the neighbours in the street. Her long hair was braided in a tail and wound into a knot at the back of her head. On a Sunday she liked to dress up in stylish clothes and hats, wearing some elegant jewellery, which was quite a change from her daily drab wear.

Ours was a functional family, everything had to be run in a strictly disciplined manner but fortunately we were always fed, clean and dressed neatly. However, emotionally it was dysfunctional, we never learned to communicate and were not heard.

My sister-in-law Tiny told me that before my mother died, she had expressed her regret of being so hard, upon which someone had replied that "she had done her best". I am glad they did say that and may be that was all she could do at the time.

The well-known English psychoanalyst, D.W. Winnicott wrote a book "Home is where you start from", which was one of the textbooks I studied during my training in 2005 at WPF (Westminster Pastoral Foundation) to become a psychodynamic counsellor. This is when I came to an understanding of my own conditioning in early infancy and during the relationship with my parents. At much too early a stage I had become 'mother's little helper' to try and lighten her load, make her happy, and it seems to me now that I carried on with this behavioural attitude far too long into my adult life.

4. WAR YEARS.

I was born in Amsterdam Noord on the 25th of October 1939. Six months later the Germans marched into our little country slicing into it as if it were a cake. On the evening of the 14th of May 1940, the streetlights went on and as usual the radio shut down playing our national anthem: Wilhelmus van Nassaue. No one could have foreseen that thereafter we would not see the streetlights or hear the radio again for five long years.

Now sixty years later I reflect on what sort of childhood this meant for me and what the effect of life in occupied Holland had on my parents.

I was their sixth child, too young to be evacuated unlike my sister Annie, who was only two years older and had to stay with a butcher family in Friesland, the agricultural part of the Netherlands where there was more food than in Amsterdam. When she returned home after the war her head was covered with lice and having had to live for so many years with complete strangers, she must have felt bewildered and neglected.

Consequently, she turned out to be quite a handful upon her return home.

My eldest brother Henk, then nearly 18 years old, had to go in hiding as from 1943 onwards the enemy picked up all men between the ages of 18 and 40 forcing them into labour in Germany. They used to raid our houses and line the men up in the street deporting them on lorries. Just as they did with the Jews who lived nearby. Henk found a place with my father's family and learned to spin wool to pay for his upkeep and my other brother Wim stayed with my mother's sister, also in Friesland, both learning the Frisian language as a result.

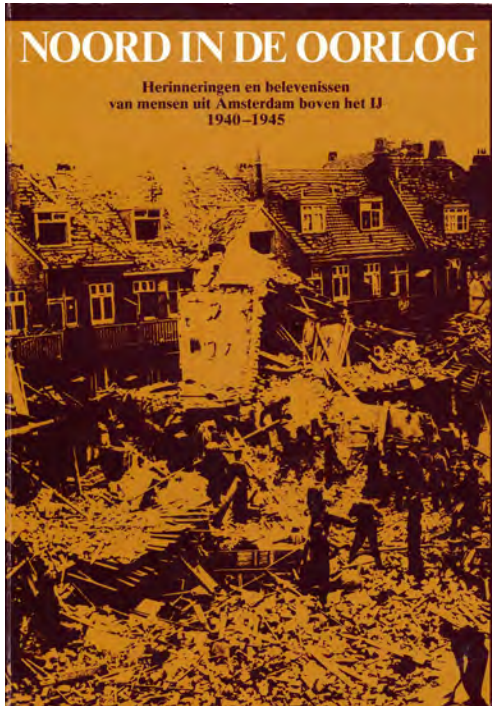
After the war was finished Wim was teased as being only 'a stupid farmer's boy'. My parents had to send their mentally handicapped son, Dick, away at the outbreak of the war to a safe place run by the Gereformeerde church in Ermelo (where my mother had been a nurse auxiliary). I try to imagine how upset they must have been at having their whole family split up, leaving them with just me, their youngest, a six months old baby.

My memories are from towards the end of the war when I was 5 and a half years old. I remember the eight o'clock curfew and the Germans with their big boots marching through our street, guns at the ready shooting at anyone still being outdoors, even little children. When I was still playing, quite late, in the street on my step suddenly a neighbour's hand grabbed and drew me to safety into a dark corridor shutting the door firmly behind me. I was pushed underneath the staircase, supposed to be the safest place during a bombardment. Shivering at the sound of the wailing sirens followed by the loud bangs. It was very cold in the house; the black stove in the kitchen usually so warm, the only hot focal centre in the house; was now icy cold, black, and alien. There was no fuel. How could we keep warm?

I can still see myself running on my little legs; through the snow; my parents in front me, dragging a tree which they just cut from the local wood, the Germans were chasing us, because it was forbidden to fell trees. I could not keep up with them, lagging behind because my little wooden clogs compacted the snow underneath them; many times, I just had to stop repeatedly to knock the snow off; but why was no one looking around for me; and why was no one holding me by the hand, I was so little, please, please wait. Running behind them and the big tree, the branches huge and wide across; at last, there's the neighbour's door where the tree got pushed up the staircase and the door quickly shut tight. It felt safe again for just a while and maybe we shall all be a bit warmer when we get the wood home.

When people ask me where I was born, they exclaim "Amsterdam; such a lovely city". I agree. They think of the beauty of the canals, the elegantly carved gables of the merchant houses and the laid-back atmosphere of people sitting on the many terraces. But across the main water, called the IJ, lies Amsterdam North. This is where we lived, at the time a beehive of industrial activities with many shipyards (where my father found work decorating the luxury ocean liners). The nearby Fokker aircraft factory was forced into repairing the German Junkers 52 and convert their ships into landing vessels. The sites were camouflaged by the Germans, but the Allies knew about this and launched enormous bombing campaigns. By accident civilian targets got hit and, on a few occasions, quite close to our house. For years the wailing sirens would sound and frighten me many times a day. When I moved to Monnickendam in 2009 shivers went down my spine when the alarm sirens were tested on the first Monday of every month. It remains an unforgettable sound and is a reminder of the terror I felt.

Dam shooting 1945



Reminiscence of people
from Amsterdam
North, war years

Part of this story is written in the present tense as I experienced it at the time: The war had ended! We dug up our flags and took the coins with our queen's face on it from underneath the floorboards where they were hidden for five years away from German eyes.

My father and I dressed up and took the ferry across the water to go to the Royal Palace in Dam Square. After all these years of living under the Germans we could once again sing our national anthem, hoist our own flags, red, white, and blue and celebrate the Canadians' entry into the city of Amsterdam. We were liberated at last. Or so we thought. With excitement I grip my father's hand tight, not wanting to lose him in the crowds of people walking along the narrow shopping street towards the Dam Square. Suddenly there is a noise of shots being fired. Everybody is running wildly, screaming, my father has fallen. I sit on top of him, whatever happens I will protect him, oh dear, where is his new hat. We scramble up and are swept along with the panicking masses of people pushing us straight through the glass of the large shop windows, there is broken glass everywhere, people are in pools of blood, they are not moving; we are being pushed, pushed, through the glass, at the back of the shop windows, there is broken glass everywhere, people are in pools of blood, they are not moving; we are being pushed, pushed, through the glass, at the back of the shop window I stand against the wall, so afraid, wetting my knickers I can think of only one prayer to say for comfort: "Here Zege deze spijzen Amen", over and over again, I dare not to stop: Lord bless this food, Lord bless this food; it is all I know and can do. With Allied troops about to enter the city some fanatic German soldiers placed themselves on one of the building's rooftop strafing the crowd of innocent civilians approaching the Dam Square with machine gun fire.

What should have been a festive celebration turned into a blood bath. Panicked people hid behind barrel organs, lorries with news cameras, lampposts, anywhere to get out of the line of fire. Overturned prams, abandoned bicycles, dead bodies, hats, shoes. All this at the end of the war when tragically so many people died that day. Many years later my nephew, Jochem, and I saw an exhibition of the photographs taken at the time of the shooting at the Photographers Gallery in London – De Dam 7 Mei 1945. Several photographers and cameramen had been there to cover and document the expected celebrations, instead of which the whole disastrous incident could be witnessed by following generations. My brother had left his ration card with us, but I remember only eating sugar beets and drinking the sticky dark liquid once they had been boiled, the smell of which is still evocative. The hunger winter of 1944 killed many people as the province of North Holland was left last to be liberated. With Henk I went to a distribution centre where we received the white bread donated by the Swedes at the end of the war. This tasted like cake made in heaven and we also got chocolates from the Canadians. I had never tasted anything like it before and the memories of those delicious first bites made a lasting impression.



Ali on the left with Greetje, Liberation 1945

The photograph given to me by my aunt shows me as a little girl, 5 and a half years old, walking hand in hand with my best girlfriend at the time, Greetje, in a school procession each carrying a little Dutch flag. I frown as I look at the unknown photographer. What is going on now? Is it safe? Once before we were supposed to have a celebration, but it had gone so disastrously wrong at the Dam. Being pushed and chased about, grabbed, and fired at: is it now safe to walk along with a little flag in my hand? And then: Why do all of a sudden brothers and a sister arrive back home? They seem so grown up, why do I have to live with these strangers? Pushing a little flag in my hand does not make it alright.

It is only now as an adult that I realize how I was deprived of what should have been an innocent and happy childhood.

Ali, little child with Annie, and
Henk and Dick



5. THE HOUSE WHERE I WAS BORN

The house where I was born was situated in Amsterdam North, in the Nachtegaalstraat, Nightingale street. All the neighbouring streets and squares were named after birds. They were large, neat houses belonging to the housing association called Patrimonium, at least on our side of the street because we were Protestant, on the other side of the street lived the Roman Catholics, whom we called heretics. Or was it the other way around and we were the heretics? I'm not sure now.

There were no cars in the thirties and early forties in our street, so it became our playground. We hopped and made turrets of stones that you had to overthrow from a great distance, Playing football upset the neighbours quite a lot being afraid of getting their windows smashed in.

A great advantage of living in Amsterdam North was that within a few minutes you were amongst the meadows and the peacefulness of lots of water. I could walk for hours there, jump ditches and catch frogs, and little tadpoles which I'd take home in a jam jar. And there was the Vliegenbos, a wood near our home and a little song I learned went: "kaai kaai ga je mee naar Vliegenbos, en maak daar je broekje los". Why you would go there and untie your knickers I never knew, may be the wood had a bad reputation.

We lived upstairs.

The stairs had copper rods holding the carpet in place. Every Saturday I had to shine them with Brasso, a polishing cream, the smell was very acidic and it always made my hands black. In the hallway was the small toilet which did not have a basin for washing hands and often there was a bucket in the corner soaking with what to me were mysterious things, they turned out to be sanitary towels.

The kitchen was quite primitive, a gas stove with only two burners, a coffee grinder on the wall, the big hot water boiler with underneath the only taps in the whole house, which all of us had to use. And there were six of us! I often had to help my mother with the laundry hauling big sheets through the wringer, both of us getting quite damp and sweaty. But to me the most important item was the big black stove with the coal scuttle next to it. In the winter I could hear from my warm bed how my father broke the little wooden sticks for the stove, then throwing the coal from the black scuttle into it and soon I could smell the anthracite and coals. It was nice and warm in the kitchen once I was downstairs, because there was no central heating.

The small back room was full of furniture and here we all turned around the table with its plush carpet and chairs in the middle. A large wooden linen cupboard stood against the wall, a small table with a large radio in the corner, in front of which the only little armchair. The cuckoo clock hang above it and the yellow canary in its cage on the side wall. In the window sill a few flower pots with busy lizzies which my mother liked and took care of.



Annie and Ali,
on the right

It was quite a crowded space and it was Conrad Lorenz who wrote a book called *On aggression*, explaining that a lack of living space caused friction in the animal world. And so it was with my family, my two brothers had to wash, get dressed, have breakfast and be off to work, my sister and I needed to get ready to go to school, and then there was the baby brother, a late-comer who tended to cry a lot. There were many diapers and bed sheets hanging in the kitchen when the weather was bad and the washing lines on the balcony could not be used. This is also where the enamel tub hang in which we had our weekly bath.

Often there were furious quarrels in our family and it got so bad that neighbours on both sides of us started knocking against the walls to try and stop it. The downstairs neighbour had a stick ready to bang up against his ceiling.

Only on Sundays and birthdays were the sliding doors to the front room allowed to be open giving us some much needed extra space. It felt very special to sit there drinking coffee after coming home from church. Sometimes there was a delicious pastry or cake bought from bakker Lieuwma on the Meeuwenlaan.

After the coffee the women spooned a glass of advocaat with whipped cream on top, or dried raisins soaked in brandy. The men kept themselves to some schnapps, usually Bokma, a Frisian genever.

Henk, my eldest brother, sat at the table covered with the thick plush carpet playing chess with his friend, whilst my dad and I loved to play checkers and dominoes. When I was allowed to stay home from church I would do all the housework. Making all the beds, dusting underneath them and polishing the lino throughout the house. I think my mother secretly enjoyed my staying home, because then for once she did not need to do this tedious housework which was a nice break for her! I put the coffee beans in the mill hanging on the kitchen wall, grind them and make the coffee, everything ready for when they came home from church. I enjoyed myself because I was on my own and had the whole house to myself.

There was another staircase (also with copper rods which had to be polished) to the upstairs bedrooms. I slept in one of the bedrooms with my parents and two-year older sister Annie. We never had the window open during the winter and I always had to cough, due to an irritating tickle in my throat. Even though I buried my head under the covers and crept under them as far as possible, my sister could still hear it anyway. She was always pissed off and scolded me which made me very afraid. It is quite possible that I had an allergy to house dust, but that was never investigated. In those early days people did not know much about allergies and so on. It was decided that I had to undergo a nose operation to widen the passages. They broke my nose and from then on I had a sort of pug nose. As a little girl I found it a traumatic experience and remember vividly the reams of cottonwool that came out of my nose after the operation whilst I laid in my parents bed.



Annie and Ali at
school desk
map behind us

On the little landing between the bedrooms stood the pisspot or to put it more delicately, the chamber pot, which was used mainly by the men. Across the landing my brother Wim had his bedroom and once I had to sleep in the same bed with him for whatever reason. It could be that we had visitors from Friesland but I can remember him taking my little hand and saying 'feel this' folding it around his stiff penis although I had no idea at the time what it was. I was too innocent and young and do not know how I responded but it is strange how vividly I remember this. It must have really scared me. Fortunately nothing happened of which I am glad.

It was always fun time for me when my future sister-in-law, Gerrie, came to stay and we were allowed to sleep together. We crawled under the covers as my mother came up and almost suffocated with suppressed giggling.

Her father had a big farm on the North Holland canal in which we used to swim and I remember that once a dead pig floated by. Once my brother Wim was with us and as he could not swim he had a tyre around him which apparently had a slow puncture and as he was slowly sinking his eyes grew larger with fear before he was rescued. Gerry used to recall this event with hoots of laughter. Her happy laugh was so infectious and made you feel wonderful.

I helped her father to bring the cows home, and fed all the chickens and going indoors loved the smell of baking bread in her mum's oven. It was a real pleasure cycling from home along the meadows and the canal to the farm.

Gerry was the light of my life and it was with great sadness that I saw them leave after their marriage emigrating to Canada as so many others did when the war was over. This was in 1954. I was only 14 at the time and in my puberty. She could have really helped me through those difficult years. Many years later on a visit to Canada she told me that I had said to her: "I must get away from here".

Even at that young age! She always remained special to me and I loved going to Canada to visit. When she was dying of cancer I went to say my farewell to her and with a glint in her eyes she gently said to me with that big smile of hers: "I'll keep the doors of heaven open for you" Even now it moves me to tears.

The attic served as storage space and had a single bed which could be used whenever necessary. It was here that I hold one of my dearest memory: my father sitting on his haunches at the little petroleum stove frying fish. He could crouch down on his heels for a very long time as he had learned this during military service and he taught me this as well. The smell of the fish, the sputtering of the butter or oil and the proximity to him is something I now cherish.

Bulldozers have years ago flattened the entire district to make room for new, more modern homes with bathrooms and central heating and so on. Our old Reformed Calvinist Maranatha church underwent a complete transformation and is now used as a Coptic Church with beautiful lush carpets throughout and Eastern chandeliers dangling from the ceiling. Once inside you walk around in an oriental world replacing the severe strict rules and dogma of Calvin. But I had long since departed to England because I gasped for psychological change and a wider cultural horizon.



Kids from our street, Henk with Annie or me and Wim in foreground

6. GROWING UP

Greetje was my special little friend from a small age onwards. She lived in the same street as me and apart from the photo taken just after the war there is also a school photo where we stand closely together, wearing big bows in our hair. It is strange how I clearly remember us playing together with dolls in the upstairs bedroom when we played doctors and nurses, secretly peeking underneath the little skirts. We giggled because we felt a little naughty doing this.

Ali, middle row with
speckled dress
School photo



When it was my birthday, my mum gave me a tin with ulevellen, a sticky sweet, to treat everybody in my class. The song goes: “Ulevellen bracht ze mee, ieder kreeg er minstens twee”. Roughly translated, she brought ulevellen with her and everyone got at least two. Next to Greetje lived Erna van Munster above the dairy at the corner with the Meeuwenlaan. She had a record player, something we did not have in our house, and as young girls we rocked around the clock to the music of Elvis Presley. Such exciting music but we never went out to dances because my parents regarded as music from the devil. Across the road from her lived a girl who showed me how when you sat at the corner of the table pushing a cushion in front of your knickers you could have sexual feelings. It scared me I think, because I only met her the one time.

Also, in the same street lived Coby Verhagen with the family Hermanides. I remember her from my MULO days when I was a teenager. Her own mother had died when she was young and as her father was always away at sea in what function I do not know she was brought up by his sister and her husband, an ambulance driver. Her half-brother Piet she was close to throughout her life, and I got to know him quite well also especially when I started going out with his friend Rudi.



Ali (far right)
in family photo
1951

Sometimes in the classroom I would sit next to her and was so envious of her drawing capacity. It is no wonder that she later became a fashion designer working with the well-known couturier Max Heymans. All the boys were after her, wanting to bicycle next to her, it was all quite competitive. She looked so beautiful in her outlandish Chinese silk jackets with the embroidered glistening dragons which her father brought home for her when he returned from his sea journeys.

And as luck would have it just at that time, I had to start wearing spectacles and felt that I did not look as handsome as her. When we celebrated Sinterklaas she would deliver fake marzipan cigarettes to our door with little rhymes: 'Secret, keep it secret. And stick it in your mouth', said the written messages with lovely drawings and also some make-believe brown marzipan turds in a small bowl.

Cycling on my own across the 32 km long Afsluitdijk to visit family in Friesland during school holidays was a lovely experience. I always looked forward to staying with my favourite aunt, Tante Dirkje, my mother's youngest sister, who lived in a small village called Witmarsum. She had become middle class, her husband being the Secretary at the local town hall and had just two daughters. Was my mother envious of her, I wonder? Would she have liked to upgrade to the middleclass and have only two children? I remember she once sneered enviously at a neighbour's daughter for not getting pregnant. However, it appeared later that she could not have any children.

At lunchtime I used to walk and collect uncle Frits from the town hall for our lunch together. A couple of times I noticed that my uncle and aunt were having long chats together in the bog situated at the end of the garden. I remember the "Boldoot" (named after the eau-de-cologne) cart coming round to collect and empty the bin. During the day I used to read to my two little nieces, Sara and Annie and in the evenings, we strolled together through the village. These were happy times for me.

When I was older my aunt once told me that she admired me: always having to look after myself and working for my upkeep whereas she only needed to hold up her hand for her husband's wages. How nice to get some admiration and a compliment as this did not happen very often.

Once Coby came with me when we cycled the other way round the IJsselmeer but usually, I went on my own. Taking the boat across the IJsselmeer and arriving in Lemmer early in the morning I waved to the people working on the land in the early morning sunshine with the rising mist. This time I was on my way to stay with Oom Dirk and Tante Cor, my mother's other sister and her husband, who had a huge farm in the newly acclaimed land from the sea, the Noord Oost Polder. There I played with my niece Annie and nephews, one of them I especially liked more than the others, Evert. A little in love, may be?

With Uncle Dirk I reaped by hand the potatoes from the land bending behind the horse and cart. Once the horse was stubborn and he pricked it with a fork in its backside, the poor thing staggered high up in the air with fright. From the many fruit bushes, we picked the gooseberries my aunt would make jam with. At another time I remember my dad fishing in the canal at the far end of the farmland, sitting quietly on his own. He liked his pipe and fishing and his canary and a small glass of Bokma, the genever. What did my mother like, I now wonder, what were her hobbies?

Following in the footsteps of my eldest brother Henk I was allowed to go to the same MULO he went to for higher education, the Dr. Bavinck School behind the Maranatha church and next to the Kuyperschool. My sister was not able to go, I was supposedly more intelligent.

In those early days I felt quite confident and not at all self-conscious. On Sundays I was teaching small children during a Sunday school class telling stories out of the Bible putting illustrations on the large flannel covered board.

On one occasion I walked on a Sunday through the middle of the church congregation all the way to the front and climbed into the pulpit to recite some poetry. So natural as if it was just a daily occurrence. My voice did not quiver at all! Not then as it does now.

When did I lose this, becoming more self-conscious and when did a lack of confidence start to set in? Was it during my puberty or earlier than that? What stands out in my mind was a school play we were to perform, I had the main role as a very fat fishwife from the Jordaan, the old working-class area of Amsterdam, all dressed up with thick cushions under my clothes, big red blobs of rouge on my cheeks and with huge curlers in my hair. We were supposed to stand and swing from side to side in an imaginary tram and sing: "we gaan allemaal met de tram" ...and so on. "All of us are going with the tram"

However, we never had a proper dress rehearsal so when the curtains went up and people broke out in hilarious laughter, I took it personally and completely dried up, I could not utter a sound and so the curtain was brought down. The whole effort was completely wasted, a wash-out! The shame of it and disappointment I caused.

But no one came to me, took me in their arms, comforted me and tried to 'make it all better', or said all the right things to help me overcome the shame.

In the long corridors of the school where the toilets were situated, we sometimes smoked our cigarettes secretly, we wanted to be like grownups, but there was one tall boy who would stalk the corridor and look over the toilet doors so he could see you sitting on the loo. Our school was not segregated and sometimes this could be a real pest. For instance, during swimming lessons the boys pushed me under water in the pool repeatedly. Again, and again and just as I came up for air, they would duck me under once more which made me gasp for air. I had only just learned to swim in a rubber inner tyre dangling from a rope with the instructor walking alongside the edge of the pool.

But at the MULO I was no angel either as I pestered my English teacher following in the footsteps of my brother. It felt as if I had to keep up the tradition. What was his name? Schillers? We had one wonderful teacher I remember clearly and with the most fondness, he was teaching us the French language and occasionally invited us to his home. We were a small, selected group; he played the violin for us, and we listened to a record of Elisabeth Schwarzkopf singing Die Forelle. I am so glad I was part of that little group.

At home we only had the radio and listened to a popular music programme called Arbeidsvitamine: vitamins while you work, it is still popular to this day.

With brother Wim who was fond of organ music, I went to the beautiful Old Church in the centre of Amsterdam to listen to the well-known organist Feike Asma. The sound loudly reverberated throughout this oldest church of Amsterdam in an unforgettable way. Henk played the mouth harmonica and the trumpet which he practiced whilst sitting on the staircase. I preferred the harmonica as it was far less noisy! What a lovely memory I have standing hand in hand with Henk on the dike overlooking the IJ waiting for Sinterklaas seated on his white horse floating towards us on a flat-bottomed boat. He also came to our house; it was so exciting. I admired his wonderful long white beard and the richly embroidered golden coloured cape. But when I saw him going to our linen cupboard to fetch himself a handkerchief, noticing his shoes too, I realized it was Henk and not Sinterklaas. What a disillusion!

Because it was so rare and as I always had to look after myself, I remember one incidence quite clearly. I was sweating it out for my end examinations of the MULO school, getting up at 4 am to study. By this time, I was allowed to sleep in the little room downstairs on my own and later in the morning my mother came in to bring me a cup of tea. Being cared for like this was so rare that the clarity of the memory astonishes me to this day.

When my brother Henk started a walking club called Vlug en Vaardig I joined and walked on my own, even then, the many kilometers through meadowlands along the many ditches with its wildlife and felt ever so proud when he pinned a medal on my chest for completing a long walk. From then on walking became my lifelong hobby. Being a sportive girl, I was the captain of my volleyball team and with another team I played basketball, cycling every Saturday afternoon to various locations in the country to play in competitions.

Recently I walked back home from doing some shopping here in Monnickendam where I now live since 2009 when a man on a bicycle stopped and asked me if I was Elly or maybe he said my old name Alie Beintema. It turned out that he knew me from playing together in the same basketball team. Later that week he came to my home for a cup of tea and showed me much to my surprise some photographs of our team, I could not remember photos were taken. He told me that I was very lively and liked by everyone, may be even fancied by the boys. I am pleased to have those photos and memories and to realise how sportive I was. My gym teacher had always been my idol. But then this man whose name I cannot remember said: "All of a sudden you were gone, no one knew why or where to". How this came about will be written about in the next chapter.

1960

CERTIFICATE



1

Date of Issue.....15th. June, 1960

Place of Issue.....Romford. Essex.

Name (Surname first in BLOCK CAPITALS)
BEINTEMA, Aaltje.

Nationality.....Dutch

Born on.....25.10.39.....in Amsterdam.

Passport or other papers as to Nationality and Identity
Dutch Passport No. K.165165

Issued at Amsterdam on 11.2.60.

Marital Status.....Single.

um of 5s 0d for the issue of this certificate

Registration Officer

P.c.282.



1953, Family Roos, Wim, Annie and Alie after Henk and Gerry's wedding

7. PUBERTY

My parents must have been pleased as punch when I started going out with Jan Ross, whom I met during one of our school outings. He lived in Hoofddorp, which was then a small village outside Amsterdam and was the son of a Re-reformed minister, Calvinist, just like our own religion and in one big swoop my parents and I would have been elevated from working class to middleclass! Imagine!

I think it had always been my mother's secret wish as a nurse to be swept off her feet by a doctor and so leave her poor Frisian upbringing behind her.

It is such a shame I was never able to ask her. But anyway, yet another disappointment for her it was not to be because I was chased and started going out with another boy, Rudi and this is when all hell broke loose.

At the time I had started my periods but cannot remember anything about how it all began. Was I shocked or not? I had seen my sister-in-law Gerrie ironing those little white towels and asked her what they were for. 'That is for later, when you are older, I shall tell you then', but she never did. I had seen those things soaking in a bucket of water standing in the toilet, could see the blood but never asked what it was nor was it ever explained. There was no literature about it at home and at school nothing was taught, or any information given.

Jan once laid on top of me fully clothed when we had bicycled out into the countryside, and I remember it feeling nice. During the weekend I used to cycle to the vicarage in Hoofddorp for a visit and whilst in the house, we went up to his room. From time to time his mother would call us from below the stairs and all too soon we had to join her for tea. Obviously, she did not want to leave us on our own for too long. He was very handsome, and my mother liked him very much. Later in life I heard from her that he became an air pilot. So, I could have been safe, and married, and have kids thereby fulfilling my parents' statement that they had done enough for me, that I could not continue with my studies, because "I was going to get married anyway". As if studying was a waste of time! No, I needed to train as a secretary, learn shorthand typing, go out and find work so that I could bring money home for my upkeep.



Ali, teenager

My earliest experiences with the consequences of sexual experiments came from my sister. I think from an early age she took risks and once asked me to come round to my neighbour's house, where she was upstairs with Appie, a boy her own age. She showed me his little red thing, his penis, and pointing to it, as if she had had it just inside her said I could try it also. It so scared me that I ran away. And why did she become so violent? I was running once again, an almost weekly occurrence, to our doctor on the Adelaarsweg, sometimes on my bare feet, because on this occasion she had put her wrists through the window. Blood had spurted out reaching the ceiling. And then, one morning I went to see her in the little bedroom downstairs and found her in a pool of blood. She had had an abortion. At the time she was befriended with a RK girlfriend across the road and my parents found her bad company.

What happened with her at the time I am not sure, maybe she had to go to a home for working mothers. There is no one left to ask, and it is better to let the subject rest but for me as a young girl it was traumatic to say the least.

Was it because of her early experiences during the war when she had to be evacuated? She may well have felt neglected, pushed out, unwanted, without anyone comforting her or explaining the situation on her return home.

Annie, Ali and Frits



And then there was her jealousy of me because I was father's little darling. But one of the worst sights I remember was seeing her, forced down on her knees whilst my father took the belt from his trousers or using the copper rod from the staircase to give her severe beatings. Poor girl. Having to watch this I felt so scared and impotent and may be somewhere inside me then made the resolution that if he, or anyone else for that matter, ever lifted a finger against me I would leave.

Jealous also because stupidly my brothers would invent so –called intelligence tests and jubilantly cry out: 'you see, she is the clever one' when I had resolved a particular problem in a different way to hers. And Gerrie told me that when I arrived by boat from England for a family re-union, they all came to pick me up and that Annie would from that moment on fall utterly silent. Yet she did once come to England to visit me in Eythorne giving me a Mahalia Jackson LP as a present which was great, and we exchanged some letters, but I was living too far away for real contact.

My father, in his function as elder of the church, visited the Ruiters family. To his taste they were supposed to be quite bohemian and outlandish, and Rudi was one of their sons, who I got to meet through my friend Coby's half-brother Piet. Rudi was 7 years older and a bit of a rebellious young man, wearing no suit to church but a high collar t shirt, may be like a Provo, provocative, a popular movement at the time in Amsterdam. I imagine the whole family making fun of my serious father during his visit.

But for me the door was opened to a wholly different family life. Wouter, Rudi's father, would sit by the radio and nearly died laughing listening to the jokes of Wim Kan and singing along with Toon Hermans: *als een ballon een ballonnetje, een ballonnetje dat hangt in de zon*. A little balloon hanging in the sun, a jolly and vivacious tune. He was quite asthmatic and when he laughed it sounded like being on a rollercoaster.

It was so much in contrast when my father laughed: it was too loud for my mother, and she would say: ach Jelle, don't laugh soand consequently he just gave it up.

Rudi's mother had a soft face, with big grey blue eyes, and a sort of gentle Mona Lisa smile. Elizabeth, his sister, with her long blond hair and a smiling face I adored. She seemed such a free spirit, jovial, ready to laugh and on top of that she was artistic producing amazing free style drawings and skilled in handweaving.

I liked her name and it was then that I decided to change mine from Alie to Elly because in the back of my head I could hear my mother's voice: "ALIE boven komen!" "Alie, come inside", calling out from the upstairs window and closing it with a loud bang. I started to dislike the sound of my name: it sounded so greasy, the way it was pronounced in that flat Amsterdam accent. The name given me when baptised was Aaltje, a beautiful Frisian name. But I was teased with that name because they'd burst out singing: "Aaltje zat op een paaltje, het paaltje brak en Aaltje viel in de koeienkak". Roughly translated it meant: Aaltje was sitting on a pole which then broke and Aaltje fell into a heap of cowshit. Not nice for a young girl.



Gerrie, Ali,
Annie (behind)
and Frits

Piet Hermanides was Elizabeth's boyfriend and as I was close to his half-sister Coby this is how I met his friend Rudi who then fancied and came after me.

Piet was an artist and worked for a well-known pottery in Makkum. He belonged to the Cobra group especially liking the painter and poet, Lucebert. Through him and Rudi I was introduced to modern Dutch literature, authors like Simon Vinkenoog, who at that time was a rebellious LSD-taking author and there were many others.



1958 Ali (top right)
WV basketball team

In Rudi's upstairs room we listened to LPs on an old-fashioned record player, musicians like Gerry Milligan, Miles Davis, Dave Brubeck, "take the A train" ...and so on. Unlike at Jan's house there was no parental supervision, but I cannot remember any sexual advances being made. Understandably my parents would have been really scared that I would go the same way as Annie and get pregnant. The only one to spoil the atmosphere at the Ruiter's home during dinner time was Piet, as he was always so critical and cynical, especially the cucumber lovingly prepared by Elizabeth was never to his liking. There was always something and we waited in fear for his critique. The three of them, Piet, Elizabeth, and Rudi were quite close and had been grape picking in the South of France, near Beziers. My own horizon had not extended that far yet.

Nearby the Maranatha church at the Mosplein was the cinema Astoria, where I secretly saw the films with Doris Day, because she was my idol; it seemed to me she could do everything: dance, sing, shoot and so on.

During the Sunday service Rudi and I used to sit upstairs in the church away from parental watchful eyes. In the basement of the church was a social place for young people where we could enjoy soft drinks, play table tennis and other games. In true Calvinist style there was no music or dancing or any alcohol.

One evening it had become rather late and as Rudi and I walked over the bridge towards home we parted, he going to Zwaluwplein and me walking towards Lieuwma, the baker and cake shop. When I was nearing the baker, I could see my mother running towards me, completely besides herself, her long hair which she usually had in a plait and wound neatly around her head, streaming loosely behind her. She was berserk and grabbed me by my hair, dragging me along the road. Upstairs I told her once again that I had just come from the church, from the youth club, obviously there was no alcohol on my breath, but she would not believe or listen to me. She went on and on, as only she could.

Then my father came downstairs, like a bolt of lightning, he hammered his fist into my face, blood spurted everywhere, my lip was cut. He never asked any questions, or told my mother to shut up, obviously he was dead tired and just wanted to sleep. In the Dutch language the word 'driftig'; means hotheaded and in our household it most of the time felt as if you sat on a keg of dynamite, walking cautiously on eggshells and, unfortunately, my three brothers developed the same temperament.

Because there was such a complete lack of communication, we never learned to express ourselves, nor were we listened to. Naturally, this had disastrous effects on our own relationships later in mature life. As an adult I sought the help of professional people and came to an understanding of this conditioned mould I was thrown into. It is now proven that 65% of our lives is determined by our genetic inheritance, physically as well as psychologically and just 35% by our own will. It is the fate of our birth's lottery and therefore it is as well to go along with Nietzsche statement "Amor fati", love your fate, or love that which is unavoidable but, of course, this is not an easy road.

As I wrote earlier about my resolution that no one was ever going to lift a finger against me this was straightaway turned into action and so in my anger I told my parents or rather shouted at them that I would leave home and as I was still under 18 that if they got the police to bring me back home, then I would never, never, ever see them again. And so, the next morning I left my parental home for good. Possibly I went to Rudi's home because I ended up in a comfortable but small room in the basement of Mrs. Visser's house near the kolenkit church in Amsterdam West. She was a kind friend of Mrs. De Ruiter but as far as I can remember we did not have much contact. My room just had a small bed and washbasin but no cooking facilities. Where and how I ate, bought my food and so on, it still a puzzle to me. Her daughter, Carla, had her room next to mine, but again I cannot recall her except her saying that she did it with a candle so we must have had some conversation!

Years later when living in England I had cosmetic surgery to straighten my pug nose left over from my childhood operation and at the same time had the scar on my lip removed. No wonder that I had so abruptly disappeared and that my basketball team wondered what happened to me.

"All of a sudden you were gone....." Young adulthood violently interrupted.

One is wise afterwards and through working with my analyst in London I came to realize that this violent event in my early life may well have been a blessing in disguise otherwise I might have been embroiled within my family for the rest of my life. It became necessary for me to find my own path and make my way independently. But as it was, I had not yet reached adulthood and was emotionally ill equipped to handle relationships.



Ferry across the IJ

8. STARTING WORK.

It was Ineke vd Weert who introduced me to my first paid job. She lived on the same square as Rudi, belonged to the same church and it is possible that she was after my brother Wim, and that this is how I got to know her. She wore spectacles, walked very upright with small peacock like steps. After my training as a secretary learning to type and take shorthand she recommended me to a job at the Prins Hendrikkade in Amsterdam where she herself was working. It was a company called Veth trading company, dealing wholesale in large commercial paper bags. I found it terribly boring and the only thing I vividly remember was that it was here where the bottom pinches started. A bit of fun for the men but not for me and soon I was looking around for another job.

At the time I was still living at home and had to take the ferry across the IJ, the huge river which separated us from the centre of Amsterdam. Or I'd take the little steamer landing at the well-known Smits Koffiehuis which often became a convenient meeting place with its terrace by the water. Also on board of the little steamer were the women from Marken and Volendam wearing their colourfully embroidered traditional costumes. The white laced caps on their heads and blood coral necklaces with golden clasp around their necks.

A few years later it was again Ineke who invited me to join her to work in a hospital in England. I went there in 1960 but it is quite remarkable that it was she who twice got me to start work in such hugely different places.

Being so bored with my job at Veth Trading Company I joined a temporary employment agency thereby establishing my streak for independence at an early age. A zzp'er in the late fifties!

The first job they sent me to was a big showroom on the Weteringschans where I was to work as secretary and receptionist. On display in the showroom were large Kelvinator freezers and fridges for sale to the wholesale trade, hotels and so on.

Thing is, the owner fancied me, young thing as I was. He and his business partner, a woman whose name I forget, lived in Diemen, then a posh area on the outskirts of Amsterdam. He drove a big car, possibly a Jaguar and as I was still living at home in the Nachtegaalstraat he would come there and cruise at the end of our street, waiting to pick me up. As there were no other cars in our streets, still considered a luxury at the time, I must have felt flattered that this posh car was there for me, feeling a bit elevated above the rest of the street. Once inside the car he would kiss me, which I found unpleasant. I cannot remember how many times this happened, may be just the one time, but apparently, I had bragged about it to Rudi who got quite angry: a middle-aged man trying to seduce a young girl!

Of course, I felt I had to leave. Before doing so I confronted the boss's partner in the kitchen of the showroom, telling her about these meetings and left the job.



Ruud and me

Unfortunately, it was not possible to talk with anyone about sexuality and although Rudi explained to me that having a climax was like having a good sneeze, I think he was quite impotent. When I had moved to the basement flat of his mother's friend, he would come down the little staircase and maybe he stayed the night, but I cannot remember us ever having good sexual contact. He was always so nervous, pressing and exploding his lips, almost like a nervous tick and unhappy with his job as advertisement sales representative for a local Amsterdam newspaper.



Cobi, Piet and me

He used the expression: Of alles, of niets. Either everything or Nothing, but he himself made a lot of compromises and was not true to his words. My sister-in-law Tiny told me some time later she thought him to be an opschepper, a braggart. Having the looks of the well-known Dutch writer Simon Vinkenoog he had none of his literal talents. Often, he'd come to see me during my lunch break when I had started work at the Netherlands Sunday School Union, in the Jordaan on the Bloemgracht, a lovely location.

Having left Kelvinator this was the next place I was assigned to, and it was the first job I really enjoyed. The people of the Sunday School Union were so pleasant and friendly. Possibly because they were all Christians; the difference in atmosphere between the commercial and their world was very noticeable. My desk was next to Dea de Vries, the illustrator of the Sunday School magazines and flannelboard stories. She was so talented and a lovely quiet person. I once visited her home in Schiedam and talked with her dad who was a physiotherapist. I remember clearly one of his lessons on what you had to do when your legs were cramping: go up and down on your toes. Such a sweet gentle man, no wonder Dea took after him.



N.Z.V. and Dea de Vries



N.Z.V.

One of my jobs as secretary was to organise the various lecture trips around the country, together with the distribution of Sunday school material, and especially satisfying for me was my task of answering all the children's letters which they had written to a fictitious person. It enabled me to use my own imagination and storytelling.

But as I was living in this basement room which had just a sink but no other facilities. I could not live here indefinitely so the feeling came that I wanted to move on to explore more of the world. Somehow, I had kept in touch with Ineke who was by now working in England. Did we used to write letters? I cannot recall but I decided that I would like to join her in England.

Fortunately, we did take photographs at the time otherwise I would not have known or remembered that Rudi and I spent the evening before my departure in our favourite local Cafe Zwart, at the corner of Dam Square in central Amsterdam. It seemed I kept winning at playing poker and drank my favourite bessengenever, gin made from berries, terribly sweet and now called a drink for old ladies! It had been our habit to visit other cafes also, often frequenting our favourite pub, the Oude Herberg, (where I met the very quiet Rita for the first time, who later became pregnant by Piet), also Cafe Reijnders and Eylders on the Leidse Plein. And, of course, Cafe Scheltema, the writer's café; all this was such a lovely introduction to Amsterdam life. To this day these cafes are still going strong.

After our last evening together in Café Zwart, a photo taken the following morning shows me putting on my makeup in front of the mirror in the basement room followed by another photo where I meet with Rudi's sister Elizabeth, who is still in her pyamas, smoking a cigarette, both of us sitting together on her bed.

I probably then said my farewells to Rudi's family, but not to my own family.

I have an image of Rudi standing on the train platform putting his fist in the air, supposedly a farewell greeting as the train left Amsterdam Central Station departing for Hook of Holland for the boat to Harwich. At the time I did not write in a diary or make any notes and cannot recall if I took my bicycle or not or how the boat journey went. Was I collected from the boat in Harwich or not?

Neither can I recall how Ineke van de Weert and I communicated, where I received her letters and so on. All I knew was that she was working in a hospital in Harold Wood, near Romford in county Essex in England.

My decision was made to join her, there was nothing left to lose and everything to gain.

Before departure with Elizabeth





1960 August Ruud, Piet
and I Farewell Leidseplein
bij Reijnders of Eijlders

9. ENGLAND – EMPTYING BEDPANS

FURTHER REGISTRATION PARTICULARS

PERMITTED TO LAND AT Harwich ON CONDITION
THAT THE HOLDER REGISTERS AT ONCE WITH THE POLICE;
DOES NOT TAKE EMPLOYMENT OTHER THAN THAT SPECIFIED
IN MINISTRY OF LABOUR PERMIT NO. 430390
WITHOUT THE CONSENT OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR AND
NATIONAL SERVICE AND DOES NOT REMAIN IN THE U.K.
LONGER THAN twelve months.

I.O.(24) Harwich - 24.4.60.

R/A Harold Wood Hospital, Harold Wood,
Hornchurch, Essex on 24.4.60 and
employment by the Matron at that
Hospital as a Nursing Auxiliary.

ENDORSEMENTS AND REMARKS

*Released from
Nursing
E. Cam. 7/11/1960*

MINISTRY OF LABOUR
CITY NURSING APPOINTMENTS OFFICE,
ATLANTIC HOUSE,
FARRINGTON STREET, E.C.4.

*Reports arrival at
13 Montagu Sq.
no occupation*

P. C. 282.

**ESSEX COUNTY
CONSISTORY**

**ALIENS REGISTRATION OFFICE
METROPOLITAN
POLICE
31 OCT 1960**

CERTIFICATE

1

Date of Issue 15th. June, 1960

Place of Issue Romford. Essex.

Name (Surname first in BLOCK CAPITALS)
BEIJTEMA, Aaltje.

Nationality Dutch

Born on 25.10.39 in Amsterdam.

Passport or other papers as to Nationality and Identity
Dutch Passport No. K.165165

Issued at Amsterdam on 11.2.60.

Marital Status Single.

Signature of Holder *E. Beijtema*

Received the sum of 5s 0d for the issue of this certificate

P. C. 282.

**ESSEX COUNTY
CONSISTORY**

**ALIENS REGISTRATION OFFICE
METROPOLITAN
POLICE
31 OCT 1960**

It is official:
Aliens Order
1953 Certificate of
Registration, Date of
Issue 15th
June 1960, Passport
issued at Amsterdam
on 11.2.60, permitted to
land at Harwich 24.4.60
and employment at HW
Hospital Harold Wood,
Hornchurch.

Nurse Elly, Harold Wood
Hospital



I was 20 years old. I still have the document and am glad to have kept it. But strangely enough I do not remember going to the British Embassy in Amsterdam applying for this work permit nor the boat journey Hook of Holland –Harwich or how I made my way to and arrival at the hospital. Did Ineke come and pick me up? Was I so filled with anxiety at the time that I cannot remember?

The nursing home accommodation was in an old house near the hospital, and I was given a large room all to myself. As my English was extremely basic, I could hardly communicate with the other nurses, which was just as well as they were not at all interested in me and were always chattering away amongst themselves.

My young body had much to endure as I was assigned to the geriatric ward. The other girls were training to become nurses and would not learn useful skills on this ward where old and lonely women were waiting to die. Most were demented and never received visitors, nor were there any flowers, all-in all it was quite a gloomy place. I lifted huge bodies, like big fat swine, having to turn them over in their beds, putting them on a commode and sometimes having just cleaned their faeces up after them one would kick me in the face, or another woman even spat at me. One woman was laying like a stick insect on her bed, with a smile on her face, 'dirty woman' they called her. When I was older, I realized that she was continually rubbing her clitoris!

One sweet little woman, Mrs. Child, kept making her bed, repeatedly, all day long. She is in the photo I took of the ward, and it is noticeable how closely all the beds were put together. I had to run for bedpans, put them into cleaning sluices, and trying hard to understand the various commands given me. The cap I had to wear on my head indicated that I was just an auxiliary nurse, being a euphemism for a maid really. It was a ridiculous contraption looking like a small sailing boat with flaps sticking out on all sides and difficult to keep in balance. You'd better be sure it was straight when matron approached on her daily rounds, and to put on a cleanly starched apron before her inspection. Line up, line up!



Harold Wood Hospital 1960

At one time one of the orderlies, Phelan, came running into the ward, panicking, and dragging behind her massive oxygen cylinders because one of the patients was about to die. I thought: Why not let them die? As it was, they had no quality of life.

Phelan was nice, and ever so Irish, her heavy accent making it difficult for me to understand her. She kindly took me to her home one evening where we drunk

neat whiskey and as I was not at all used to whiskey, I felt dreadful the following morning. On duty with an enormous hangover the floors of the ward wobbled and seemed to be vertical rather than horizontal.

Another kind person was Betty; another orderly, she and her daughter came with me for my first horse riding lesson when we had some fun.

Unfortunately, I did not have enough money to continue with the lessons.

What happened to Ineke, my Dutch friend, during this time I cannot recall because we never went out together nor met in our rooms. Possibly her accommodation was elsewhere. On the other hand it could be that she was already sick and depressed of which more later.

1960, London, First Visit

Naturally, I had heard of the well-known Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park, London. So, on my first day off I took the train from Hornchurch station to go and see for myself. I was on my own and curiously walked from one speaker to another, standing on their soapboxes they were allowed to talk about any subject except race and the royal family. Whilst listening and taking photos this man kept bumping into me at various times. He was taking photographs as well.

Oh sorry, he said, smiled and started a conversation with me. Many years later I discovered that this was his way of picking up women, who were on their own in a foreign country, easy prey to his charms. This is also how he later met and married Haruko, a young Japanese woman who was visiting Switzerland on her own, meeting her on a boat on a lake near Zurich.



Although I did not find him physically attractive what kept me on my toes was his conversation and knowledge. Soon he explained to me everything about the architecture of the Royal Festival Hall, well known for its perfect acoustics and how this was achieved by building boxes within boxes thereby insulating the sound. And on he went, by this time we were walking along the South Bank. For an innocent newcomer to London my ears were flapping! I always had a curious nature and his stories fascinated me; it was his mind that I found stimulating but that was all.

His name was Ronald and soon afterwards this first meeting he came to visit me a couple of times in the nurses' home driving from London to Harold Wood. After some years I learned that he was born in 1925, so he was 35 years old when we met and I was 20, which at the time seemed quite a lot of difference. Not just in age but also because we had experienced such different lives. Being a non-practicing Jew, he had found it necessary to change his surname as anti-Semitism was as rife then (and Hitler formed an immense threat) as it is till this day. When the war broke out, he refused to go into military service and instead had to fulfill his civil duty by working in the coalmines in the north of England.

Did I feel lonely during this period? No family or friends around me and working under hard conditions? I was and one evening in bed I thought I heard someone breathing underneath my bed and remember being scared. At that time Ron was the only contact I had, being able to phone him and who would drive down from London. There was no contact with Ineke who apparently had a complete mental breakdown. Now I ask myself: who contacted me, where was she all this time, and who knew that she was my friend?

But what really brought Ron and me closer together was the trip we had to make to take Ineke back to Holland. She was quite deluded and was scared thinking that Ron was an Arab and that he would sell us both of us into slavery! We went across by boat and motored along in his wonderful thirties Triumph Roadster automobile.

Arriving back in Holland and having Ineke safely delivered to her home, the details of which I cannot recall. Rudi and I had some unfinished business; he probably felt jilted and out of sheer jealousy had booked a hotel in a small place called Heeswijk even though both of us knew that our relationship had finished. It turned out to be a disaster, there was so much discord. He did, however, give me my first writing cahier which I was to use as a diary. My first ever entry is dated donderdag, 1 September 1960 and it started a tradition lasting until now, 61 years later!

In the meantime, Ron got busy meeting people, he met with Dea, the artist and ex colleague from the Netherlands Sunday school Union, whilst Piet, Rudi and I had some talks in cafe Reijnders on the Leidseplein. Maybe they were trying to convince me to come back to live in Holland?

And did I want to? Harold Wood was a boring place and so was my work, it was sheer drudgery and unbelievably tough- going.

In September I had been there for just five months and decided to look around for other work. It was such a surprising discovery to read in my diary that already on the 19th of September 1960 I was attending the highly reputable Polytechnic in Regency Street at 8 o'clock in the evening. Amazing! .

I wanted to get my English GEC level and thereafter the Cambridge Certificate, studying two evenings a week and thought that I could eat my meals at Ron's place. My aim was to look for a job in London possibly with a Dutch firm which would eliminate the working permit restrictions; all great plans except that Ron railroaded me and got me to work for him.

10. RON 1960-1966

The official Certificate of Registration states my arrival at 13 Montague Square, London, W.1. no occupation on 31st October 1960. Another stamp showed that I was released from nursing on 7th November 1960 and was thereafter granted permission for employment as a shorthand typist/translator by R. Sheridan Esq. Suite 19, 123, Pall Mall, SW1 on the 6th of December 1960. After only 6 months in England, I was already living with Ron!

Ron was very clever at getting this permission explaining to the authorities that my various languages were an asset and a necessity for his business.

What this business exactly was, I do not know at this stage, but I remember he used to dictate to me his letters. Did they relate to his business in Kent? At the time I was unaware of this but may be this was his source of income.

For me a whole new world opened for me in Montague Square, which is one of the most expensive squares in central London W1. I felt ever so posh when mentioning my address during a telephone call.

There were so many exciting people around. For instance, Harold Chapman, the well-known photographer, and his American wife Thelma. At the time Ron was publishing a newsletter "Left Bank, This Month". Because of this we stayed in the small Beat hotel in Rue Git le Coeur on the left bank in Paris, where huge penises were painted on the walls which shocked me a bit. It was all very bohemian and artistic. We slept in what seemed like an airing cupboard, and in the various other rooms artists and beat poets had their accommodation. This small hotel achieved an international reputation having positive vibes and was loved by its inhabitants.

Some of these people came to stay with us in Montague Square, often rolling huge joints, especially one young man called Nick Smart seemed to have a lot of grass on him. Ron had also published a newsletter: "No News, Good News" with his friend Sara assisting him. She was an art student from Brighton College of Art and a good sculptor, we later became good friends.

They all seemed to be having a good time but at the time I was still rather naive and quite a puritan. "God has destined me for someone and in his way, I shall walk". This is what I wrote in my diary at the time and would have forgotten all about it had I not kept it. Although my English was getting better all the time, having lived in England for just six months, I was completely out of my depth. Also, I came from such a different background and was still an inexperienced young girl.

I also met Cyclops, whose one eye was covered with a big black patch, so it was an appropriate name for him! Then there was Tom and his Swedish girlfriend, who later became his wife, Gurn. After many years he took over the publishing firm Thames and Hudson from his dad. Recently I googled Harold Chapman's name and it appeared that he too was born in 1927 in the small seaside town of Deal in Kent. I remember Ron and me going to the "Pelican", the local pub there, singing carols at Christmas time. Harold took great black and white photographs all his life, one of his fascinations was for nuns and turds, what a combination! His collection is now with photo library Topfoto's and we exchanged some emails as he was still alive some time ago.

As time progressed cultural life became a part of me, and London had plenty to offer! There was the ballet in the Royal Festival Hall, Ron's friends Diana and Heather, both teachers, came too. We went to see *Irma la Douce*, the musical at the Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, and the *Opera Faust*. "I never thought opera could be so fascinating", I wrote in my diary at the time. The films: *Jazz on a Summer's Day*, *Some Like it Hot*; the sculptures of Henry Moore, Picasso, Zadkine and others in Battersea Park; and we listened to a Beethoven Concert in the Royal Festival Hall.

Through Ron I got to appreciate classical music, he often played records and hummed along. Beethoven's Pastoral was a favourite of his; also, the Gilbert and Sullivan songs with which he sang along with great delight and glittering eyes. It did indeed sound cheerful. From him I learned some Irish songs, for instance "In Dublin Fair City". Also: "Old Macdonald had a Cow", which he then performed with much glee snorting at all the right places and flapping his arms about.

Recently I met a woman at the Vrije Gemeente in Amsterdam who told me about her experiences in London during the early sixties as an au pair and that in 1963 she had seen a performance of Dylan Thomas's "Under the Milkwood" at the National Theatre whereby the actors walked about on a huge rotating wooden platform telling the stories and I realized: this is when I saw it too. It was so impressive that it stayed vividly in my memory!

So, we had a good cultural life in those early days and developed my taste for it lasting until the present time.

A lodger in Montague Square flat helped to pay for what must have been an extremely high rent. John Pitt was his name; going out to work early every morning he made it known that he wanted to sleep with me. It never dawned on me at the time that I had such a beautiful body. I never felt vain or spent hours in front of a mirror and did not make much fuss about going to a hairdresser or shopping for clothes and shoes. Unknowingly, I was like a magnet attracting the opposite sex.

After I had lived in Montague Square for only two months the money must have run out because we had to move to the Old School House in what once was a coalmining village, Eythorne, in Kent where Ron had his plastics factory, Homunculus. After just two months in London, I was buried in that forlorn village!

The school was a huge place, and our living accommodation was in one of the classrooms with its high ceiling. It was an old building with none of the modern facilities like central heating, so it was cold in the winter, nor did it have a proper bathroom. The difference from Montague Square could not have been more acute!



Ron, 1964
Summer Springer holiday
in Zwitterland

Ron was a clever inventor, having designed all his own machinery. There was the injection molding machine which produced the inkwells for the wholesale school supplier Reeves. It was Brian in his wheelchair who used to operate the machine, and I was vacuum forming the wastepaper tubs rims, or melting the polythene grains turning them into sheets of his patented so called “pebblythene” from which lampshades and wastepaper baskets were made. The smell of the resin and fibreglass was extremely pungent, causing me headaches. Ron told me later he was always listening anxiously in case anything went wrong in the workshop. Tony the manager threatened to leave, and when he did Jack replaced him. His wife Kitty was a friendly woman and on one or two occasions we met them in their house.

And there I was: working my butt off, unpaid as there was no money, keeping the wolves away from the door. With all the various debtors on our backs getting the orders out on time was an absolute necessity; I was also doing all the accounts, making the many phone calls, and washing socks, and cooking horribly smelling kidneys for his breakfast when we had some money. And being grateful for a little bit of chicken! What a life! I felt isolated as there was no contact with any of the villagers because we were outsiders.

Intercourse with Ron was painful for me, and I cannot remember ever having a climax with him. The Shere Hite Report was published in 1976 and she shocked the world with her research when it became known how female orgasm worked. It was discovered that orgasm for the woman was not in the vagina but in the clitoris. In a review Shere told the journalist that when she walks outdoors and sees a woman she thinks ‘you owe me something’. If only it had been published much earlier!

The other day I again saw the film “When Sally met Harry” on TV, it is well-known for its restaurant scene where she is faking an orgasm. One woman sitting at a nearby table tells the waiter pointing to Sally: “I’ll have some of that”. Funny! The scene does show that often women fake an orgasm and one of my women friends told me that she faked hers even though she had been married for decades. Just imagine that.

I sometimes took the train to Etchingham station from where I would be collected. Ron's local friends were John and Joan Eyre who lived in a cottage on the estate of Lord Killearn. They had met each other in Indonesia in a Japanese prisoner of war camp (therefore they were also much older than me) and here they were, looking after the estate's chicken stock, killing, defeathering and deep-freezing them ready for the various supermarkets. John was a sort of Marxist intellectual, looking a bit like Sartre and used to have long conversations with Ron, beyond my comprehension. It is only much later that I started to read *The New Statesman* and became involved with left wing politics.

In the Old School House, I can even now still recall his face whilst he laid on top of me, his face in seventh heaven, making love to me and enjoying himself, ignorant of the fact that I was unmoved by it. He was a gentleman though and made his excuses afterwards in case he had hurt me.

Was that the time I became pregnant and consequently was made to jump on and off the table, and to do almost everything possible to shake it loose? I was given lots of quinine tablets which a GP told me afterwards could have made me blind and deaf. Writing about it now makes me angry because he was so much older and should have taken precaution.

I was surprised to read that Etty Hillelsum undertook a similar procedure with quinine and warm water, her lover Pa Han, who was also much older than her, was carrying bowls of hot water to her, her unborn child was 10 days old. Her circumstances were so different from mine as she was surrounded by friends, had two warm relationships with older men. But being a Jewess, she had the threat of total annihilation hanging above her head. I read about this event in her book *Het Werk – The Work* and it brought back my own memories. I much admire her.

My own embryo was still tiny and landed eventually in the toilet bowl, it happened in the cottage of the Eyre's because I remember that John was there to snatch it out of the water to examine it with that glee of his on his face. It just got flushed away after that and we did not give it a proper burial. Ron obviously needed the support of his friends, the Eyre's, but I cannot remember any support from him, nor even from the only woman around me at the time: Joan.



1963
Haremere Hall,
Etchingham Killearn's
Estate,
Ron, Joan and John Eyre

It was such a dramatic event in my life and to this day I remember it clearly. Yet there seemed no alternative at the time, we did not even have to discuss it, because we were as poor as church mice. I walked about with big holes in my shoes, had to take milk bottles back to the local shop to get some money to buy food. There was the constant threat of bailiffs knocking loudly on those big school doors. Often, I was hungry and was given prelude in the evening to keep me awake so that I could work all throughout the night, like a slave, to get the orders ready for dispatch in the morning.

I have come to terms with this episode in my life, but it has taken a lot of bereavement work and therapy.

When I was 23, in 1962, (so I read in my diary) I wanted children and it was my intention to observe them closely for creative tendencies which I would then stimulate and encourage. So completely different from my own childhood experiences and I wish I had a more nurturing environment in my early years. But the situation Ron and I were in at the time was just too desperate and our friend, Anne Ward, told me later it was just as well as otherwise I would have been underneath his thumb and for many years be completely dependent on him. When I read about people who had the opportunity to go to university, however poor they were because they got a grant, I got envious. That is what I would have wanted but "I was going to get married anyway", my mother said as if education would be wasted! So, I had to take my own education in hand and was reading lots of books written by authors like Darwin and Freud and gave up my religious indoctrination, no longer wanting to marry in white in church or going to the Dutch Church in the City of London as I used to do when I had just arrived in London. Although it is quite common nowadays living together without marrying was just not done in those days. But I thought it showed more courage and independence and that security was to be had within oneself.

How did I end up in a poor mining community in Kent? It all started so well in Montague Square. It was probably due to some sort of emotional blackmail as Ron had told me at the beginning of our meeting how life laughed at me, I had a whole future ahead, whereas for himself he had no hope, too often he had been disappointed, and now half his life was finished.

My tender young heart would like to be in love with him (but I never was) and being conditioned as mother's little helper, I now became his helper. I would make the world a better place and make him happy! It was as crazy as that but did not realize at the time that I could never change my mother or Ron to make them happy people.

After many years I came to understand how he and his sister were severely damaged by their negative and destructive Jewish mother. Anne Ward was befriended with Ron's sister Barbara with whom she attended Leeds University and got to know all about their background. Anne was introduced to me by Ron when she was sharing a basement flat in Queen's Gate with her friend Vivian, who also became a psychologically bad case because of her nasty but very rich Jewish mother. With Anne it was the start of a long and enduring friendship. She is now the only person left, aged 89, who knows my whole history since arriving in England in 1960.

However, at 21 years of age I was unaware of all those psychological issues, neither his nor mine. He was 14 years older than me and well-educated at Bury Grammar School, Lancashire. Unfortunately, I was not physically attracted to him which caused a lot of friction in our relationship, but I loved his mind.

My sister Annie came to stay in Eythorne for two weeks and brought me a Mahalia Jackson LP as a present, I know we cried as she left but much more about her visit I cannot remember. After a few months of living in Eythorne, I had enough and tried to escape taking the train to London intending to stay with John Eyre but Ron drove all the way up from Kent to fetch me and drove us all the way back that very same evening. It seemed I had no say in the matter.

With John and Joan, we attended a huge wedding party being given at Herstmonceux castle, which at the time was the National Observatory, now situated at Greenwich. Our duty was helping with the catering, diving underneath trestle tables getting more champagne bottles from the ice filled buckets and washing all the glasses. One of Lord Killearn's daughters was marrying Lord Peregrine Elliot, an aristocrat from St. Germans in Cornwall. By sheer coincidence it turned out that much later I would become his friend, and lover for a while as his marriage did not work out.

There is a great photo taken in 1963 of John, Joan and me in our car "Springer" a Triumph Roadster from the 30's parked outside Haremere Hall, the Killearn's stately home. Ron had bought "Springer" from our friend Edgar Samuel whilst living in Canterbury, in Dane John Gardens, in a lovely flat looking out over well-kept gardens. It was a welcome change of habitat after dreary Eythorne. We were back in civilization.

Edgar was Sara's friend and lectured at King's College. He also became a choir master and later emigrated to Uppsala University in Sweden where he lectured and conducted enormous choir works. Unknown to me he once visited my parental home where he chatted with my mother, in what language I do not know but she had liked him very much. He would have been a good one for me to marry she must have thought, like the minister's son, Jan Ros.



1964 ,Elly, Thelma,
Heliczzer's friend in
Paris

Finally, after desperate years and near bankruptcy, Ron was able to sell the patent rights for his “pebblythene” invention. It was such a tense moment when a Mr. Odell came to visit us. He took us out for a drive in his car, drove it into the river which then floated like a boat! An early invention probably dating from around 1963/4. Ron did not tell me what price was involved in the patent’s sale but after all those years I was ever so glad to move to a lovely spacious flat in Palace Gate situated in cosmopolitan Bayswater, London W.2 near Hyde Park, a great location.

11. LONDON AND JOURNEY TO ISRAEL 1964-66

It all seemed to go so well in December 1964. Finally! Ron was feeling quite positive and cheerful.... until the bailiff came. Apparently 4 pounds had not been paid and more demands for money could follow, even for as much as 700 pounds, (was he so much in debt?) so that once again he became depressed, feeling hunted and fearful all over again. This is when I had enough. Basta! I wanted to spread my wings because since arriving in Britain I had only known life with him, with all its ups-and-downs.

Since February 1964 I had a nice job with Unilever in that huge building near Blackfriars Bridge, being secretary to Mr. Luyke Roskott, Head of Technical Division. He was a gentle Dutch person even though he had this very high position within the organization. My working there enabled me to extend my working permit, Unilever being a half Dutch-half British concern. However, I did not like the office atmosphere, as I got into a good position quite high up the ladder, it felt competitive with the others especially with the director’s secretary, Miss Schrijvers.

When I finished my employment there in 1965 to go on my travels, I received a good reference letter and some nice farewell presents, a Parker pen, a card with drawings and from my boss a rucksack. I stayed in touch with some of the staff receiving a letter from Ms. Schrijver and a few years later visiting Luyke Roskott in his house in Bromley when we walked around a local silkworm farm. Maybe he was a widower by then and wondered about a relationship with me? I’ll never know but, in any case, Bromley would have been far too suburban, bourgeois and conservative for me and I certainly did not feel like settling down.

The flat in Palace Gate was large enough for us to share and rent out rooms to two tenants: Lesley Mayall, related to John Mayall, the well-known blues singer and Christine Beckett.

During this time, I was receiving some letters from my schoolfriend Coby saying how depressed she was. That she had nothing to say, did not feel accepted as she was and disliked being on her own. This really surprised me. Elegant, talented Coby working with Max Heymans, one of the greatest Dutch couturiers! I once attended a show there. I once attended a show there wearing a Chanel lookalike dress and wearing pearls.

She had stayed with us for a few days and Ron took photographs of her spreading her arms out from behind one of the decorative lamp posts along the Embankment. Strangely enough I received a similar letter from Rudi's sister, Elizabeth de Ruiter who had always appeared so cheerful.

I seemed to be in turmoil too, unable to make up my mind. I was 25 years old in January 1965 and I just wanted to read, read, read to make my mind richer. And yet there was this note: "if Ron goes to America, where his sister Barbara lives and he wants me to join him, I want to marry him. I want to study and save money so that within two years I can have a baby. Something positive and I don't want to wait too long, may be three years or so. I want to be good, and study for a degree and then when my children are a little older, I can teach and study in the evenings. I hope that I live long, that no war comes and peace on earth and in all hearts". But Ron never went to America but reading this now in my diary I find it so endearing.

I liked our tenant Christine very much; she was a self-assured and cheerful person. In her room she had hung various Shakespeare programs on the wall, all orange coloured on bright silk ribbons. She was trained in occupational therapy, came from a warm nest up North, (it has become my habit to differentiate between people; those from warm nests i.e., good parental emotional relationships and those from cold more functional ones, like mine) and had a boyfriend John Quirk, a graphic artist. It so happened that, like me she also felt a need to spread her wings, wanting to travel and finding work as a locum would be easy for her.

When we saw an advertisement in the morning newspaper, we both applied for a scholarship which would enable us to go to Israel under a Building Bridges scheme, if we were accepted that is.

And so, we set off during the first weekend in April, 1965 to the Jewish Home in Seaford, where we attended different programmes with 60 other young people. We all had to give a talk and mine was about how a new law should be established which made slander and racist opinions an offence.

But the following day I became skeptical of the scheme because it appeared that we had to participate in entertainment events with this group. Once in Israel we were not allowed to leave this group. Chris did not like this idea either and we, therefore, decided to leave. The woman in charge, Mrs. Blooman told me later that we would have gotten the scholarships anyway.

So, Christine and I decided we would hitchhike to Israel instead. But what was Ron going to do? He was so much older than us and did not want to hitchhike. His idea was to buy "Dianke", the camper from the Heaton-Watsons when they returned to England from their journey across the world. We had met them whilst on a camping holiday in Switzerland. His huge moustache and the warmth of his wife and daughter made a big impression on me.

It was our friend, Anne Ward, who suggested to Ron to photograph the classical cities around the Black Sea and living in that camper would be ideal but the purchase of the camper fell through. Why this was, I do not know.

Instead, Ron decided to buy a Ford ambulance which he came across in the picturesque harbour town of Rye with its narrow-cobbled streets. With such a small population it was underused and having much spare time the engine was lovingly serviced and reliable.



Ron on the ambulance

My wish had been to get away and go on my own with Christine but in the end both of us decided to go with him.

And so, Sunday 11th April 1965 was the last night we slept in Palace Court. I loved that spacious flat which had felt like my very first home ever and I wept.

The ambulance was converted by Ron into a cosy and functional mobile home whilst we stayed at Sara's in Baron's Court but had to scrub her flat out first, everything was so greasy and stinking badly John Quirk applied a lovely emblem on the outside of the ambulance: a round circle with one half showing sunrays, the other camera shutters because we were going to photograph and follow the sun!

On 6th May 1965 I found myself back in the Nachtegaalstraat, waiting for Ron and Christine to arrive which apparently took them 11 days without a word from either of them. Possibly my parents did not yet have a telephone. And as I am writing this, I ask myself: was this the first time I was home since my furious departure before 1960?

It was a long time ago that Ron had told me he would not marry me because we didn't have the same sexual appetites. No wonder, penetration was all too painful, not at all pleasurable for me and he was an undemonstrative sort of person. "Why do we carry on in that case, should we leave each other, or do we need each other?" I wondered at the time. My mother was not of much help either, because in that negative way of hers she told me: "he uses you just to get rid of his stuff – using the Dutch word "spul". Why does he not marry you, you are like a mistress". As if she of all people would know!

For the first time I was reconnecting with my family. My mother was 60 at the time, my father 68 and my youngest brother Frits 17. Together we went to see the show "My Fair Lady", all 7 of us (who else came, Wim, Tiny?) but Annie did not come because of a quarrel with mum.

We also visited Friesland because Pake was ill; Annie treated me to Chinese food some days later, and I was able to visit Anne Frank's house with mum. Piet Hermanides (who later became a member of the Cobra artists group) showed me some of his drawings and I met again with Coby who was then about to get married to Manfred, a Jewish wholesale dealer in fabrics imported from India, some of which I modelled for them, Ron taking the photos. Also, Elizabeth de Ruiter, and Rudi, who by this time was married to Betty. The marriage did not last very long but we all had dinner with his family. It was all quite amicable.

Mum wrote in my diary "wij gaan naar Canada", we go to Canada. That must have been quite something for them going abroad for the first time and travelling by boat was going to be a long journey. It was also during this period that she confided in me and told me about the tub with hot water she had sat in and the still-born baby. Also, that her own mother got pregnant and quickly had to get married to Pake who was just 16(!) at the time and employed as a farm worker. There was always this fear of unwanted pregnancies.

I have no idea where Ron and Christine were during all this time, possibly with my friends in Amsterdam, but they finally showed up and we left Amstelveen on Monday 24th May 1965. Amazingly I read that I had saved up about 600 guilders to start the journey with which was not much really. Our small home on wheels was very comfortable, the table in the middle folded down to make a double bed for Ron and me and Chris slept in the large driver's cabin which she told me was comfortable. There were various cupboards for cutlery, two cookers, and a sink, with underneath a water tank. All in all, he had done a brilliant job with the conversion.

It seemed that at the time I was reading Albert Camus "Der Mensch und Zweifler" and that I agreed with him but with what exactly now escapes me.

Via Cologne, Bonn, and Koblenz we arrived in Frankfurt where we bought our first bottle of white wine for only 2/6d about f.1.25 and listening to the radio we heard that the US Air Force wanted to employ girls, so Chris and I applied. Having gone through all the strict security procedures, I got a job typing and was paid 15 pounds a week, but Chris could not so easily get a working permit because England was not in the Common Market! Ron had only 60 pounds left and was worried about this. So, here we go again!! But it seems he was able to buy a camera which was strange, but I did not ask him about it.

Christine and I had to get up at 6 am as both of us were finally employed as cleaners in the hotel on the Rhein-Main base. We earned 13 pounds a week and got extra money if we worked on Sundays. Frau Lehman showed us around the hotel where all the Americans with their families were staying and explained how to handle the big polishers, swinging them over the floor from side to side. We went to bed at 8 in the evening, feeling exhausted and got up again next morning at 6. We liked the hotel and the interaction with the Americans, but found the women very bossy, and they all seemed to have about 5 or 6 children. We found chewing gum everywhere, stuck underneath seats and tabletops.

Once we quickly did our own laundry in the launderette and to our surprise found that one of the American women complained about this. We were getting quite tired after working nine days without a break but ended up with DM323 each. Good heavens, apparently, I gave Ron half of my earnings (!) and we left the base under a shower of compliments because we had worked so hard and well.

We were on our way again and it was time to celebrate, so we indulged in strawberry cake and Ron bought a bottle of champagne. Experiencing a wonderful feeling of freedom, we were finally on the road to Berne in Switzerland.

When we switched the little red light on it turned our living space into a darkroom enabling us to develop the photographs. Ron was taking these all along the way and the dark glass windows of the ambulance were helpful for this purpose. Pulling the little yellow curtains across them it became cosy and snug inside. During the day we were able to look out but because of the dark windows no one could look in. It was fun to observe people walking by and the teenage boys and girls combing their hair in the glass reflection of the windows.

1965-66
Journey
Swiss Border



It appeared that the Bulgarian Embassy had not received an official permission from Sophia for us to photograph in their local museums, so the Black Sea plan was off.

But in the meantime, Ron was busily taking photos of different locations with me posing as his model. The idea behind it was to sell them to Keystone Press Agency for distribution to the various tourist magazines.

On the 18th of June we were at the St. Gotthard Pass at 2.091 meters or 6.680 feet, Chris said she had never thrown snowballs in mid-June, never worn sunglasses at 6.30 am nor had she ever drunk coffee at a height of nearly 3000 ft. Next day we had our breakfast overlooking Lake Como; the golden fireflies swarmed all around us and the sweet smell of the honeysuckle was overpowering. The Italian custom man had called our car 'the ship'.

In the morning a sport car stopped, and we heard a voice calling out: 'He, how are you' and this extrovert woman came sailing in clutching a big paper bag filled with cherries, it appeared she was a journalist and her boyfriend a model, Stephanie and Stef. They were the beautiful people and we promised to visit them in Milan once we got there. I suppose Ron thought she might be useful. Once in Milan I saw Michelangelo's Rondanini Pieta, his last sculpture and was bowled over by it. Of course, we did visit our "friends" in their apartment.

Arriving in Venice it was hard to find a parking place but having succeeded we took the slow boat to Plaza St. Marco where we drank some wine whilst an orchestra played classical music. The stunning architecture and golden mosaics are unforgettable; in peace and quiet we could study them at our leisure something now hard to do with the hordes of tourists. We learned that the gondoliers will only sing if you pay them, and that Venice was sinking by $\frac{1}{4}$ " a year, and that many homes were closed as they were unaffordable for families. Imagine the situation now so many decades later.

At the border of Yugoslavia having a Dutch passport, I did not need to pay at the border control, but Ron and Chris of course did. Here we met an English couple who had just been touring the country and found it far too bleak. But we just loved it, the beautiful empty coastline with the little islands dotted around in the sea silhouetted in the undergoing red sun blazing on the water. The town of Skopje had been destroyed by a strong earthquake in 1963. Ron took photos of the various architects' models for rebuilding the town, apparently the competition was won by the Japanese Tange Kenzo.

It was always good to receive letters from home, my mum sent one from Canada, one from Annie, and from Luyke Roskott asking when I came back. We always gave everyone our Poste Restante address so we could stay in touch. Especially important for Ron's contact with John Eyre who was to send Ron's photos to the various press agencies like Keystone.

On 26.6 we were near Thessalonika, in Greece where Ron counted over 400 insect bites! We visited Elizabeth de Ruiter's friend Nikos there who thought we were like a dream, the reason why I did not get to ask. Further south we parked underneath Mount Olympus and of course this is where I started to read Homer's Iliad and other Greek classics imagining the various gods at the summit of the mountain. I also bought Plato's The Republic and Aristoteles' Ethics developing an early interest in philosophy which continues until today.

On the third of August we arrived In Athens and parked in the street outside the British Club so that we could use their toilet and have drinks in the bar. All three of us looked for work, placing advertisements in Ta Nea, the local newspaper. The Greek king had just dismissed Papandreou and many demonstrations in Sygmatis Square followed. Anne Ward and her friend Vivian Conrad came to visit and together we made an unforgettable visit to the Acropolis, only by full moon was it open to the public in the evenings. Fortunately, very few people knew about this and so the small number of people there were whispering, not wanting to break the spell. Moonlit, the Acropolis appeared as floating on a magic carpet in a silent dream.



Journey 1965-66
Greece

After about two months in Athens, still parked in the street, I started to feel fed up. Meantime, Ron is flying high, having dinners in various places, and making good contacts thinking to himself: 'Eythorne, what a waste of time, all that time I could have done this: photography'. And what about me then, I asked myself?? Have I been wasting my time also? To earn money, I must go out with different men, either posing for them, sometimes in the nude, or to be their companion whilst eating out in various restaurants. They paid me to keep them company as they were lonely, but I never slept with any of them. I also travelled some distances across Athens to teach English privately to children in their well to do own homes.

Ron then thinks it better that he goes on his own to Israel because we are quarreling so much lately. I was called frigid, a dead loss as a woman, and as we did not have the same sexual appetite according to him it would be best if we were to part. Same old story. Chris says she will go to Israel later because we quarrel so much.

Journey 1965-66
Sappho's house ruins



I had to spend Drachmas 150 to get some photos printed taken in Frankfurt, because Ron says he is far too busy. A packet arrived from Annie and on the 15th of October 1965, a letter from mum; they were back home from Canada on the 23rd and will celebrate my 26th birthday on the 25th of that month. She also mentioned a young man who had written an article about a place in Greece where Paulus had preached. A letter from our flat mate Lesley told me she had to undergo an abortion which cost her 130 pounds! Poor girl.

With Chris I went to a travel agency; the boat journey to Israel costs 12 pounds including a cabin and food, we would be staying for 6 hours in Cyprus, and at the same time learned that going to Crete was quite inexpensive.

But then: what a surprise, on my 26th birthday on 25.10.65 I got a ticket to fly to the island of Lesbos, coming back by boat via the island of Chios. Apparently, Ron had received a letter from Keystone in which they wrote something about two attractive girls, obviously meaning Chris and me because we were appearing in most of his photos. There were all sorts of other presents and I felt really spoiled. In the evening we went to the cinema to see "The Knack" featuring large eyed Rita Tushingham and continued afterwards to Plaka district with its many tavernas nestled against one of the Acropolis 'hills. It was obviously a nice meal because we went to bed that night at 3 am.

Next day we sat in a tiny airplane destined for Lesbos, the local Greek women sitting nearby were crossing themselves as we took off and it really scared me. It was my first ever airplane trip and in such a small one too! We were fascinated by the local poet, Sappho, the poet who had committed suicide by throwing herself down the cliffs. She was known as a symbol of love and desire between women, the word lesbian comes from the island where she lived. I still have a photo taken of me in the ruined doorway of her house. We also came across a primitive painter called Theophilos, whose paintings we discovered on a variety of walls sometimes hidden by haystacks and so on. Instead of paying money for his food he would do a painting, but the locals called him mad.

We were able to meet with the author Peter Green, who had written the book: *The Laughter of Aphrodite*, and he drew a couple of hexagrams for us about sexual relations whereupon Chris told him that we were not lesbians. When we left, he kissed her on the mouth for a long time and me on the cheek. We also met Walter, the Daily Mail journalist, it turned out that Chris had a little affair with him. And much to my surprise she told me much later that she also had sex with Richard Stubbs, the PR man in Athens in whose wonderful house we stayed on the island of Aegina. Amazing, so quietly on the side.

However nice and exciting the external circumstances were, it still did not click between Ron and me and so in November 65 we decided to go our separate ways, initially for two months. This is when I had my affair with George Kralic, who played guitar in a nightclub and for the first time in my life I fell in love!

He was such a lovely extravert person, thousands of embraces, so demonstrative and so unlike Ron. I stayed in a youth hostel but after a while found that quite depressing. News came that John and Joan Eyre decided to break up their marriage and, in the meantime, it seems I would like to be a bit more like Christine, who is so self-sufficient, and independent. The way she walked away to find some silence and in hotel "Horizon" I was waiting for her whilst she was negotiating between Ron and me, seeing him at 9 o'clock in the morning and then me at 11.30.

One afternoon I met Peter Henry and his friend Jan Dallas, a film critic. Whilst Peter popped into the different shops buying delicatessen, he had the taxi with me inside waiting for him. This seemed ever so luxurious to me at the time. He wanted me to stay with him telling me: "don't waste your time with useless people", and wanting to buy fine clothes for me, taking me to Rome and so on. He had such a lovely spacious apartment in Piraeus, the harbour town of Athens. In the evening we went out for dinner in Zafiris, the best restaurant in Plaka. I was bowled over unused as I was to all this ease of living.

“Elly, love, hurry back” he said when I told him I was going away and willing to send me a return ticket so I could make my way back from Israel, which he found to be a fascists country. When talking with Stubbs later, he agreed with this viewpoint. Henry and Ian talked with me about enigmatic actresses like Anna Magnani and Jeanne Moreau and upon my departure I was given a whole library of books to take with me to Israel.

“Experience is what many people call as an excuse for their mistakes”, wrote Oscar Wilde. How many mistakes did I make out of feelings of loyalty, fondness, and pity for Ron? What if I had stayed with Henry? Just one of the many decisions I took in my life.

After 6 hours in Cyprus and sailing across to Haifa, the ambulance was finally lifted off the boat and so our original destination was finally reached. One of the books Peter had given me “The Tin Drum” evoked many memories of my childhood, and re-reading Kafka’s “The Trial” that feeling of being trapped resonated for me. Ron’s pessimistic attitude and feelings of being unwanted became too much for everyone, poor Chris had said: “here we go again”and so I ended up on my own in kibbutz Gan Shlomo near Rehovot. There were many young people there and had a positive atmosphere. I learned to say in Hebrew that I did not want to work in the kitchen any longer cleaning out those huge pans but pick oranges instead. Getting up early in the morning, and with the dew still on the leaves it took the sun to warm us and pervade the smell of oranges all around us. But I remember Hanna, one of the kibbutzim asking me: “Elly, why do you smile like that?” I wonder if it was because I wore my so called “stewardess smile”, hiding my real feelings and inside emotions.

I liked the idea of the kibbutz, where everyone was treated equally. If a child was talented and needed to go elsewhere for an expensive training, it was paid for by the kibbutz. Therefore, all the children could develop their skills and talents regardless of costs.

It was such a shock for me when I noticed for the first time the number tattooed by the Nazi’s on a woman’s arm. Faced with the monstrous reality.

The other day I found an old writing cahier marked 60’s Book Readings filled with typewritten pages: Dreams and Nightmares by Hadfield; Plato’s Republics; Tender is the Night by Scott Fitzgerald; The Divided Self by R.D. Laing; The Jewish Wars by Joseph Flavius; Voltaire; Herzog; too many to write down here and some poetry, for instance, by John Donne. Some pages are headed: Eilat 24th February 1966; and then Rehovot 3rd April 1966. My wish to study started early.



Dancing with restaurant
owner



Chris and me inside our home

In the meantime, Ron was in Jerusalem where he had made some friends. One evening playing a game of monopoly with them during which he was winning, an American girl who was a bad loser had a go at him. Ron wrote to me that he would have taken his own life if he had had enough tablets: "I am just a bad loser, not worth wasting time on, yours or anyone's". Naturally, I then felt so dreadfully sorry for him and felt out of loyalty that I had to support him. My next question was: should I go back to England, get a job in London, save enough money so that we can travel on to India or go to America?



King Solomon's
mines in the Negev
Desert

There were so many beautiful times, for instance the isolated empty beach at Eilat, on the Red Sea, where we snorkeled above the stunning coral reefs. To earn some money, I worked behind a bar in the evenings but was expected to dance with the sailors coming back from their trips. Was I too good for them, the owner asked when I refused? I did not stay. Christine was washing dishes in a restaurant whilst reading Dylan Thomas poems which was a much better choice, of course.

Then there was the Negev desert with the many camels and the ancient King Solomon mountains which we explored with a geologist. One morning we got up very early, before it got too hot, climbing laboriously along the snake path to reach Massada, the citadel on a 400 meters high rock near the Dead Sea where Jewish citizens in around 70 AD had committed suicide rather than handing themselves over to the Romans. The views from there were as if overlooking a lunar landscape; the tragedy combined with the beauty of the place was impressive. It is now a World Heritage site, and the top can be reached by cable. I much preferred our way and health allowing would have walked again in the same way.

From this impressive site a dip in the nearby Dead Sea provided us with much laughter. There was no way you could dip into it but just float as if on a balloon because of its high mineral and salt content.

In the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, where we developed photos in a darkroom, I sometimes knocked my knees against something hard. When I drew the little curtain aside, I saw several small Epstein sculptures. Obviously, this museum also had a shortage of space, but the huge Henry Moore sculptures stood magnificently in the surrounding grounds of the museum. We met some good people there, Irene Levitt being one of them who I remember clearly.

Unfortunately, all those wonderful experiences could not make us happy, the right chemistry between us was never there. Ron and I stayed good friends right to the end of his life, I think he truly loved me and once the sexual tension between us was removed it became so much easier for us to have a solid and warm friendship. He became a much happier person as his passion for photography developed and was successful in creating his own extensive photo-library: the Ancient Art and Architecture library which I helped him to set up. Anne Ward told me once that she liked my photographs better than his. This may have been true in the early days but later he took mostly technical photographs for the library, which became both his passion and obsession.

12. RICHARD. FROM THE FLAME INTO THE FIRE?

"Nobody loves me for myself alone and not my yellow hair".

This poem is by Yeats written for Anne Gregory and it goes on: "I heard an old religious man but yesterday declare. That he had found a text to prove. That only God, my dear, could love you for yourself alone".

Another saying which I learned long ago was: "Smile and the world smiles with you, cry and you cry alone". Both sayings applied to me.

During our journey across Europe, which lasted one and a half year, I had posed for Ron as model; the photos were destined for the various travel magazines and tourist boards. I had been a good PR with my charming manners and good looks opening all sorts of doors, easily making various connections, and obtaining good commissions for him. But I longed for my independence and left Ron and Christine behind in Israel. She stayed in a different kibbutz where she was to meet her future husband, Joe, during the 1967 seven days war.

In 1966 I made my way back to Europe and was met by my mother and niece Annie van de Ploeg at Amsterdam Central Station meeting the train from Athens. What amazes me is the timing of our meeting as I had made my way starting from Haifa with the boat and continuing from Athens by train on the 14th of July 1966 and arriving in Amsterdam to be met by them. This is the era before we had mobiles, SMS, What's app, etc.! To this day I do not know how we arranged this meeting at the station. I made a note that the single ticket of the whole journey at the time cost just \$41.

Being back in Holland I wondered about staying and living there again but that did not seem an option because I did have a few contacts in London and none in Holland. Also, I had left Ron in Israel with the excuse of going back to make some money enabling us to continue our journey to India. It seemed to be the only and rather drastic way to finally untangle myself from this relationship.

Returning to London I found myself with nowhere to go; it just felt as if I had to start all over again since I landed in GB in 1960, drifting along with no warm place to fall back on. Looking through advertisements I found a flat in Belgrave Road renting and sharing it with some other unknown girls.

Fortunately, I got some typing work through our friend Anne Ward, who worked for Thames & Hudson as an editor. I was quite surprised when visiting her a couple of years ago in her new apartment to see that ancient portable typewriter which I had borrowed still there.

I was paid 6s.6d per thousand words, plus 2 carbon copies @ 6d each for typing the manuscript "Etruscan Cities and Rome", a total of 68.160 words,

The pay was 25.11s.3d. and my invoice was from 81, Belgrave Road, my rented flat share. The other invoice came from 13a Graham Road, Hendon, NW4, this was Jack and Kitty's place, ex foreman of the Eythorne plastics factory. This manuscript had the title "Law and Life of Rome", a total of 121.000 words which paid me 45.7s.6d. All those carbon copies, erasing typing errors with Tippex or smudging with a rubber pencil, one by one, and then retyping the correct letters was such a painstaking laborious task. Times have certainly changed!

In August 1966 I had to write a rather stropky letter to the Under Secretary of State regarding the letter I received permitting me to stay for only 2 months. I pointed out his mistake after which I was re-instated as a resident. So, I had to be quite a fighter.

My friend Sara and I got some work in a restaurant folding serviettes and putting toast on the dining tables. I think she was working also for escort agencies, sometimes sleeping with the men because she was always broke. It was through her that I met Richard Stirling, a photographer. Maybe she knew of him because he contributed photos to the girly Mayfair and Penthouse magazines, but I have no idea. During our visit to him, Richard told me that if I wanted to, I could come one day to his studio, when he would make me up as a professional model and take some photos. And so, it was me who phoned him reminding him of his offer. He was tall and slim, his manner warm and extrovert, a man of the world with a touch of flamboyancy, looking a bit like Zorba the Greek.



Richard and Elly
1967

During our first meeting he gently touched my face, putting make up across my eyes and with warm hands stroking across my neck. Obviously, a man who loved women. His photographs of glamorous girls often featured as double page spreads in magazines like *Mayfair* and *Penthouse* and he lived in a huge apartment which held a large photographic studio within a block of large, luxury flats in West End Lane, where the film actor Shirley Ann Field also lived with her husband Jackie Stewart, the racing driver. Also, Annie Ross the jazz singer lived in the same block and through her I was to meet with Quincy Jones, the famous singer and record producer. Such famous people and may be this sort of environment would contribute to my happiness? Did I really ask myself this at the time or was I just swept away by it all?

By now I was 27 and was to discover at a later stage that he was at least 20 years older than me. Yes, indeed here we go again! Soon I found out that he was married but had lived separated from his wife for a long time. She did not want him anymore, experiencing him as a cloud hanging over her whenever he came to visit. They had two little girls and later I learned that he had twin sons from a previous marriage and that they were just 9 years younger than me! And so, I had put my foot in it again, no wonder Ronnie wrote back from Israel telling me that I was quite mad. From the flame I had jumped into the fire!

I was young, with lots of positive energy and as always wanting to make the world a better place and make people happy just as I had tried to do with my mother. Shakespeare wrote: "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players". On our stage the outside appearances were fine but behind the curtains the real drama was to take place. But for now, we were in love, lived in a beautiful apartment, travelled to Spain in a Mini Cooper S across the Pyrenees, and made friends with a Dutch couple from Amsterdam there, Pascale and Peter Ruting and their small children meeting them many times in Holland at a later date. We had what seemed an enviable life. In our London studio we once gave a lively party and I am now amazed how many famous people came, for instance, the actor Julie Christie, also the writer Norman Mailer with his mob of curly hair who sat next to me on the floor. And, of course, our equally well-known neighbours were also present.

However, Richard's career had never really taken off (yes, just like Ron's!), even though he had trained at the Slade College of Art, but unfortunately, he was not at all commercially minded and lacked confidence. Apart from the *Mayfair* and *Penthouse* double page spreads (once he made up and photographed a Golden Girl look alike as in the James Bond film) he also took photographs of actors like Francesca Annes and Barry Ingham, Jane Birkin with Serge Gainsborough, and so on.



Elly, 1967,
by Richard

But somehow there were not enough commissions and money was tight. So, I took it upon myself to go round with his portfolio, for instance to ICI for the fabrics they made and to Phillips Records to try and get him work. History repeated itself again as I posed for him as model taking pictures in which I looked quite stunning and in some of them I looked a bit like Julie Christie with that strong jaw line of hers. To help paying the rent we had a lodger called Max, quite a stiff formally suited businessman, who had a room next to our bedroom, which I did not like as apparently, (did he tell us?) we made quite a lot of noise because for the first time in my life I enjoyed having sex.

We enjoyed our walks with Hypo, our little Lakeland terrier, on nearby Hampstead Heath, where we had pub lunches in the Spaniard's Inn. He enjoyed cooking Sunday lunches, roast beef and Yorkshire pudding being his speciality, it all felt so homely and cosy. We played darts in the pub with friends, Peter Phipp, also a photographer who sometimes used the studio and Patsy Baxter, his girlfriend, and a writer. With her I photographed a story about the London Victorian laundry houses which at the time were still in use, launderettes becoming popular a few years later. I should have liked to be a photojournalist full time. If only..... (No back-up, no money and so on, same old story).

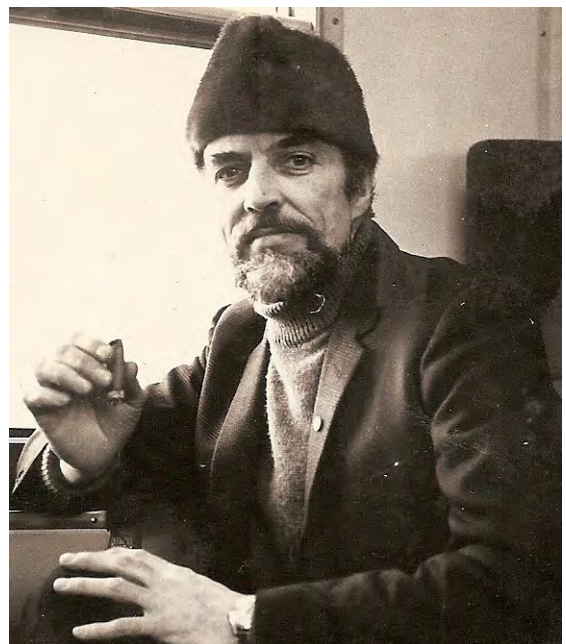
Finally, I got a commission for him due to my contact with Phillips Records, Mike Stanford, the art director liked his photographs ... and me. The American band 'The Association', was due to visit the UK, their songs "Wendy" and "Along Came Mary" were hits at the time. Together we visited the antique market in Portobello Road and photographed them during an appearance at the BBC's "Top of the Pops" music programme.

We were to accompany them to Rome, but I discovered that my passport had expired. By special arrangement the Dutch Embassy official agreed to meet me on a Saturday at 9.30, which was very kind of him. In Dutch the time is said as half tien, so I translated it into half past ten. Therefore, I arrived one hour too late and having waited for me patiently for half an hour he had left.

I learned my lesson from this and even now living back in Holland I make sure to say: nine thirty and so on.

They gave both of us a beautiful golden coin on a gold chain, as a souvenir of our pleasant time together but unfortunately mine was later stolen.

In the beginning of April 1967, we were on a visit to Holland, hanging out the fools in Elizabeth's weaving studio in Haarlem. Ruud and his brother Karel and wife were also there. Everybody really took to him, we all smoked and drank, played scrabble, and met up with Amarins and Martin, a publisher colleague of Ruud. So, it was a whole sociable crowd of people both in London and in Holland. This I experienced for the first time, and I felt much happier because I was in love with Richard and was attracted to him, our warm cuddles and lovemaking were special.



Richard, 1967

London life was also exciting: we went to the Cromwellian club, to the Casino, the Playboy Club, and met up with people like Bill Oddy and his wife Jean (he was not yet famous as a tv personality and nature presenter), the Country and Western singer Dodie West, and many more such people.

Other men were also attracted to me: Peter Harland, studying to be a doctor, the son of the governor of Parkhurst Prison on the Isle of Wight was interested and introduced us to Sir Max Hastings who invited us to a party in Cowes on the Isle of Wight. He was Chairman of Beaverbrook Newspapers Ltd. and a keen yachtsman. I remember that little dog biting me in the ankle as I was running to get aboard his yacht, it just snapped at me, and I was taken to the doctor for a tetanus injection. Max phoned me twice afterwards, probably trying for me to come and visit him on my own and into his bed. I remember Peter sneaking in one night, but it came to nothing, and he too telephoned

Why did I not marry Richard and have children with him, after all I was 27, just the right age. Well, he did ask me several times, but I told him he was in no position to ask me as he was already married. Norrie, his wife, did not like his bald head, although some say it is a sign of virility and I certainly found it to be so. However, her remarks and sniping attitude had given him quite a complex about it.

I never in my life wanted to be the cause of a marital breakdown. This was a strong moral belief of mine. When I met Richard, they had lived separately for many years and it, therefore, hurt me incredibly to be cited as the third party and the reason for their divorce. Norrie's action came out of the blue and the events leading up to this darkened our lives. As Richard opened up to me about his life and his ghastly feelings towards his ex-wife, my jealousy increased as their little girls Melanie and Amber Jane were much loved by him. Day by day I became sadder because I felt so sorry for them.

And the situation became more difficult as the little girls started to love me more than their own mum, sometimes not wanting to go back to her. Melanie, the eldest daughter, only 5 years old, became quite affectionate with me and whilst we were in the shower would say: "you are a real mummy, I want to stay with you. You are a real housewife, but you have no babies", and so on. Did I have a wish for children in all this turmoil? It was not an option anyway as Richard did not want any more kids, he's had two marriages and 4 children behind him even though I later learned that Amber Jane, his youngest, was not his, it seems Norrie had slept around.

The whole situation became too complicated and sad especially when she was threatening to take the kids with her, back to Australia. Of course, this would break his heart, and I also had become attached to the little girls.

There were so many horrible scenes, messy arguments and it was all outside my control. Nothing I could do would make it any easier.

But by this time, I had also become dissatisfied with the superficiality of our life. Having lived with Ron for so many years I had become used to a more intellectual environment and had immersed myself in world literature, authors like Camus, Sartre and the philosophy of Aristoteles and Plato and so on.

This brings me to the nature and nurture debate, i.e., one's potential and upbringing.

Because when Richard told me about his upbringing it once again became clear to me that the early environment we grow up in to a great extent shapes our lives..

Apparently, his father died when he was just 4 years old and as his new stepfather did not like children he was sent to a boarding school. Often the children there were awarded with pink and blue slips, one colour for good behaviour and the other the reverse. It was sheer terror for him to have to stand in line and show the slips he'd been given. If he had too many blue ones he was told, 'go and get changed', i.e., put on his thin silk gym pants and get ready for the cane. The master would then humiliate him and in the headroom, he would beat Richard and then fiddle with his testicles.

On top of that his mother suggested that he should stay on a farm during the school holidays and never showed him any affection or love. It is no wonder, therefore, that he sought it (unsuccessfully) in two marriages which produced 4 children.

The whole affair with his wife, Norrie, became terribly depressing. I remember going to the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square and that I sat in front of Leonardo da Vinci's cartoon for many hours. I was reading books like Camus "The Outsider", trying to keep my cultural interests going. I met with Feliks Topolski, the well-known artist with his studio under the arches at Hungerford Bridge. As he regarded me as a sort of nymph, he wanted to paint me in the nude. How Richard knew, I don't know but he came to the rescue whilst I stood there naked in his studio. He was very angry with him, and a similar event happened when I got close to the singer Richie Havens behind the curtains after a concert. It seems to me now that I was making attempts to leave the nest, so to say.

Earlier I had enrolled at Paddington Technical College to study photography properly but unfortunately did not get very far as there just was not enough time or money. I was working full time and was housekeeper in my so-called free time. A professional Vocational Guidance Test I had taken gave me a high rating for art, writing and people. The suggestion for journalism was made but the same story went here too: no money, no time.

During this period, I also tried to enroll with Marion Naylor - Holiday Drama Schools for a six-day acting course and applied to the Babylon Translation Service. In retrospect it seems to me now that I made quite a few attempts at self-development pursuing my various interests but that none of them came to fruition due to unfavourable circumstances and lack of support.

When I think about this now, I feel a huge sense of deprivation at the loss of those various opportunities.

Dr. Jerichower, my local GP in West End Lane, put me on anti-depressants and told me that if or when I ever found another man I should come and consult him first. It was obvious to him that I was attracting the wrong sort of men or should I say, emotionally unavailable men. And I was still naïf, being unsure of myself.

Slowly I started to feel that I needed more help, wanting to write down my problems and/or consult an analyst. Dr. Deman, the female gynaecologist based in Child Street in Chelsea knew about my loneliness. I was run down, she said, and told me that she had married a divorced man who had a child of 6 and that she felt quite cynical about men even when she was only 20 years old. She told me: "be careful that you don't spend another 4 years again and have nothing in the end". Wise words indeed. She then prescribed some tranquillizers and iron tablets for me at the same time fitting me with the Dutch cap, at the time a popular contraception. I really disliked it, the horrible smell of the jelly on the rubber when taking the thing out in the mornings; washing, powdering, and drying it was such a procedure. How much easier it all became when I was on the pill at a later stage in my life.

The author, Mr. Lovat Dickson, for whom I was typing manuscripts told me about a part time job as secretary in the Canadian Club which at the same time could be quite a social one. I had told him and his sweet wife that I had been unlucky so far with men, they were either divorced or married....and that at times I desperately wanted a baby too. But when they moved to Canada it seemed to be the end of the only sane contact I had in the outside world. Perhaps I should have applied for that job, but it was another decision not made at the time because I still felt loyal to Richard. Later in my analytical therapy sessions it was suggested that I had remained loyal to my mother, be it on a subconscious level. It took almost my whole life before I learned that it is not possible to make other people happy, especially when they are disturbed through earlier unresolved traumatic experiences. As the saying goes: "you can take a horse to water, but you cannot make it drink".



1967
Elly in Spain,
photo by Richard

The divorce proceedings were started in July 1967, and as I was cited as the course of it all it made me very angry and upset, as if a dark stain had fallen over me. And if this was not enough another bombshell broke loose. Apparently, the lease of the flat and all the comfortable lush furniture in it was not Richard's but belonged to a rich American. Had Richard promised to procure girls for him through his contacts with Penthouse and Mayfair? I never found out but did my best to mediate consulting Ronnie's solicitor, Mr. Faithfull in March 1968. I received a letter from him replying to mine early in January 1969 with an invoice for 4 pounds and 45 pence. For 10 months I fought in Richard's corner! However, in the end I was more than I could cope with and wanted out. One evening at midnight I took my bags, left Douglas Court in a taxi and found a hotel near Marble Arch. The whole night I spent crying in this strange room feeling incredibly lost.

Fortunately, my contacts with Phillips Records had somewhat continued and I decided to apply for the advertised job to work in the Personnel Department and was offered it! I used to call myself Miss Brent, as the continued spelling of my own surname became such a bore. I got on well with Ms. Cohen, the Personnel Manager, which was nice and was paid a salary of 16.50 pounds and shillings per week. This enabled me to buy my first record player on hire purchase via Philip Records: Model 816 for 25 pounds and 10 shillings. It was enjoyable to go with Mr. Muddle to the Walthamstow factory and see how the black vinyl LPs were pressed in the machines.

But Richard refused to leave me alone and kept coming round, using emotional blackmail: he is dying, he does not want to live, Hypo the little dog is lost, look at the scar in my neck, he nearly committed suicide. He loves me, he needs me and so on. Being a softy, I go back with him to Douglas Court. Amidst all this chaos my brother Frits arrives on the 21st of August in 1968 and stays in Douglas Court, something I can't remember much about, maybe my mother sent him as it seemed to her that I was cracking up and needed a psychiatrist.

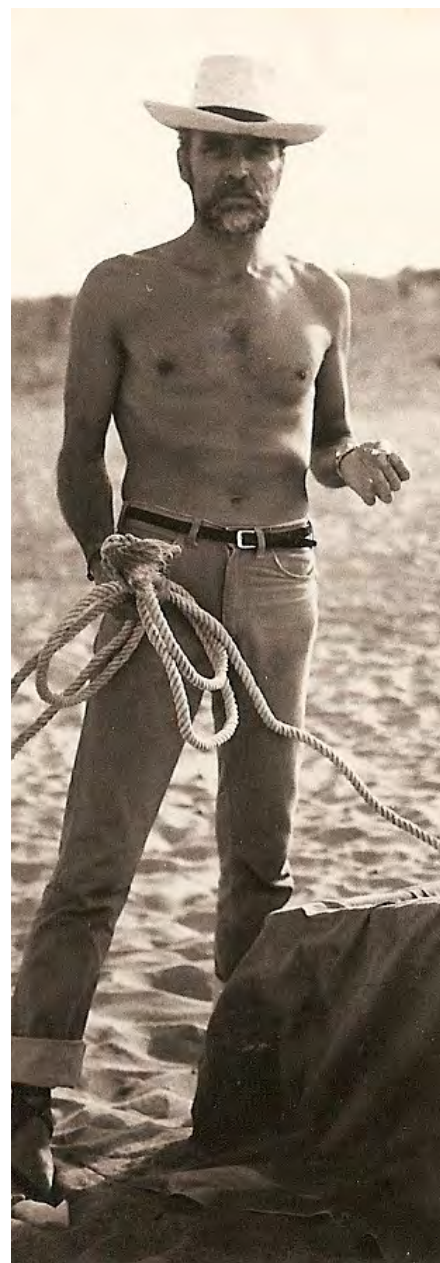
However, in the meantime I had found a room at the top of a house in Albion Street, situated opposite the big white building in which Phillips Records was housed, just near Marble Arch and Hyde Park. The house belonged to friends of Michael Gleave who worked as a computer programmer at Phillips Records. Of course, as I was working in Personnel Department, I got to meet everyone including him. He was a young man, 4 or 5 years younger than me, charming, and with a broad smile. He came from Hartlepool, in the North of England and had this lovely broad rolling accent. We felt attracted to each other, and I felt here was finally someone near my own age, without a hugely troubled past.

I still remember to my shame that feeling terribly shy I did not dare to use the downstairs toilet. And so, I shat on a newspaper in my room which I then neatly folded and took out into the street below searching for a wastebin to dump it in. This stays with me as a sharp memory and since then I asked myself the question: what was I so afraid of? Was it the fear of intruding into their private domain? Or the discipline of my parental home or that I at least should not be a nuisance, just be quiet and helpful guy? This feeling that I had no right to use their toilet indicates how fragile I felt at the time and uncertain of my right to exist. On the surface I appeared to be a confident young woman but hidden inside there was a shy timid little mouse! Even to this day it makes me sad.

Michael promises me that he will end the Mrs. Sheridan and Mrs. Stirling, the married surnames I used in the past, “we’ll change that”, he said. It is possible that he intended to marry me, and I stayed with him a couple of times in his basement flat underneath the greengrocers. But he still loves a girl called Sue, and loves me too and when I meet her, I feel jealous of her. We saw the musical “Hair” together, but unfortunately, I missed the Rolling Stones concert in Hyde Park during which they released a multitude of white doves. And so again, it was a confusing time and I blamed Richard for spoiling my relationship with Michael, because he could and would not leave me alone.

In the meantime, my doctor gave me a prescription for some sleeping tablets. I seem to have no friends although Sara tells me on the phone that she now works with an Escort Agency and sleeps with the men. For me she is not the right sort of person to turn to. She still lives in Baron’s Court and pays only 7 pounds a week in rent. To prevent demolition of these beautiful houses people squatted in them and it turned out that their action was successful as the council restored all the houses and she was able to continue living there which was very lucky for her.

During November 1968 I finally consulted several psychiatrists as I was at the end of my tether. They were Dr. Rowley from the Cassell Hospital, and Dr. Hilda Abraham, consultant psychiatrist from Paddington Clinic and Day Hospital, I vaguely remember having to stay as an in-patient one day, or was it for several days? It appeared they were looking for the best method to treat my severe depression and was then referred to Dr. Malcolm Pine, of the Group Analytic Centre, in Montague Mansions. Apparently, what I needed was a “fairly consistent kind of solution”. At the time I did not realize that this solution would not be found for many years.



1967

Richard and Elly

13. GORDON PLACE

Since coming back from Israel in 1966 I had lived in a flat share in Grosvenor Street; in a room in West Kensington, where no men were allowed by the landlady which was probably a good thing; later I had a room somewhere in Swiss Cottage, then I lived with Richard in Douglas Court, after that there was my room in the Albion Street house and only for a short time in Paddington Street with Michael.

After living in so many different places for two years it was not until November 1968, aged 29, that I finally got a place of my own at a posh address, 32 Gordon Place, the ground floor flat in a beautiful white stucco house in elegant Kensington with opposite the old-fashioned local pub, "The Elephant & Castle".

It was John Quirk, Christine's ex-boyfriend with whom I had kept in touch who introduced me to his girlfriend Barbara who worked as a manager in the fashionable warehouse Burberry. At first, we shared the flat but when she moved out to marry John I had the whole place, two rooms, kitchen, and bathroom all to myself. It was such an unimaginable luxury to me. It felt like my first own home, I was the only one responsible for the rent and all the incoming bills for the first time in England.

The house was in such a lovely location, just off Kensington High and Church Street. Nearby was Biba, the fashion store of the swinging sixties and the warehouse Debenhams which had a large roof terrace where one could meet for lunch. In the bookshop in Church Walk, reached via the flower stall on the corner with the church, poetry readings were held every Saturday whilst we enjoyed a glass of red wine. Nearby was the little dairy shop and bakery where you could have a typically British tea. It was just a short walk to Kensington Gardens with its palace, where royalty lived, the last inhabitant was Princess Diana. It was altogether an idyllic place!

Not only was my flat very popular but I was too, almost like a queen bee in her hive. On Richard's recommendation I had my pug nose due to my early childhood operation straightened because it would look better in the model photographs; at the same time the cosmetic surgeon removed the blob on my lip where my father's fist had hit me.

It was interesting to meet Richard Pavlev with whom I went to Idris Shah's Langton House. Shah was a well-known author and teacher of the Sufi tradition. We attended his New Year's Eve party on 31.12.68 and I clearly remember the large elephants made of papier mache, decorated in glistening colours and glass mosaics standing around in the large garden. Richard also introduced me to the songs of Leonard Cohen: for instance, "Suzanne takes you to the river" and many others, but at the time it sounded a bit melancholic to me and I never got into the poetry of the songs at the time.

Our relationship was short lived as he was not interested in meeting occasionally. I met him through the writer Denise Winn, and I think it was him who told me I must get rid of my sexual energy. What nonsense, it just was not channeled as I was not meeting with the right sort of men.

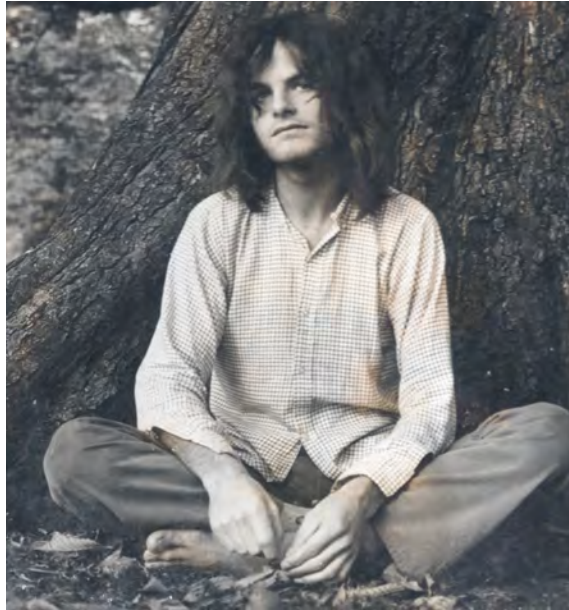
The months leading to the ending of my relationship with Richard had been most traumatic, his divorce, the whole flat business, his interference with my relationship with Michael, staying in different places, and then finally the move to Gordon Place, resulted in me feeling at the end of my tether, depressed and lonely. My physical and emotional life had to be sustained by tranquilizers and sleeping pills prescribed by my sympathetic GP Dr. Jerichower in West End Lane. He became so worried about me that he phoned Paddington Clinic to get an appointment for me with a consultant psychiatrist whom I finally saw on the 4th of November 1968. Her name was Hilda C. Abraham, and her report to Dr. Rowley at the Cassel Hospital, Richmond, I still have in my files. It seems we had a long conversation about my childhood because she ended her letter with: "I think this poor girl had such a difficult background that it would be a pity to give her anything but a fairly consistent kind of solution".

It was the beginning of a long road stretched over many years whilst I searched for some continued therapeutic support.

But I am absolutely baffled by the fact that I cannot find a diary for this period except all the many extracts I had made from it. Because of these I still know what happened during this tumultuous period in 1968 and that I was also having to keep my job down at Phillips Records.

From an outsider's point of view, it seemed I had the time of my life, I was 29, attractive and doing well in society. Unfortunately, I just allowed myself to be drawn into all sorts of relationships with men, whilst I now realise that I was basically an unstable person, in many ways looking for love and stability or security.

One of these men was Chris Scheffels, a writer, whom I met whilst staying with my friend Pascale in Amsterdam. He was a resident in the Bader Meinhoff community in Berlin. At the time I was ignorant of the fact what they advocated, or of the violence they would use if the situation so demanded. With all his high ideals it was he who gave me the clap which made it necessary for me to go to St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington for tests and penicillin. Oh yes, and then he had the nerve to call me a *trut*, a word difficult to translate from the Dutch, a conventional type of person. Thanks very much. He continued to send me telegrams and phoning a couple of times after I returned to London. He too dropped the question: Why don't you have a baby? Goodness me, I could have had a whole menage by now but none of these men were able to provide any stable support.



Bob Bean in park

In the basement below me lived a young man, called Bob Bean. He was a friend of the landlady's daughter Leonie, whose parents lived on the Isle of Mull off the coast of Scotland. She loved to be in the company of black men, who were mostly on drugs and so after a little while it became inevitable that Bob came to live with me. He was broke, of course, and earned his money as a cleaner. Sitting at my front table he was in the habit of continuously drumming with his hands. his long greyish hair around a sensitive rather whitish face with blue eyes. A sensitive, gentle soul. Obsessed by dust he rolled up towels putting them at the bottom of doors and windows and used to take a long time chewing his homemade salads.

David Costa became a friend of us (he later designed my headed notepaper) and I photographed him and his pop group "The Trees" in nearby Kensington Park.

He was the son of Sam Costa, the popular singer, and his dreamy dark brown eyes and gentle smile are fond memories I have of him. Later I also met his girlfriend Judy who later became his wife. It was she who predicted that I would become a nun! What did she see in me at the time? She must have had a penetrating view of me sensing something more deeply behind my superficial appearance. They were lovely company and together we visited Hampton Court Palace and had some long walks in my nearby park, Kensington Gardens.

I learned from my notes that quite soon there was talk about him or me wanting a barnaby (a child), where he got the name from, I don't know but he used it quite often. It seems he was still entangled with his ex-girlfriend Heather who lived not too far away in Linden Gardens, but he was unable to go back there as he had not paid the rent! It was Bob who introduced me to Beano, the cartoon magazine which featured the Bash Street kids. The kittens I had were named after some of these characters: Biffy and Basher and I was called Sniffy, as I always had a runny nose.

One of his idols was Nick Mason, the drummer with the Pink Floyd band and he could not believe it when I arranged an interview with Nick at his home where I photographed him seated behind his drums. Quite amazing really when I think back of it.

It seems incredible now how I had access to so many famous musicians and was so involved in the pop music scene.

How did I get to meet with Julia Brown who became such a good friend and shared the flat in Gordon Place with me? We had so much in common, both liking vegetarian food, cooking, and eating together and became sort of soulmates. It was so easy and uncomplicated living with her and then one day

she took me to see some of her friends in Powis Square: Dob, Pam, Kes and Ken, but that is for another chapter.

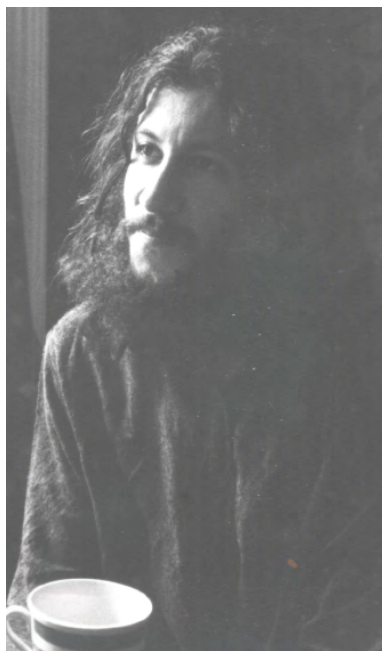
It was she who years ago reminded me that I had gone to meet with Gram Parsons, the American country singer with The Byrds. Really?? I completely forgot, but looking through my notes, there it is: 18.5.1968 Gram- Lancaster Hotel, room 724. And goodness me, I met him again on the 13th of July, this time in the Royal Garden Hotel, room 2549; he asked me to go back with him to live in California. It is just as well I did not, I might have become involved in a drug scene as he later died of an overdose. What a waste, he was just 27.



1970
Peter Green,
Fleetwood Mac

In 1970 Peter Green, the blues guitarist who started the band Fleetwood Mac came to Gordon Place where I interviewed and photographed him. Sitting at my table near the window, the light gently falling on the side of his face and the long black hair. He had such a sensitive expression and fortunately at the time we did not know he would go a bit mad, using psychedelic drugs and growing his fingernails to amazing lengths.

With my friend Dick Lawson we wrote articles for IT and the popular London guide Time Out attending many concerts, for instance Captain Beefheart in the Odeon, and a Pink Floyd concert in the Royal Albert Hall. I went with Andrew of Liberty Records who lived nearby in Kensington Church Street to another big pop concert.



Peter Green,
Fleetwood Mac

During those few years in the seventies, I photographed many musicians and singers, and articles, for instance a feature on Women in Rock, interviewing Elkie Brooks amongst others for magazines like Story of Pop. Sandy Dennis, another singer, I took pictures of whilst she sat next to Chris Blackwell in the recording studio of Island Records. He was the owner, coming from a rich Jamaican plantation background and was the main drive behind importing reggae music into Europe and especially his favourite singer, Bob Marley.

Often, I was photographing in large concert venues, like the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm and in another rather claustrophobic place, called the Underworld? where people laid down on the floor listening to the music. I remember looking for the exit signs in case of a fire or panic breaking out.

It was probably here that I listened to the band Daddy Longlegs, and who knows who was the first to do the chatting up, but to cut a long story short soon Kurt Palomaki, their bass player came to live with me in Gordon Place. Both he and Steve Hayton, the guitar player, both young Americans were escaping the brutal Vietnam draft and John Peel the famous radio DJ used to comment on this. Before coming to Britain, they used to live in a commune in New Mexico and they now came together in Gordon Place to rehearse whilst I was off working. And I felt jealous of Chrissie when she was given a beautiful silk scarf which she wrapped around her. I was the pragmatic one and Tim Sharman, their English manager, told me later that he used to feel a bit guilty about that. I was awed by his talent, when he came in and asked me listen to a piece of music he had just composed, playing his bass guitar, and overlaying it with the sound of the clarinet. So beautiful. Together we went off to Julie Felix's country house and I so much enjoyed singing harmonies to her songs whilst she played on acoustic guitar; followed by a walk in the countryside whilst her red setter streamed past us, its long hairs flowing in the wind. And on another occasion, we took Biffy and Basher to the recording manor house near Oxford, owned by Richard Branson of Virgin Records. I remember that in the garden a huge dog towered over poor Basher, scaring her, but I immediately took her in my arms, she was still quite little. When Kurt was back in the States, he wrote me two letters saying that from my letters he noticed "I was as scattered as ever and to stay away from pariahs". Julia became quite enamored by a Finnish band (Kurt's surname was Finnish) but I forget the name. She went to hear them play a couple of times. Was he right and was I scattered? Yes, looking back, I think so, I was all over the place, riding high, photographing the music scene, having lots of sex and not at all thinking. For instance: what about the Vietnam war? I never asked or had any discussion with him about it.

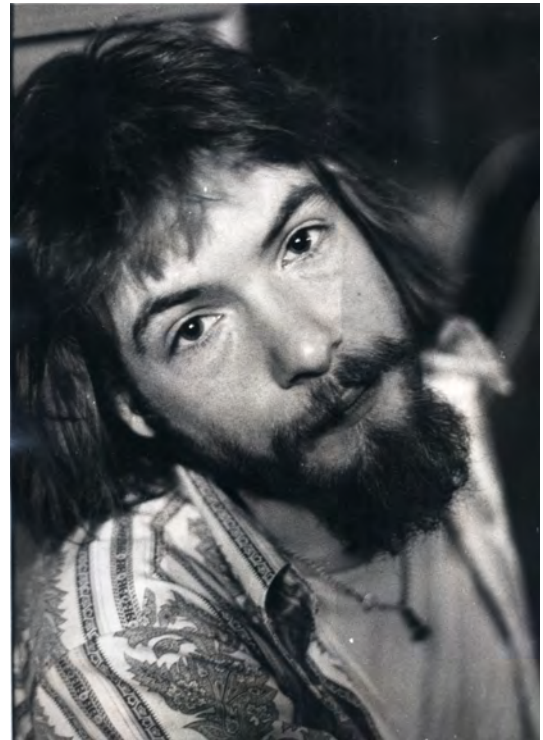
Possibly I was too busy trying to make an alternative career, away from office work. Together with journalists I worked on many stories, one of these was Dick Lawson when we wrote several articles for instance for Time Out, London's Living Guide. Later, he and Chrissie went to live in Lanzarote; one of the Canaries Islands, and we became good friends especially when they came to live back in London.



David Costa and
iTrees



Bob at Nick
Mason's drums



Kurt Palomaki

In the meantime, Ron had kept in touch and invited me to go with him to Rome. It occurred to me later that he could not stand to be on his own and always needed company. Or maybe life as a photographer was made easier for him, places becoming more accessible if he was accompanied by charming female company. We stayed in a super expensive hotel with antique furniture at the top of the Spanish Steps, everything terribly posh but we did have separate rooms. We visited the Vatican, the amazing Sistine Chapel, and several other places taking photographs wherever we went, secretly taking away the cords fastened across the delicate museum chairs. After we had been in the Via Appia, we bumped into a young man called Robin, also a photographer, and as it turned out a white rich Jamaican with a sugar plantation in his background. He was to meet us again when we were back in London and was to have an affair with Julia, which did not turn out too well.

Ron had rented a flat near Gordon Place, in Cornwall Gardens, where I assisted him with setting up the photographic library. Bob often came to help too, writing out the labels for the numerous transparencies in his calligraphic lettering. At the time I did not know how important this library was to become for my future career.

Kurt Palomaki





Ken Chow

Powis Square was a lovely garden square located in Notting Hill and this is where I met Ken Chow, whose half Chinese looks with lovely smooth olive skin and slanted brown eyes attracted me. He had a room on the top floor of the house with his friends Dob and Pam living in the next room.

The square had just been taken over by the council as it had socially declined dramatically and had been exploited by the notorious slum landlord Peter Rachman, who divided houses into flats increasing the number of tenants without rent control. The area had become notorious for hippies and drugs mainly marihuana and Ken with his long sleek black hair and half Chinese looks always aroused the police's suspicion. And this gave them the excuse to bust us. Although we were always half listening, this time being caught unaware, the men were taken away but fortunately released later with only a small fine of 40 pounds.

The marihuana was for personal use only and for the first time I started smoking the weed and really got stoned as they say which became a weekend habit. I went to pottery classes locally and was coiling clay pots on the low table and crocheting a long scarf. He drank his whiskey and went to the betting shop in Portobello Road to place his bets on a Friday night watching the horse races next day. We listened to some amazing music, mainly West Coast favourites, like the Doobie Brothers, the Eagles, and Crosby, Stills & Nash: "Our house is a very, very, very fine house; With two cats in the yard; Life used to be so hard: Now everything is easy 'cause of you.....". all of us stoned and having a great time.

Often, we went to our local cinema, the groovy Electric Cinema in Portobello Road, and we frequented our favourite pub and made love, lots of it.

Ken and Dob carefully prepared me for my first LSD trip and took me to a large wood, but I was completely unprepared for the wonderful effect. I seemed to be floating over the treetops and on the way back in the car it felt like flying on a magic carpet. I decided never to take it again, because I had read about people having bad trips and throwing themselves out of windows. And, yes, Ken also asked me to marry him.

After a while though I started to get bored with the same routine, listening to his guitar playing, immersed in Wes Montgomery and the Basso Nova, and his best liked singer: Astrid Gilberto. He did play very well and could have been a professional musician but instead worked in a hamburger joint and came back home smelling of burned meat. Bah!

We often went to Ronnie Scott's, the internationally known Soho jazz club where I photographed some well-known musicians like Charles Mingus and back home smelling of burned meat. Bah!

We often went to Ronnie Scott's, the internationally known Soho jazz club where I photographed some well-known musicians like Charles

Mingus and the pianist Horace Silver, or we ate at nearby Jimmy's Greek restaurant with its oil cloth covered tables and once I went on my own to the 100 Club in Oxford Street to listen to the old Delta blues singer Son House, on a tour from America pressing myself right up in front following his fingers sliding over the guitar strings and did not miss a thing.

Isle of Wight
Festival
Joan Baez



Not to forget the 1970 Isle of Wight festival, the last and largest. I had managed to get a Press Pass from Phillips Records, good old Mike Stanford helped me with this. With this I was able to go backstage during the Sunday to photograph the folk singer, Joan Baez. She was such a gentle easygoing person, and the photos showed that we made a good contact with each other. Unfortunately, I did not meet with Jimi Hendrix backstage but saw his performance later at night which was not enjoyable as he was unsatisfied with it and re-started many times. Unknown to us at the time it was to be his last concert because he died a few weeks later in London from an overdose. We slept in tents on the hill side, Dob and Pam in theirs, (the people of Phillips Records staying on a yacht) and had difficulty finding loos whilst being unaware of the gatecrashers, which we learned about at a later stage.

Ronnie was on the scene quite regularly and helped me to buy Yew Cottage in Wales, a derelict house, just outside Newtown, for 400 pounds from Mr. Harold Bumford who told me that in all his life he had never been outside of Wales. People did not travel much outside their local areas or counties. At the time quite a few people seemed to have cottages or places in Wales, it was becoming quite popular. Kate Helicz, for instance, had a place there, coincidentally I later learned that she had been raped by Andy Warhol. Also, there was Neville Jones, Sara's friend, also from Wales, and she told me later that he had slept with her mother! Just imagine.

My intention was to renovate the derelict cottage as it had much potential. On the way to Wales Kenny and I slept on a mattress in the back of the van and in the cottage itself in the upstairs loft which we covered with hay. It was incredibly sad that I had to end my dream of having a place in the countryside and sell the cottage, but not before I had it listed. The Visual Arts course which I attended at London University came in handy because I noticed the ancient brick chimney and the waddle and daub of a typical 17th century Elizabethan structure. It took some doing with the Council and strenuous effort but finally the papers came through: it was to be listed and now at least it could never be pulled down. Visiting Wales at a much later date I saw it again, admittedly with much envy, as it was beautifully restored to its original design. It seems to me now that it became the story of my life: lack of money, lack of support and men power and this prevented me from restoring the cottage and having my own place in beautiful hilly countryside. Nevertheless, it was a good dream!

On the 17th of March 1971 my parents celebrated their 45 years wedding anniversary. Apparently, I was with them for only a few hours, from 11 o'clock to 2.30, this seems quite crazy now but was it because Ken was with me at the time? We stayed with Pascale in her house in Amsterdam. She scored some weed for us, and we met up with mutual friends Hans and Mary Meijer; took the pleasure boat round the canals, visited picturesque Volendam and, of course, Paradiso, the Pop Temple of Amsterdam where big bands like Pink Floyd played. Going back to Britain on the 19th I missed my youngest brother Frits and Ineke's marriage on the 24th. I only attended the wedding of my eldest brother, Henk, as I was still young and living at home, thereafter I never bothered with the marriages of my other siblings.

Surprise, surprise in April 1971 Ronnie phoned from Beirut inviting both Ken and me to come to Beirut where he was commissioned to take photographs for the Lebanese Tourist Board! So, I got the necessary vaccinations from Dr. Jerichower, and soon we found ourselves in this beautiful apartment in Beirut, with its marble tiled floors and fabulous views over the city. The Arabs living in surrounding countries regarded Beirut as their gateway to the West. It was modern and Western; they were able to play in the casinos; bath in the sea during the day and when it became too hot retire into the cool shade of the cedar trees covered mountains. The cedar tree is also the emblem of Lebanon. For the inhabitants of the surrounding dry desert countries Lebanon was like the Garden of Eden, a perfect retreat in which to relax.

Ken Chow
and Elly
and Bedouine





Ken Chow

Kenny with his oriental looks was quite a novelty in that part of the world. In a Land Rover we travelled all over the country, through the beautiful cedar forests and the extended marihuana- growing fields in the North. We remembered the Lebanese gold we used to smoke in London but did not touch anything whilst in Lebanon, too scary as it was illegal, and we did not want to get thrown in jail. Visiting a traditional Bedouin in his tent Ronnie was offered some goats in exchange for me which showed what they thought of women.

Once Kenny and I were hitchhiking and got a lift from a driver with a Coca Cola lorry and got into trouble as he insisted that I sat in the middle and began making advances, his hands nearing my crutch pretending he wanted to use the gearstick. We insisted he stop the lorry and getting out Kenny walked up behind him with a huge stone in his hand.... fortunately, he did not have to use it. When we finally got to the depot we complained about the driver's indecent behaviour, he had really frightened us.

We photographed ancient sites like Baalbeck, the Roman ruin which goes back to 15th century BC and many others, developing the photographs in our darkroom in the flat. Usually, we were a bit naked as it got very hot and had to be careful not to let the man from the tourist board in.

We had an unforgettable time in a most beautiful country, it saddens me immensely to think the way it is now. Afterwards Ron claimed he had been spying for the Israeli secret service. I think this was quite possible and that he used us as decoys posing as young tourists. I remember him having a camera on a huge extended tripod so tall he could look over any fences. Back in London he boasted about this to Tom N. and so without us knowing it he put both Kenny's and my life at huge risk!! Afterwards his beautiful traditional Arab furniture and lampshades were exported to Britain where Michael Gleave and I picked them up from the airport. It was strange to see this Oriental furniture with its inlaid ivory mosaics in his newly bought house in Harrow as it looked so out of place.

This trip to Beirut heralded the end of my affair with Ken. Upon returning to London, he decided to go and live in Holland where he found work with KLM's catering department. Koos and Pascale saw him just a couple of times and then lost contact.

Apparently, my mother and father went back to Canada on the 2nd of July that year. My lovely sister-in-law, Gerry once confided in me that it was always a depressing time for them because they stayed such a long time and were not exactly cheerful company.

15. JOHN AND PEREGRINE

With Patsy Huxter, Peter Phipp's girlfriend; the photographer who shared the studio with Richard. I worked on a photographic story about the old Victorian laundry houses in London which were still in use at the time; the black and white photographs are still with Top Photo library. To this day I do not know how or why she introduced me to John Fenton, who lived in Brompton Road near Harrods. Was it because he like me was involved in the music scene? Certainly, at his flat in Knightsbridge I met the Dutch band Golden Earring; was he one of their record producers? I had not lived in Holland for a long time and had no idea they were so famous. Apparently, they had a top hit: "Radar Love" which was chosen as Single of the Year by New Musical Express in 1973. Afterwards I wished I had taken photographs of them!

However, John Fenton turned out to be quite mad and the Lord may know why I became involved. In fact, he had a complete mental breakdown which in the end landed him in Banstead hospital where he received ECT treatment, just like in the film "One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest". Many years later I was working with the producer Dr. Jonathan Miller on "Madness", a mental health tv documentary series, when I saw the very first ECT experiments done in Italy using a frog and recording it on black and white film. The poor thing flew a meter into the air as they had not tranquilized the muscles. Shocking! I nearly cried my eyes out watching this whilst remembering the awful time I had in Banstead Hospital with a mad deluded man.

Once when I went to visit him there, he tried to seduce me in the grounds of the hospital. Often, he would make a big fuss saying he would ask his other women or wives if they would give approval and allow me into his harem! I now have an idea that he was a real misogynist, a women hater, and had a huge, inflated ego based on nothing.

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He did, however, have a friend in Cornwall we went to visit, Lord Peregrine Elliot, a young aristocrat whose pedigree went back a long way, apparently a forefather was imprisoned in the Tower of London in the 1200's. During the train journey John was manically taking notes, as if to keep himself sane, and arriving at Plymouth station we were awaited by the chauffeur and driven through the beautiful Cornish countryside arriving at the stately home, Port Eliot, which had its own ancient church in the grounds next to it.

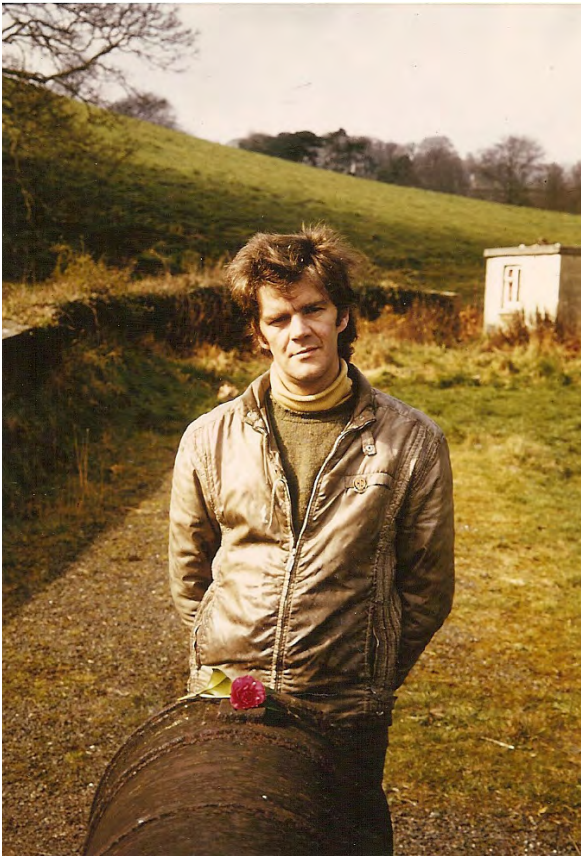
At the time I was not to know that it became a much-loved home for several years whilst I was Peregrine's mate, mistress, friend, or lover, whatever one wants to call it. He and his wife had lived separate lives for many years, she in their house in Notting Hill, London, whilst he stayed in Cornwall managing the estate.

I think he felt quite lonely, and it seems such a coincidence that I had been present at his wedding during the 60's at Herstmonceux Castle, with Ron and the Eyres, washing their numerous champagne glasses.

During that first stay with Peregrine John had hit me for some reason. I cannot remember if we had an argument, but I told Peregrine about this who was quite shocked. Also, that I had solemnly promised myself that after my father had put his fist into my lip, I would never ever allow anyone to hit me again. I was furious and it ended our already fragile relationship, but John would not accept it. Back at home in Gordon Place he'd come and hammer at my door, repeatedly ringing the doorbell, and demanding to be let in. It seems strange now that the people in the pub across the road never intervened or even called the police. Was it the old British stiff upper lip? Fortunately, my Dutch friend Pascale was over for Christmas, and she became like a TV and music disc jockey cutting out the sound of his urgent doorbell ringing and banging by playing extremely loud music.

1973
John Fenton





Peregrine Eliot

Peregrine kept in touch with me inviting me down to Cornwall. After a pleasant train journey along the coast, he himself (this time not the chauffeur) picked me up from Plymouth station. Often, we would first go to the little harbour of Loo for tea with scones and the thick Cornish clotted cream. Accompanying him on trout tickling trips in a stream on his land, he'd put on his tight-fitting wetsuit, (oh that beautiful lean body of his!) got into the water, tickled the trout under its belly and once it became hypnotized quickly swept it up where it landed on the grass.

He often came to see me in London when we'd go out for dinner in "Alexandra", a members-only restaurant and I admit I felt a bit flattered dining out with a lord.

On his estate he always casually dressed in jeans and a jumper, and he drove an old Citroen, the "snoek" as it called in Holland, or pike because of its elongated bonnet. Sometimes he gave a lift to hitchhikers who became a bit suspicious because of the chaos inside not realising they were sitting next to a lord who owned almost a quarter of Cornwall. This he used to find quite funny, but he was never showy. When you are on top of the pile there is no need to.

With his friends we went on a picnic once on the wild moors and often I would potter on my own in the grounds deadheading the rhododendrons around the pond with the lovely black dog always accompanying me. Meantime he was busy managing the estate and working in his own bookbinding and printing press, called the Elephant press, using handmade vellum paper and old methods of printing and binding, selling the books as limited editions by subscription only. Lovely John, the butler, with his round smiling ruddy face, would wake us in the morning and draw the curtains: "Good morning my Lord", he'd say as the two of us still laid cosily side by side. Joan, the housekeeper had our breakfast ready in the breakfast room, where a small Rembrandt was hanging on the wall. Apparently when he used to have bad rows with his wife the plates thrown at him were a near miss of the Rembrandt. Imagine!

Anyway, one of the many wonderful things about staying at Peregrine's stately home was that I was surrounded by beautiful antique furniture, ceramics, porcelain, silverware dating back hundreds of centuries which was very useful for me as I could write many of my essays for the Applied Arts course I was attending at the University of London, Extra-Mural Studies.

He was such an attractive and virile man and what a shame we did not communicate about what felt good for me during sex. Because my clitoris was not stimulated and being highly charged and aroused, I just had to go into the next-door bedroom to give myself a climax. Oh, ignorance!

I remember him once saying: we get on well, don't we? But then much later he said: "you'll never be happy", why I do not know or what the cause was. Unfortunately, we never discussed this further, nor did I ask him about it as I lived in my head and was not apt in discussing feelings.

I think it was the Dalai Lama who said that happiness is like a dew drop at the tip of a blade of grass, not lasting very long. Maybe it was because I was always working under pressure because I had started my job in publishing, and it seemed that everything had to be finished yesterday; the deadlines were dreadful, and on top of that I was studying hard for my university exams in my so-called spare time. Possibly this could have been the reason why I was not as happy or carefree as I might have been. Or was it because my colleague at Tom Stacey's Sue Monserrat had said to me: "you don't think he is going to marry you, do you?" Was I protecting myself unconsciously against disappointment? It was not until later in my life that I realized how a lady's role would not have suited me. Just imagine having to organize the annual hunting season, the partridges shoot and then the ball afterwards closing the event. Be it as it is, we remained friends and continued to meet well into 1975.

Port Eliot



This autobiography seems to be revolving around my affairs with the opposite sex, because these were dramatic and well-remembered. After leaving Ronnie in Israel, he wrote me that he was heartbroken because I was not going back to him; I then fell into my disastrous relationship with Richard but had some stress-free time after moving into Gordon Place, the relationships with Bobbie, Ken and Kurt were not so demanding and I had time to do my own photography and keeping my jobs down.

However, since 1968 I had looked for therapeutic professional help. The madness of John Fenton made this even more necessary. I had a mental breakdown and received support from Dr. Stevenson of St. Stephens hospital.

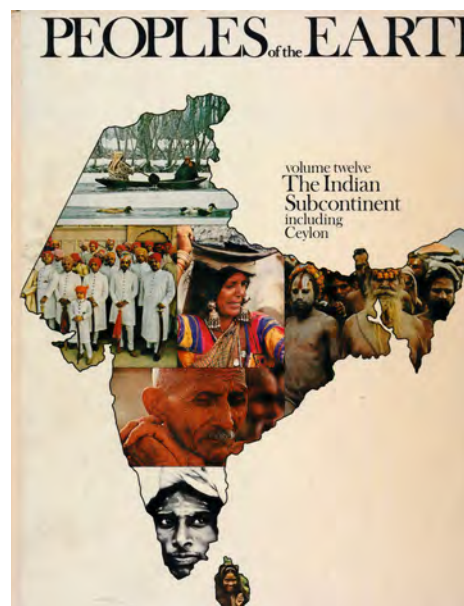
This is probably what Kurt meant in his letter telling me to watch out for psychological piranhas and to stay loose for a while, also commenting on my scattered brain letters. Scattered brain, so: no clear thinking or examination of my real feelings as far as relationships with men were concerned.

Compare this with Christine, who after talking with Joe for just two months after their meeting in the kibbutz in Israel during the six-day war decided they had much in common, were in tune with each other, got married and 54 years later are still happy in each other's company. What a warm nest will do for you!

It gives confidence and stability in one's emotional life.

But comparing with other people does not do anyone any good but I received a message after visiting the Tavistock Clinic when I am told to stop my self-destruction and Mandrax was prescribed for my sleeping and anxiety attacks. Did they spell it out to me what this self-destruction was in their view? May be because I let myself in with the wrong sort of men? There were a few 'healthy' men like Edgar around but know that having a glamorous appearance, which I had, does not necessarily make you less lonely on the inside. This is probably what Peregrine and other emotionally healthy men sensed.

1973
Peoples of
the Earth



16. 1972 PICTURE RESEARCH

In the meantime, on the 7th of January 1972, aged 32, my professional career as a picture researcher had started with the publisher Tom Stacey working on the 21-part series "Peoples of the World", a fully illustrated anthropological series, expensively produced, and printed by Mondadori in Italy which because of the high quality was quite unusual at the time. Most of the black and white photographs and colour transparencies I was to research on the spot with the individual Magnum photographers and through their agent: John Hillelson Agency in Fleet Street. Somehow, I never got on with him because he was much more of a prima donna than the photographers themselves!

I shall always remain grateful to Claire Waterson who came one day to do some picture research at Ron's photo library, which I had helped him to set up, and when I expressed interest in doing a job like hers, she took me under her wings, introduced me to Alexander Low, the Picture Director telling him we had worked together in the past. A wonderful white lie! Not bad for a county parsons' daughter.

Of course, by that time I had been steeped in photography, first with Ron travelling throughout Europe and Israel, then with Richard in his studio and darkroom and travelling on commission through Lebanon for the tourist board with our base in Beirut. Ron's library which he called the Ancient Art and Architecture Library was by this time quite extensive since his career as a professional photographer had really taken off whilst he was staying in Israel and after I left him in 1967.

Tom Stacey's office was in Maiden Lane, Covent Garden, which was then still the vegetable and flower market. It was my habit to come into the office early, leave my coat on the chair indicating I had come in but went out with my camera to photograph the porters with the tower high baskets balancing on top of their heads. I loved the whole buzzing atmosphere, the smell of the flowers and vegetables. Even now I can still evoke that lingering smell.

One of my specialist volumes was India and it was during this research that I fell in love with that country and would visit it later in my life at least three times when I had established an interest in the philosophy of Krishnamurti and undertaking a pilgrimage following in the footsteps of the Buddha). How wonderful it was to be responsible for such beautiful volumes exploring in depth the indigenous people of the world. Meeting the various Magnum photographers at their homes pouring over their lightboxes with my magnifying glass selecting the best transparencies was a real feast and made me a little envious of their lifestyle.

During this time, we had quite a few parties at Tom Stacey's and Claire was often the center of interest with her stories about Brazil where she and her husband Bill had been filming the local tribes. Interestingly during one of those parties I still remember a remark made by Barry Winkelman, an editor with the Times, I think who said to me: "You'll never be able to be close, will you"? or words to that effect. What my response was I can't remember except that at the time I had no idea what he was on about. Much later I wondered : was I carrying that smile, my 'stewardess smile' a term I read about recently in a book written by the American psychologist Martin Seligman: 'Genetics and Authentic Happiness'.

Seligman did a variety of tests on the various smiles of people's faces. He found that there were two kinds, the Duchenne one (named after its discoverer) which is the genuine one. This smile uses the muscles around the eyes, like crow's feet, and then there was the cosmetic Pan Am smile.

Trained psychologists looked at photographs of young college students to identify the different categories. The women who participated in the experiment (yes, only women were tested, it could just as well have been applied to men) were contacted again at later ages, i.e., at 43 and 52.

Could they predict from the earlier smiles what these women's married life turned out to be like? Without quoting all the results the outcome was that the genuinely smiling woman was more likely to be well-wed and happy. Possibly Barry could detect the Pan Am smile on my face which I imagine was quite artificial.

Given the circumstances it is not wholly surprising as I had to pretend to be an experienced picture researcher whilst I was completely new to the whole situation and had not worked with a team of colleagues before. Also, without realizing this at the time, lacking in self-knowledge, I was more of an introvert person rather than an extravert one. The general discussion around this issue of being introvert or extravert is ongoing in the newspaper now (Trouw November 2018). When I developed more confidence in my work, this smile was no longer needed to hide my general anxiety.

One of the other picture researchers, handsome Patricia had her stomach fat removed, so what does that say about superficiality? To me she looked perfectly alright, slim, and buoyant. However, it is also true to say that I had been unlucky with my love affairs. The sixties, generally praised to high heaven, were an extremely hard time for me and I hoped that the seventies would become more 'my scene'. Therefore, with nothing left to lose I decided to try the dating site Dateline in April 1975 and they came up with six compatible names for me on their computer data base, but I cannot recollect what happened with this initiative. I assume nothing because I was too busy.

At SOAS (School of Oriental and African studies) I was able to meet with Professor von Fuhrer-Haimendorf, who then became my India volume editor. He had done much fieldwork and possessed an enormous collection of black and white photographs of the various traditional tribes in India, like the Nagas and the Gonds. (I tried to find them myself in India later). All this was something for me to get my head into, as they say, and I found it exciting and hugely rewarding to work in this academic atmosphere.

Some of the individual photographers I met made a huge impression on me. I got to love and admire the photography of Marilyn Silverstone, her intimate portrayal of the people of Kashmir was special and so evocative that I had a wish to go there but never made it. John Bulmer, he of cider fame, lived in a converted church with his wife, a sculptor. His collection was enormous which made it hard to select the best Images.

There were so many other photographers I met, some of them in their countryside homes but the person I loved meeting best of all was Sue Arnold, such a strong yet gentle woman with a soft dark American accent. Her apartment was just off Oxford Street, which was light and large. She had some of the most wonderful black and white photographs I had seen. For instance, the pictures she took of Marilyn Monroe are justifiably famous.

Sometime later she asked me if I would like to work with her as her assistant as she was researching a project on South Africa. But I declined. Did I regret this decision I asked myself many years later? Who knows what would have happened if I had continued and gone with her to South Africa? However, I would not have developed my own career as an independent freelance researcher knowing I had nothing to fall back on, no inheritance, no savings, no parental home.

17. 1973 CANADA AND MORE RESEARCH

Unfortunately, Tom Stacey ran out of money and had to reduce most of the staff. The high printing costs and expensive quality of the books meant he had to carry on with just a skeleton number of staff.

I left on the 6th of June 1973 and much to my surprise found myself within a few days, in fact on the 9th of June, on a plane to Canada, reinventing myself as a photographer for the Daily Telegraph Magazine, carrying a proper hard camera box with varying cameras and lenses to prove it and flew to Toronto to spend some time with Henk and Gerry and meeting with my parents who happened to be there too. Laker Airways had started long haul flights at relatively cheap rates making it possible for people like my parents to travel to Canada by air instead of the long tedious boat journey. My return air ticket cost 45 pounds. I stayed in Canada for five weeks arriving back in London on the 15th of July.

Whilst in Toronto my brother developed the habit of asking me on a Sunday if I would come to church with him which I repeatedly refused. He remembered and told me later that when he and the other churchgoers he had invited for coffee back home the eyes of some of the men popped out because of the scant clothes I was wearing!

After a few days I took the Canadian Pacific Railway traveling from Toronto all the way across this vast beautiful country to Vancouver on the West Coast, a journey of 4 days. Amazing! I was 33 years old and just upped and went.

This train journey across Canada left a lasting impression on me. I could not afford a sleeping compartment but in the evening this big black train steward came round, clutching huge white pillows in his arms, giving me a big smile, and handing me two of them so that I could snuggle up against the window. Just before reaching the awesome Rocky Mountains the train stopped and the viewing deck with its all-round clear glass was especially cleaned so that we got clear views of the mountains. I sat there comfortably drinking a lager whilst the train took us further into the mountains. It is one of the greatest, longest railway journeys of around 5000 km and is certainly an unforgettable experience.

At Banff I got off the train to photograph the golf course and at night slept in a tent hearing the coyotes howling around me. When I arrived in Calgary I visited my cousin Henk, son of Aunt Bauk and Uncle Dirk, staying with him in his large mobile home. I cannot remember any conversation I had with him, we never were close in Holland and probably did not have much in common. Fortunately, I was able to attend the famous rodeo and walked around the local heritage sites memorizing the indigenous Indian tribes whose land it used to be.

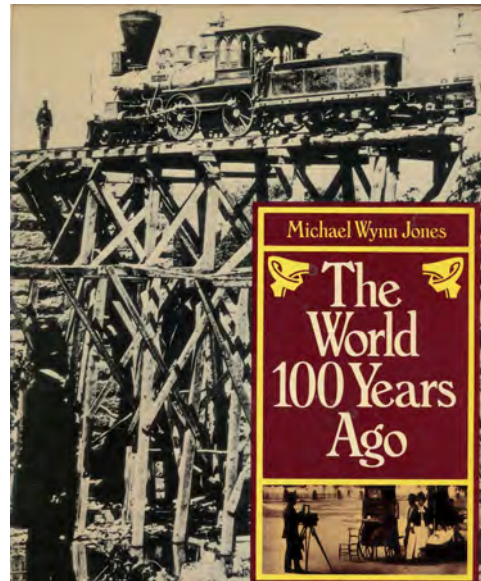
Amazingly a woman whose name I forget awaited my arrival at the train station in Vancouver, where she took me to a much needed, relaxing sauna. I liked the Bay of Vancouver, with its relaxed atmosphere and people.

After contacting Macmillan Bloedel Ltd, the big paper manufacturers, using my credential as a Daily Telegraph photographer, I was flown out by them in a tiny aircraft to one of the islands covered in vast forests. This is where I photographed the lumber jacking, the huge logs floating down the river, ending up on the lorries where they were taken to the paper making factory. It all became even more exciting when a huge fire broke out in the forest which I got close to, the men being much amused by having a woman around. The pictures ended up with Robert Harding Photo library and from time to time I received money because some publisher had used some of my photographs. Strangely enough I did not make any notes of this journey, but the memories are still clearly in my head.

Fortunately, back in London other projects came my way quite soon and I became a freelancer much in demand as I was conscientious, organised and most importantly of all: I delivered on time. Those were real assets and that is where my hard-working class discipline really paid off.

“The Plague of the Spanish Lady” was the title of a book written about the Spanish flu of 1918: the biggest pandemic in modern history. The author was Richard Collier, a charming gentleman. I met him and his wife in their country cottage and have some correspondence with them on file. The pandemic of influenza slaughtered worldwide more than twenty-one million people between October 1918 and January 1919. The book was published by Macmillan in November 1974 and inside Richard wrote: “with fond memories and her sterling research”.

1976
The World 100
years ago



In Belgium and the Netherlands, I had talked with some of the pandemic's survivors and was even able to interview my father! His name and story got mentioned in the book as he was able to relate how he was queuing for a cup of coffee or chocolate whilst in the army's Leeuwarden barracks. When he looked over his shoulder some men had fallen on the ground and just died. It was that quick. There were not enough coffins to cope with all the dead and people did not dare to go into the houses where the dead were laying. The doctors were helpless, there were no vaccines, even aspirin had not yet been discovered. I collated worldwide reports of this dreadful influenza epidemic.

For my research I frequently dived into the archives of Colindale Newspaper Library, searching for the reports through the newspapers and the ILN, Illustrated London News, always a great source. I got to know the Northern Line of the Underground very well, all the way up north to Colindale, the British Library newspaper collection. The huge trolleys delivered stacks of newspapers to my seat, and I was then endlessly turning their pages or alternatively having to read them on microfilms which I disliked. What a different atmosphere compared to doing research in the London Library situated in lovely St. James Square. It was founded in 1841 and felt like an old-fashioned gentleman's club, with huge leather armchairs, wooden floors, ancient clocks ticking the time away. One needed to be a member and could then peruse all the hundreds of shelves at one's own leisure. The most impressive place to do research was the British Library situated inside the British Museum. Only with a Readers ticket designated for a specialist researcher would allow you to enter the huge Round Reading Room, which was officially opened in 1857, it is hard to imagine that it had around 25 miles or 40 km of shelving! All the tables radiated out from the keyhole-shaped catalogue desk. One of the notable readers included Karl Marx who had moved to London in 1849, his seat can still be seen today.

Another special reader's ticket was needed for my research on other projects which enabled me to look through the old, illuminated manuscripts like the 9th century Book of Kells with its colourful decorations and gold leaved pages. White gloves were always needed to carefully turn the delicate pages. The library moved later to St. Pancras but fortunately the Reading Room remained preserved. It was always a pleasure to take the underground to Russell Square, quite a difference from the Northern Line and to walk around in leafy Bloomsbury where the "Bloomsbury Set" used to live, which included Virginia Woolf who later became one of my favourite authors. I was able to visit her house in the rural Sussex countryside where sadly she drowned herself in the nearby river having weighed herself down with stones.

Looking back on this whole period I am glad that the internet had not yet been invented, otherwise I would have just sat at home behind my computer doing most of my research and how tedious that would have been!

Various other research projects followed, too many to mention here; but on my CV it filled two pages. Among them was Headlines, designed by Dennis Hackett Consultants; The Shell Book of First written by Michael Wynne Jones, who turned out to be the husband of the well-known cookery writer and television presenter Delia Smith. I especially remember our lovely working lunches in the luxurious RAC club on Pall Mall. I mention him here because another book we worked on together got me my first television job.

18. 1974 MOVE TO BEAUCLERC ROAD

Meanwhile back at home in Gordon Place the situation changed and things were not happy because the landlady's daughter Leonie was having these crazy affairs. Probably on drugs she was threatened with knives by her men friends, some of them black and often there were many loud screams. Her parents, my landlords, lived on the Isle of Mull, off the coast of Scotland, unaware of what she was up to.

Their house in Kensington was old, not sound proofed. In my ground floor flat, there was an old bathtub with a rusty gas geyser, three- bar gas heating in the rooms kept going by inserting coins in the meter. It was very draughty, and the kitchen too was very basic.

It came as a complete surprise when I received a letter from the estate agent Marsh & Parsons giving me notice to quit because the house was going to be renovated and a grant was awarded by the Council. My reaction was one of absolute fury and this in fact saved my bacon.

I had been a good and careful tenant, occasionally having a glass of sherry with Leonie's parents in the basement flat when they were on a visit in London, talking about bird watching and about whatever project I was researching. Because they gave me notice to quit through an impersonal route via the estate agents, I became angry: I deserved better. It was just as well really because had they approached me personally and explained the situation, I would have complied with their request to move out and found another place.

Instead, I or Julia went to my Labour MP Douglas Mann who had his own solicitor's office and was recommended to Alan Edwards, one of his solicitors who fought my corner: As a tenant I had some protection, and after taking our case to the Rent Tribunal we wrote: I am not prepared to move! As the flat below me was demolished from under my feet, the water and electricity cut off, (the black guys came to me for water and using my loo) we nevertheless persevered. Finally, I received a sum of money which contributed to me getting a mortgage and buying my own flat.

On 30th October 1974 I bought the ground floor flat at Beauclerc Road, Hammersmith, for 12.100 pounds to be paid over 35 years. Fortunately, my accountant had been able to submit my three years account so that I could obtain the mortgage as my research career had been going well. At the age of 35 I was at last the owner of my first home. Tony had her adjoining flat in Agate Road, overlooking my little patio, and as she had worked in a hospital, she received tickets at a reduced rate or sometimes free enabling us to go to concerts and the theatre in the Albert Hall and the opera in The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

On the top floor lived Richard, a sort of genius who worked and taught mathematics at Imperial College, having studied at the MIT in USA. We often sat on his patio on the rooftop having lunch. The floor just above me was occupied by Imogen Bickford-Smith, a double barren name, her father being a famous barrister and she a model, with long blond hair, slim and trying to get into film, she managed to get a small part with John Cleese. Her bedroom was above mine, and it was noisy. Often, she and her photographer boyfriend went out at night to catch moths setting out bright lights to attract them.



Julia and Elly
in Patio Beauclerc
Road



Julia
in Patio Beauclerc
Road

Julia had the patio room next to the bathroom. It was a lovely modern flat, spacious, and warm in the winter. It was a sociable place with David and Joss Pearson now with their own publishing house, Gaia books, living in their big house nearby, I liked their daughters Cassandra and Tiffany too. The cosmopolitan Shepherd Bush market was within walking distance, bustling with many Arab customers, and nearby the pub in Shepherd Bush with a small theatre above it and Goldhawk Road tube station. The river Thames was not far off and Hammersmith Tube station, the Odeon and Lyric theatre. It was a good environment to live in.



1975
Harold MacMillan
Book

In 1975 the book “Past Masters” written by Harold Macmillan, a history about Politics and Politicians from 1906-1939 was published for which I researched all the photographs. Although I was able to photograph him standing by the river Thames with the Houses of Parliament in the background the photograph was not used on the jacket. Some of his sayings at the time I well remember for instance: “We never had it so good”! And: “We are selling the family silver”. This was during the time when Margaret Thatcher was privatising all the nationalised industries.

One of the reviews about the book was written by Enoch Powell and was quite gratifying for me: “How on earth did the unknown illustrator discover in Gwynedd Archives that marvellous photograph of Gladstone addressing a public meeting” and on and on he went about the marvel of the photographs. Indeed, how did I find all those wonderful photographs? If Enoch had looked on the inside cover of the book, he would have noticed the “Picture Research by Elly Beintema” credit. Since then, no newspaper or magazine praised me again for my researcher’s work. But what a shame it had to come from him, remembered as he was for his “River of Blood” speech about the so-called immigration threat. But credits in the books themselves were a lifeline because it got me work.

When “The World 100 years Ago” written by Michael Wynne Jones was published in 1976 it proved to be my steppingstone into the world of television. This book gave insight into how from the 1860s onwards the early pioneers of photography paved the way for a new skill: photo reportage. They went all the way to China, entered the forbidden mysteries of Japan, recorded daily life in Egypt, the American Civil War and so on, all the while carrying cumbersome equipment and the processing of film which had to be carried out in situ often in difficult circumstances. The acknowledgments section at the end of the book is large but it cannot encapsulate my intense wonder at those early photographers’ achievements and the faraway places of the world they portrayed.

What a privilege it was to be able to handle all those precious documents in, for instance, the library of the Victoria and Albert Museum, (the Victorian photos by Julia Margaret Cameron were a special favourite), the Royal Library with special permission of the Queen, the Royal Photographic Society and so on. All those doors were opened like magic to me for my research.



1976
Biking
in Scotland

Pascale and Koos
wedding





Steve
interviewing
Barry Sheene

Steve and Elly



19. STEVE AND MOTORBIKING

At last! I had made up my mind that from now on I would only get involved with professional men. Steve Harvey was such a professional young man, enthusiastic and working as a roving reporter with LBC, London Broadcasting Company. Meeting him in 1975 came about through a press lunch I went to with Bill Haylock and Mark Williams and Paul Sample of Bike Magazine, I had met Bill earlier via an introduction through Katherine Leloupe, one of Ron's assistants, staying with her a weekend in the small village of Elton.

Bill lived in Oundle near Peterborough and invited me to stay with him for a weekend. There he was, on a huge Moto Guzzi bike, waiting for me at the station and never having been on a motorbike I apparently leaned the wrong way when turning a bend, afraid we'd fall over, so he stopped the bike and explained I had to lean over with him. The bike was like a sitting room with huge seats and panniers, little did I know then that a year later I would ride around the circuit of Le Mans with a professional race rider. Enjoying it because it was so exhilarating.

Oundle was a little village, and his cottage was small but comfortable. From his bedroom we had a lovely view over the rolling countryside. It was the beginning of my love affair with the motor bike especially after I met Steve, whom I had lunch with on the 22nd of July 1975; it was the start of one of the happiest and carefree time of my life. About time too!!

He came to live with me in Beauclerc Road and brought with him his big fifties Wurlitzer jukebox; we often pressed the buttons so that one of his favourite bands 10CC could be heard.

On television he loved watching programmes featuring Dame Edna Everage ("Hello Possums") created by the Australian comedian Barry Humphries. Fortunately, he was also fond of my two little pussycats Biffy and Basher, and we often invited his colleagues for dinner. We got on well with Richard Vintner, who lived on the top floor of the house and used to have gathering with friends on his balcony. At last, an enjoyable social life!

A few months later Steve and I were the guests of BMW staying at a castle near the famous motor circuit of Le Mans for the Bol d'Or 1975. My Presse Pass stated that I was with the BBC. We rode up to Le Mans with his colleagues and friends, Nick, and Isabelle, who were also on an equally powerful BMW bike, and this is when I experienced the camaraderie of fellow bikers on the road, always giving each other a jovial wave. We interviewed Barry Sheene, the well-known British motorcycle racer and I especially enjoyed laying on my belly near the tarmac photographing the start of a race, loving the smell of the burning rubber tires and all the wheelies going up in the air.



Bol d'Or
BBC Press Pass



Bill Haylock and Ducati bike

Steve and I started to do many different stories and interviews; me taking the photographs. For the first time I was with professional men, who had no hang-ups, divorces, bankruptcies, whatever, liking their jobs, and so I felt free too.

Proudly I used to listen to Steve's reports on the radio, for instance whilst bringing the first wine back from Beaujolais, or during the first Concord trip flying to New York in 1976, always ending with: "This is Steve Harvey, LBC".

Bill Haylock tested various bikes for their performance for Bike Magazine and got me to model the newest bike clothes designed by a hip designer's team called Swanky Modes. I used to brag about all of this to Paul who worked in the Imperial War Museum film archive, because he also was a bike enthusiast.

During that summer Bill also joined Steve and me as we biked to Portmeirion, the famous subtropical garden on the Welsh coast also well known for its ceramics and afterwards camped at my derelict Welsh cottage. Unfortunately, we never went back and did not have time or money to do any restoration work. Such a pity really. One illusion less.

I liked Steve's parents, who lived near the river Thames, and it later appeared that one of Steve's secret dreams was to own a lock keeper cottage on one of those canals. His brother Harvey was a musician whose expertise was medieval instruments, and his sister Liz often joined our walking groups. For the first time in my life, I felt part of a family.

During the summer of 1975 Steve and I took the motorbike all the way to the South of France, to Carcassonne where we met with some of Steve's friends who had booked a canal boat which would take us across the length of the Canal du Midi. It was such fun all of us jumping off board, opening and closing the various locks, whilst buying the fresh produce from the lockkeepers.

The film Easy Rider played in my mind, imagining my blond hair streaming in the wind. But it was horrible weather, rain, and cold wind, and not having booked hotels there was no room for us anywhere. It was the height of summer, and everything was fully booked. Fortunately, the weather turned much better once we arrived in the South. I especially liked our return journey visiting all the beautiful cathedrals of Vézelay and Autun.

Carcassonne



A most memorable trip was when we put the BMW bike heavily loaded with our camping gear on the train to Scotland in the summer of 1976. Unfortunately, the weather was against us, and it often rained. But we were able to camp in glorious countryside with no one else around, we smoked kippers wrapped in baking foil on an open fire near Loch Lomond and afterwards took the ferry from Oban to the Isle of Iona where I marveled at the beautiful ancient Celtic crosses.

Mobile phones did not exist in those days so when we were near Lancaster, where Steve still had some friends from his university days, we phoned home in London and were told that my family from Holland had phoned with the message that my sister had died. She had been ill with cancer for a long time, and it was expected. At the time I thought at least I still have a chance to see and talk with my mother who also had terminal cancer. It now seems strange to me that Steve asked me not to tell his friends in Lancaster about my sister's death. Weird but I fell in with his request. Could it have been a warning about his emotional life?

Anyway, it meant I had to pretend that I was fine whilst the young woman of the house was ironing and listening to the Archers, the popular radio programme about farmers' families and their intrigues which hardly anyone in GB could stand to miss. It seemed a sort of addiction.

And so, next morning I left on my own taking the train back to London where I immediately phoned my brother Wim who told me that not my sister, but my mother had died. This turned out to be the saddest month of May I have ever experienced; in my mind I lost not one but two relatives. I went to see my mother in her coffin in a mortuary near the Vondelpark in Amsterdam. Tiny, my sister-in-law had offered to come with me, but as is usual with me I thought, I should or could do this on my own.

Looking at her peaceful face draped by her long grey hair I gently shook the coffin saying: "why did it have to be like this", bursting out in tears, often repeating the question. When the funeral took place, I walked besides my father and both of us knew that it would be my sister next to die. However, nothing was said about this; we never talked about it.

But once back in London I hoped I could still have some quality time with my father, perhaps taking him on a Rhine cruise but after my sister had finally died on the 19th of June that same year, he unexpectedly died too. His lungs stopped functioning, having inhaled toxic paint fumes all his life destroyed his lungs; he could hardly breathe. It meant three deaths in my family, all in one year, one after the other, and that is very tragic indeed.

Later that year Steve and I went to attend Pascale and Koos' wedding in Amsterdam when I presented them with two beautiful handblown art nouveau glass candlesticks. They were delighted and always treasured them. However, Steve told me soon afterwards that he had fallen in love with another girl. Maybe he could not cope with my emotions and had by then saved up enough money to buy himself a little house south of the river. Cold and emotionless as a fish he moved on.

Confiding in Derek and Sumiko Davies, my lovely friends and neighbours, and sometime later talked with his parents, expressing my anger at his cold fishlike, emotionless behaviour but what could they say?

At a somewhat later date Derek and Sumiko moved to Hong Kong to be nearer to Sumiko's family in Japan. Derek worked there for Cathay Pacific magazine and as Steve later developed his own company "Inflight Music" it was beneficial for both to stay in touch with each other.

But Steve and I had unfinished journalistic business to sort out, there were payments for interviews and photographs and so on and so we did stay in touch for a while.

After Steve and I split up Bill often came to visit me and it was great when I could hear his approach with the engine's deep roar of the latest Benelli, or Ducati he had to test for Bike Magazine and Which Bike.

When Bill was unable or did not have time to go to Ireland to test and compare two motorbikes, a BMW760 with a Yamaha760, I climbed on the back of one of the bikes with Colin Curwood, a photographer whom it turned out I quite fancied. It was a most amazing trip across some of the wildest parts of Ireland, as we were riding from the East to the West coast. Here I tasted the finest draught Guinness and the very strong poteen. No wonder a law in 1661 forbade the production of this strong stuff but the Irish do not care a hoot and continue to this day to illegally enjoy it. I had underestimated the strength of it and remember being sick in my helmet! Yak!

Many of the locals were musicians playing their instruments in tiny so-called pubs which looked like ordinary, rather bare living rooms with benches around the walls. Riding across the rugged and untamed landscape it all had a Wild West feel to it, car doors would be slung open, and lifts given to anyone making their way to the local pub.



Elly
Motorbike
Gear

Steve Elly Nick Isabelle





Steve and Bill at the Cottage

20. 1978 TELEVISION RESEARCH

My research credit in the book “The World 100 Years Ago” was spotted by a producer at Granada Television, Maxine Baker, who got in touch with me and after an interview with the Head of Features, Gus Macdonald I got the job as Picture Consultant to research the tv series for “Camera, a revealing history of Victorian photography”.

My contract was from the 2nd of February until the 15th of September 1978 at 100 pounds per week working from their office in Golden Square, Central London, in Soho and near Covent Garden, which was a superb location.

At first, I had great difficulty in understanding Gus’ heavy Scottish accent, as it is a difficult dialect to get used to. He and Maxine were old buddies and ardent socialists, both were brought up in working class environments, his from the Tyne shipyards, and hers from a coalmining family in Durham.

It is here that I was turned into a lifelong vegetarian frequenting “Cranks” restaurant in Marshall Street where the food was delicious, a counter displaying a variety of salads, different nut roasts, and the desserts were out of this world. In the entrance many leaflets were on display, and this informed me about the cruelty to animals, the harpooning of whales, and the force-feeding of turkeys at Christmas to get them ready for the market. There were many other examples of calves, chickens and so on. The alternative vegetarian food was a good ethical and tasty solution.

In one of the many craft stores in Covent Garden I found a potter whose vases were of a shape and colours so attractive that I bought one which to this day stands like a still life on my windowsill.

To work in the television industry, one had to be a member of the television union Equity and to become one was quite a difficult job. It was like a vicious circle: firstly, you had to have worked in television to become a member, but secondly, you could not become a member unless you had worked in tv. A crazy regulation and a vicious circle. Fortunately, it helped that I already had a NUJ (National Union of Journalist) card and had been a member for several years.

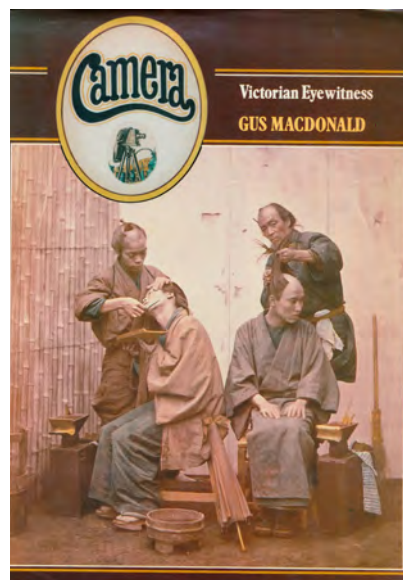
Maxine was a person who needed to wield her power, but after a while we became quite pally. I especially remember the nearby Members Club which enabled us to drink after the lunch closing time. Usually, one was thrown out of pubs, the landlord ringing a large copper bell shouting: “time, ladies and gentlemen”, sometimes in the evenings joining with the fun question: “don’t you have second homes to go to?”. But how we continued to work after our afternoon drinks in the club, lord knows.

I especially remember visiting our colleague Philip Flower late one night, Maxine and I being very drunk, ringing the doorbell of his basement flat in Goldhawk Road, but he handled us quite well and was slightly bemused. She lived not too far away in a red brick block of flats near Hammersmith Bridge overlooking the river Thames where we occasionally had our meetings.

My work was not very different from the research I had done for “the World 100 years ago” except that I was able to travel more, for instance to Glasgow in Scotland to search in the local archive for the photographs taken in 1868 by Thomas Annan. These showed the horrendously overcrowded slums where cholera had killed hundreds of its inhabitants. The camera had become a wielding power to expose the filth, misery, and disease in which working people had to live which stimulated the clearance of these tenements, replacing them with better housing conditions. Whilst in Glasgow I took the opportunity to feast my eyes on Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s magnificent Glasgow School of Art. I always loved Art Nouveau and after Annan’s photographs the beauty of these designs were like a sight for sore eyes. It was great also to be allowed into Windsor Castle to search for the Victorian photographs in the Royal Archives, this felt quite special and there were countless other archives I was able to explore.

In Dean Street, Soho, (where else? at the time everything was happening here) I often had to meet up with our Rostrum camera man, Ken Morse, a specialist operator who was to make moving images of still photographs. He later took my example, as did quite a few others, and like me became a freelancer.

The book accompanying the On Camera series was published in 1979. On the inside cover Gus wrote: “To Elly with best wishes and much thanks, Gus”. He later was to become the Head of Scottish Television, a powerful position.



During my work with Granada Television, I was engaged in and was sexually very active with various relationships, how I managed it all, baffles me, but first there was my relationship with Robbie, then followed by Charles, but I shall write about them in a later chapter. I also had a bit of a fling with Tony Salmon, a producer with the BBC who lived nearby on the other side of Goldhawk Road and with whom I went for a recce for the RAC rally somewhere up North which he was to film later for a sports programme. To me he seemed to be a bit of a mother's boy, always phoning her when he got an opportunity, but people around me were impressed: A BBC producer! As if I was going up in the world because producers were higher up the ladder than researchers. But I did not want their job, as they often were more deskbound, had to worry about the costs, the budget, and so on. Whereas I liked my freedom and independence and being my own boss about which Jim Ballantyne wrote in an interview with me. He was head of information of the British Universities Film and Video Council in Greek Street, Soho; we became quite pally and used to meet for a drink after office hours in the Blue Angel pub near his office.



Film Still Dietrich



Film Still Marilyn
Monroe



Bill and Claire
Leimbach

It was through Bill and Claire Leimbach that I had met Sumiko and Derek Davies who had a large house in Hammersmith Grove just around the corner from me. Derek and I often had pints of Guinness in the pub's little courtyard in the Grove. He worked for the BBC World News, and this is how I met one of his colleagues, it seemed time for yet another affair. She was an elegant Japanese woman, an illustrator of children books with many beautiful drawings. We became good friends.

Compared to us Bill and Claire were quite an exotic pair. As they had been filming in Brazil, they brought back some of this culture. At one of their yearly parties this manifested itself in their costumes made of beads and shells with feathered headdresses. Really magnificent. Whilst she was earning money as a picture researcher, he was studying at the London Film School. They asked me to feature in a film for his final exam which was about the motor car and its development throughout the various decades. I was made up to look like Marlene Dietrich and seated in a car from the thirties, then came Marilyn Monroe driving a fifties car and lastly, I was made to look like Brigitte Bardot riding on a bicycle with in the background a cars scrap yard. Claire was the one who organized everything, the makeup, different period costumes and with her persuasive power was able to borrow the different vintage cars from their collectors. At the time I could not drive so when the car had rolled down the lane, an assistant had to run and drive the car back again.

Afterwards she made a nice book of the film with the various period photos. I think she must have a bit sour to say the least when Bill decided to leave her telling me some time later that he felt unable to relax with her. He was a lovely laid-back Californian with an easy gentle smile and she an energetic English pastor's daughter, perhaps always organizing too much? In the end it did not click between them any longer, even though by now they had two wonderful little blond-haired daughters. They had emigrated to Australia to enter the film industry there and lived separate lives.

Pub with Derek and
Sumiko



21. GAIA BOOKS AND ROBBIE

During my research projects with Macmillan publishing, I met Joss Pearson there. She worked as an editor and seemed unhappy working there or possibly felt out of place. As I was by this time a freelancer with numerous connections, which goes with the job, I recommended her to apply to become an editor with Dorling Kindersley, independent publishers, less conservative and producing books more to her liking. We were able to build up a solid longstanding relationship working on many books together and becoming good friends in the process.

After several years, she and her husband David started their own publishing company Gaia, the subject of the books being close to our hearts, for instance: *An Atlas of Planet Management*, with the well-known Dr. Norman Myers, also *Green Inheritance*, written by Anthony Huxley in consultation with the World Wildlife Fund, and *The Natural Garden Book*, by Peter Harper, about gardening in harmony with nature.

It was my task to find the lavish illustrations, consisting of drawings, photographs, paintings and so on.



Joss and David
Pearson and kids
and Robbie

But the start of our collaboration was with Dorling Kindersley and the many books on photography which by this time had become my specialist subject. In collaboration with Michael Langford, lecturer at Royal Academy of Art and the British photographer John Hedgecoe, also called 'the man who taught the world to photograph', we started a series of self-help books on photography. For instance: *the Book of Colour Photography*, a practical guide showing how to achieve the best possible pictures, and *The Book of Special Effects Photography*, using striking images by top photographers. I was able to meet these creative people, searching their photo archives and portfolios for the best images, travelling to their photographic and designers' studios.



Dick de Moei
and Parakeet

In Holland I met the photographer and collector Willem Diepraam, who tragically lost his family in the Tenerife air crash of 1977. His black and white photos, especially the ones he took in Suriname, one of the Dutch Caribbean islands, are justly famous. With my friend Rita I went to see him at his studio located on the Oudezijds Voorburgwal.

At around this time, the most artistic and glossy magazine in Holland was Avenue magazine. Meeting the editor, Dick de Moei, we undertook many photographic sessions together, meeting up in London whenever he had to be there for business. Of course, I then stayed with him in his hotel, and we had some good times together, visiting Covent Garden; being photographed with the parakeet on my shoulder; in the Ritz Hotel restaurant for tea; eating our cucumber sandwiches which he told me I ate far too quickly, whilst we listened to the tinkling of the piano music in this most elegant of settings. Often, we went to Arti et Amicitiae, which is the oldest visual artist society in the Netherlands situated on the Rokin, in central Amsterdam. It was all quite a whirlwind, and enjoyable.

It was decided that I should go to Photokina which is the largest bookfair held once a year in Frankfurt, and a must for every publisher and researcher. Although Joss and the other people of Gaia had booked their hotels, none was booked for me as it was a last-minute decision that I should go. I got a lift with Dick to Frankfurt, slept with him in his hotel until I had to make way for the Polaroid director's wife and was then without a place to sleep. Just for the record this was on the 10th of September 1980.

This is so thrilling! I just searched in my iPad, and it appears that my brain still functions well because I remembered the name: Fritz Gruber, and it seems that there is a Platz in Cologne named after him! His Photo Museum with a photographic archive span over 140 years and it was one of the many reasons for my being at the Bookfair. Also mentioned in the article was Bettina, born in 1961, who is probably the daughter of 'fotograaf legende' Bettina, and it was she who kindly offered me a place to sleep at her home. She was not yet a legend at the time.

It was a very busy, stuffy, hugely frantic time during this large Fair; making my contacts during the day, in the evenings I socialized and drank quite a lot, in the process of which I lost one of my contact lenses and also forgot where I had put my camera. But fortunately this had a wonderful outcome because a few weeks later my doorbell in London rang and this redhaired slender woman handed me my camera which I had actually left behind at Bettina's house! Jill was her name and it turned out we were of the same age, got on like a house on fire and remain friends till this day. She and her husband Ade used to live in London but later moved to a house in Derby, which made meetings more difficult.



1977-78
Robbie Fox

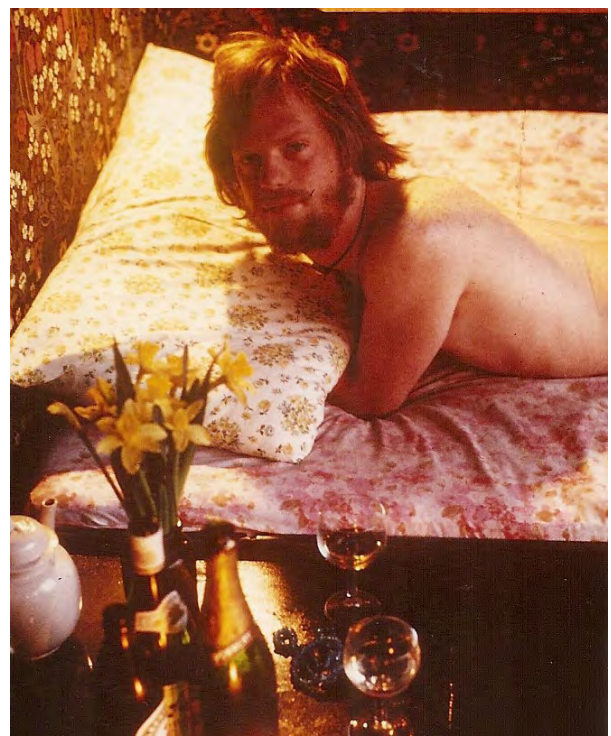
And so, to one of my love affairs during this period. Whilst researching the Special Effects Photography book for Dorling Kindersley I was often in the heart of London, around Soho and Covent Garden, where many artists and designers had their studios and this is how I met one of their representatives, the young American, Robbie Fox. Although based in Amsterdam his work would often take him to London. He was young, energetic and had a body, I hate to say it. to die for and yes, we fell in love.

I went to see him in Amsterdam; our first meeting took place in the famous American Hotel on the Leidseplein with its fabulous Art Deco interior. In Covent Garden we had our favourite pub called the "Brahms and Liszt" which is Cockney rhyming slang for: getting pissed. Cockney is the language of the London working classes and you must be born within the sound of the Bow Bells of the church, St. Mary-le-Bow, and people are proud of it.



1977-78
Robbie Fox
and Elly

And I don't know how he managed it, but we once stayed overnight in a spacious room of the expensive Pulitzer hotel on the Prinsengracht, one of the pretty canals in Amsterdam. We smoked quite a bit of marihuana there, and this was the first time I smoked again since living with Ken. A few months later we looked after the plants and cats belonging to one of his clients. It meant living in a huge apartment/studio near hotel l'Europe overlooking the wide Amstel River. We gave quite a few small parties there for our friends and it was a lovely way for me to get to know Amsterdam better. During our holiday on the island of Texel we stayed in Hotel California, which is also the title song of the Eagles album we were so fond of, all of it was hugely relaxing and fun. My friend Mary with whom I regularly stayed whilst in Amsterdam always giggled when she told me many years later how Robbie and I used to go upstairs to quickly make love once more before I needed to depart again for London. Funny, I had not remembered this. It is true, we liked our sex, and this is putting it mildly. My friends Koos and Pascale came to Aldeburgh with us where we rented and shared a house. I thought they were a bit penny pinching about splitting the costs and so on. They still lived in their Bussum house where we visited them a few times, moving to an apartment in the celebrated "Wolkenkrabber" in Amsterdam sometime later.



Robbie Fox
1977-78
Prins Hotel

Robbie's father lived in a large apartment in the Amsterdam district called the Jordaan, once the working class area but now much gentrified, with his two sons, Henry and Robbie. He seemed to be a big name in advertising or PR, but I never got to the bottom of it. His female partner whose name I cannot remember was a descendant from a well-known cacao family. The only occasion we all came together was for Christmas dinner and I remember feeling somewhat awkward: may be because I felt I was a bit too old for Robbie? This dinner was in December 1977 so at the time I was 36 years, was he 10 years younger? I never got to ask.

The elder brother Henry came on a visit to London but gradually he became quite a pain in the butt and Robbie now started to complain about him almost continuously. It was enough for me to slowly turn off our affair which had by now lasted just one year. The actual decision was made when Derek and Sumiko invited me over to their house for drinks or dinner where I met Charles, one of his colleagues at the BBC World Service. It was extremely hard to have to tell Robbie and to upset him so badly. It was the only time I dumped a man and feel ashamed to say it because Robbie did not deserve it.

And so, yes, here we go again, yet another relationship started in August 1978. Charles Nicholl was tall, elegant, and black, often dressed like a cricket player with a white scarf draped around his neck. Speaking with a soft languid velvetlike voice and a beautiful BBC accent, being educated at Cambridge because his father was an important person working for the United Nations in New York, descending originally from a wealthy Sierra Leone family. His mother seemed highly dynamic and held a high position with UNICEF; her roots were in the Caribbean, the island of Trinidad. Therefore, Charles' background was of a highly political and rich family.

Whereas with Robbie it was all light, fun and bright, with Charles it was like the man himself black and moody, but I loved his beautiful ebony brown sleek body, it was almost like a moving sculpture. During the weekends in his flat we used to drink Bloody Mary's early in the morning sending his brother Olu out to get some of the shopping, then he would order a car to take us to a club, we smoked dope and looked at tv films until early morning hours.

1978-79
Charles Nicholls 12
Beauclerc Road



At the time I was still working at Granada Television, what my colleagues thought of my affairs I can't recall but how I kept all these balls up in the air is now beyond me. Somehow, I made sure that my work never suffered, but at what cost I kept up being a professional, hard working woman because this turned later in a severe depression.

Charles once confided in me that his BBC colleagues had told him that he had 'no spine'. Although denying it at first, afterwards I realized that this was only too true. He was strongly under his family's influence and nearly fainted with what I think now was fear when his mother came to visit him in London. Possibly she had heard about me from his brother Olu and came to check it out.

She later called him back to New York so he could study at Columbia University and keep an eye on him at the same time. She obviously did not like what she saw during her visit to London: his association with me, a nearly 40-year-old woman from such an indifferent background. Whereas his previous relationship was with Suzie Parker, daughter of Sir Peter Parker, Chairman of the British Rail Board and, of course, much more to her liking!

Once Charles and I were allowed to stay in the Parker's house, whilst they were away. Situated near Minster Lovell, set in beautiful extensive grounds and the rolling Cotswold countryside, apparently, he felt her presence so much that it became very painful for me to be there. A photograph of me shows how forlorn and miserable I looked sitting on the garden bench. How I now wish that I should have said there and then: OK! Goodbye, I don't like it here. You can think about her as much as you like. I'm off! But, unfortunately, I did not.

Unknown to him he had a beautiful half-sister, extended families are quite common in those cultures. When meeting her for the first time, gorgeous looking Ayo, there was straightaway a sphere of sensuality around them. I can imagine that he fancied her. He kept making promises to me, telling me time and again that I was his everything and wishing me to come with him to "his island" in the West-Indies as he boasted to me and my friends, especially Dick and Christie. His island turned out to be Trinidad!

Upon his arrival in New York in December 1978, he kept insisting during telephone conversations that I should come. Asking him several times if he was sure I at last decided to go and meet him in Trinidad; for me a promise is a promise. He was not there to welcome me; one of his relatives came to pick me up and I was to stay with his mother's sister in Trinidad. It turned out that her husband had disappeared in a small airplane crash just off the coast of Venezuela, but neither the wreckage nor the body was ever found. So, it was not a fun family to be with specially at their first Christmas without him.

Fortunately for me, a week or so later my friends Dick and Christie Lawson turned up with their daughter Viva. Christie was heavily pregnant with their second child, and we went to stay on the beautiful island, Tobago. We went to the local horseraces, enjoyed the sea and warm sunshine. I photographed the bougainvillea climbing up against the wooden trellises of the white colonial-style houses. We did have some fun together and made our stay pleasurable. All of Charles' ideas turned out to be sheer fantasy. He suffered from a feeling of grandeur, having invited Derek and Sumiko with their two children and Dick and Christie with their little daughter Viva and me to 'his island and house' in Trinidad.

But we did not know that he had not been there since he was ten years old his brother Olu told me later!!

Dick and Christine and Elly in Trinidad



He never turned up in Trinidad nor did he have the decency to telephone. Not once, leaving me to my own devices living with an unknown family. They must also have thought it weird to be lumbered with a strange woman in their house. When finally, I met up with him in New York and having lunch in his family's apartment, jetlagged and with culture-shock, I got a bit drunk. I had to keep a brave face on it all and possibly challenging his father's authority, I was thrown out of the flat.

Spineless Charles had no reaction at all but fortunately I could stay with Nicky, the onetime manager of Pink Floyd, who had moved from London to New York. Later Charles' mother had the nerve to ask me for the return of some money she had lent me, which I refused to pay. Together with my friend Jerry, Sandy's husband, we wrote a letter back saying that her son had deceived not only me but my friends also. It was now a matter between her and her son. I never heard from any of them again. And so, another episode and affair came to an end.



Elly in Trinidad

On the surface of things my life was flourishing, my career went extremely well, although the pressure of work was demanding. I was living in a nice flat with friends not too far away, but my emotional, relational life with men was a shambles and far from satisfying. As I was approaching the age of 40, I had not experienced an enduring intimate relationship. It is also possible that the deaths of both my parents and sister together with the unexpected ending of my relationship with Steve in 1976 were never properly processed. The following relationships with both Robbie and Charles were turbulent as well. Having an attractive energetic personality, a beautiful looking body and liking sex my main disadvantage was that I lacked experience in expressing my needs. At my parental home we did not have any real communication and I never learned how to have an open conversation about my feelings or indeed to trust and listen to them.

All these emotions started to take its toll and resulted in depressive feelings for which I sought professional help hoping to come to terms with my relational life. Once before I had tried this during the sixties, when the analyst had stated that I needed some consistent support due to my difficult upbringing.

I now arranged an appointment on the 17th of August 1978 with Dr. Jamieson of my local Charing Cross Hospital, who after several consultations referred me to a psychoanalyst: Dr. Lanman in Belsize Park. Unfortunately, after a few sessions he moved away from London but recommended me to Dr. Temple in Tufnell Park whom I consequently saw over a period of many years from 1980 onwards. He looked a bit like Karl Marx, or indeed like Freud, with his nice beard and kind eyes. It used to be quite a slog getting to his house where he had his practice travelling all the way on the Northern Line, having to change at crowded Leicester Square tube station.

22. UNIVERSITY AND TRIP TO INDIA

As I had never had the opportunity to study at university level ('you're going to get married anyway', my mother told me) I enrolled for the four- year Extra Mural London University Visual Arts Course. The studying and writing of essays I had to do in my so called 'spare' time, which was quite hard really, but I wanted to prove to myself that I was university fodder, so to say. In this I was much encouraged by my friend, Anne Ward. She had been at Leeds university with Barbara, Ron's sister and this is how I got to know her. The course I most enjoyed was the year on sculpture taught by Eric Stanford who himself was a sculptor so he lectured us with heart and soul. He was a bubbly sort of person with an affectionous laugh, inviting us on one occasion to his house and studio in Reading where he lived with his wife and a couple of adopted black children.

Our class went around the countryside with him visiting local churches like Kilpeck's Romanesque church with its incredible carvings around the lintels and in the tympanum, the building dating from around 1140. Such beauty! Often after class we took ourselves to the local pub in Queen Square to down a pint of draft Guinness. He was indeed an inspirational man. It was his enthusiasm and my discovery of these medieval master sculptors which made me want to visit the 12th century cathedrals of Autun and Vezelay in Burgundy, the South of France with their Romanesque figures masterly sculpted by Gislebertus around the doorways and in the tympanums. The opportunity arose when motorbiking with Steve through France on our way to Carcassonne and the Canal du Midi. He did not seem to be interested in art and must have silently sighed: another tympanum, another doorway! What a shame he could not share my enthusiasm.

After 5 years of evening studies and writing essays I finally received my Diploma in the Visual Arts in 1981. I had failed the Applied Arts examination and had to retake the whole year and the final exam which I had passed. So, I had embarked on this course in 1976. It is so amazing that I took the time and perseverance to bring the studies to a completion.

The Director of the Department of Extra Mural Studies of London University, Brian Groombridge, handed my Diploma to me during a wonderful ceremony. It filled me with huge satisfaction, I felt proud and although difficult and time consuming, the various subjects studied and explored have given me an in-depth knowledge of the arts and social life of the different centuries. Brian and I stayed in touch afterwards intending to start a project with African students, but it did not materialize. Anne Ward reminded me later that one of the lecturers thought that she had written a particular essay for me, because it was that good. Of course, she denied this as I had done all the essays myself!



Visual Arts Class
London University

During this Visual Arts study course, I got into conversation with one of my fellow-students, Annie Overstall. She told me about EST, the Werner Erhard Training programme, an outgrowth of the Human Potential Movement of the 60's and 70's. Consequently, I attended the rigorous intensive weekend workshops. Some 200 people participated, we were under strict orders: wearing watches was forbidden, so was going to the bathroom except during the allotted breaks. There was to be no talking amongst the participants whilst a sort of Socratic interrogation took place.... relying on the power of the shared cathartic experience that Aristotle had observed. We were told we were perfect the way we were and had to show with our hands that "we got it". Did I feel perfect? Of course not! but I did learn a rather direct way of communication in the trend of: this is how it is, which was not always tactful. It appeared that for many people it was a mind changer, old patterns of the past were shown for what they were and consequently abandoned. Rather a cathartic process I think and probably not an enduring one. Anyway, my past was too deeply buried and protected.

But, and more importantly, Annie also talked about Brockwood Park where she went every year with her husband Peter, who was a GP, and friend Sue Lapidus, the Jewish princess as she used to call herself, to listen to the Indian philosopher, Krishnamurti. Intrigued, I wanted to investigate for myself and in August 1979 I rode on my motorbike, a Honda 125 cc. on the motorway in the direction of Winchester finally reaching the country lanes in Hampshire and my destination: the school grounds of Brockwood Park. As promised, they had set up a small tent for me next to their larger one; in the evenings there were huge campfires with people quietly chatting whilst a young man, Dave Arnott played his bongos which I found an irritating and penetrating sound. I was to meet him again in London later when he talked with much enthusiasm about a female friend of his who lived in the Auroville community in South India.

The talks were given in a huge marquee erected in the extensive school grounds, and we queued as early as possible to get a good front seat. Krishnamurti was a remarkable man, his aura of quietness as he walked from the school to the grounds in his neat western suit made a big impression on me. Some years later working in the archives of the K Study Centre I read that his shirts came from a fashionable Jermyn Street shop, also about the orders for his homeopathic medicines and his handmade shoes. He was quite particular about his appearance. I read many other private things too but won't divulge them.

During the talks everything he said I absorbed. At the time I completely understood what he was saying and it all made sense yet afterwards could never put my finger on what he had meant or the main issue he had been addressing. The books I later bought made up for that.

The food for all the hundreds of people attending the talks was cooked in huge cauldrons. It was such an inspiring event, and I was so impressed that I decided to listen to him in India, in his own native cultural environment. It was also a treat for my 40th birthday.

Before Annie got married, she was an air stewardess, this is how Peter and she met, and so was her friend Sue, both working with Pam Air. She had been to India before and told me that she would be going again that year.

In Adyar, a place just outside Madras as it was then called, now known as Chennai in Tamil Nadu, the usual crowd of his followers would be gathered so it felt reassuring that I would not be on my own upon my arrival there.



1979-80
India
Krishnamurti

I left on the 18th of December 1979 flying with Gulf Air to Bombay. From the air I already could smell the city's fumes and dust and then flew onwards to Madras. The Theosophical Society International Headquarters with its large gardens are based in Adyar, where K was first "discovered" by Leadbeater. Nearby on the outskirts of Chennai is the Krishnamurti Study Centre named Vasanta Vihar, a modern villa built for him in the early thirties. Here, in the extended grounds of the Centre famous Indian classical dancers and musicians were invited to perform for K, as we used to call him abbreviating his name. We listened and watched whilst sitting amongst the various lotus ponds dotted around the gardens. Used as I was to see K in western style suits, looking at him dressed in a colourful dhoti and being surrounded by his Indian admirers provided the atmosphere for which I had come to India. With some of K's regular and yearly followers who therefore knew the place well I was able to attend some classical Indian music concerts in the Madras Music Academy. I was amused by the relaxed atmosphere as people just walked in and out at their leisure during the performance.

1979-80
India
Elly, Tibor and Sue



After Sue arrived, I met up with some other people she knew from previous years. We also met a tall and handsome Australian, named Tibor and both of us were attracted to him. After a while Sue withdrew 'from the competition' knowing she had to get back to work in London whereas I was staying to travel further. Tibor used to talk sometime about the issue of pain but did not get to the bottom of it. It seems that I had asked for an interview with K, and had kept him waiting, because someone said afterwards: "where were you"? What in heavens 'name possessed me then? Or did I not know what to ask him anyway? It now seems a regrettable lost opportunity.



Elly in the arms
of Tibor

Bicycling to the extended gardens with its ancient trees of the Theosophical Society I used to stop at one of the many tea stalls where the seller used to pour the tea from a great height so that it was nice and frothy. Or I bought a delicious lassi, comparable to a milkshake at the roadside cafes.

After the K talks were finished, I boarded the bus with Tibor for Pondicherry, the French enclave where we wanted to visit the nearby Sri Aurobindo ashram and Auroville, the experimental township founded in 1968 by "the Mother", her purpose being to realize human unity. It had attracted many young people and became a sort of utopia where people could deepen their spirituality. At the time I knew very little about these places but on later visits I received more in-depth knowledge, for instance when visiting the tomb of "the Mother" which was bedecked with a blanket of flowers and talking with some of the people.

After spending some time here Tibor and I parted. During my anthropological research and meeting with Professor Fuhrer- Haimendorf I had come across the Naga and Toda tribes and so in search of them I took the crowded bus to the high and rugged Nilgiri mountains in western Tamil Nadu. I found the Toda tribe and was welcomed to stay in their huts, spending the nights sleeping on a wide shelf with the women. Specially the rhythmical dancing around the warming fires at night became a lifelong enjoyable memory. In a photograph I am sitting amongst the women looking so western and big compared to their agile figures.

1979-80
India
Elly with Hill Tribe



In Ootacamund, the ever so British hill station also called Snooty Ooty, I found accommodation and often went to the cinema in the evenings enjoying the hilarious Bollywood films. Sitting behind the local women in whose long hair sprigs of jasmine were woven, the sweet perfume filled the air.

The British librarian, sporting a well-trimmed Jimmy Edwards moustache, had arranged for me to stay in a wild nature reserve where the local people came to wash their elephants. Wire gauze covering the windows prevented the monkeys to get their long arms into my room pinching whatever they could find, and I was dumbstruck at their ability to fly at such high speed through the trees! It caused me much distress when back in Amsterdam I visited Artis, the local zoo to see these poor creatures so sad and captivated in small spaces. Fortunately, these days zoos provide more free space enabling them to swing about in trees and run around more freely.

“Jimmy” as I will call him also arranged an elephant ride in a nature resort and with a few people we sat on top of one in a basket, but the driver got far too close to the wild elephants with their young. To protect them they sent an aunt elephant after us, who came running towards us trumpeting loudly, trunk up in the air, whereupon our driver called out “pat, pat, pat”, and with his feet behind our elephant’s ears drove him on to run at a higher speed. Fortunately, there was a ditch nearby we went into before the aunt elephant could bump into us returning to her herd. Our driver got a telling off afterwards because he had gone much too close to the wild herd. Since then, I have never seen such green faces because we were so scared!!

After a few weeks in Ooty I travelled to Cochin, “Queen of the Arabic Sea” in Kerala, on the East Coast and stayed in ballroom sized rooms in a hotel, which was previously a small palace belonging to a Maharadja. Walking to the pier of the hotel I looked out over the azure blue sea and was able to drink openly a cool beer at leisure. It tasted especially delicious because I had not been able to drink any for so many weeks. In Tamil Nadu drinking alcohol was forbidden but with a special tourist permit I had been able to sneak into my tiny Ooty room a small bottle of rum to mix into the coca cola. Not at all the same as sipping a cold lager whilst sitting at leisure on a pier overlooking the tranquil sea.

The famous local Kathakali dancers were giving a performance and I was able to photograph them as their faces were made up with stark expressive colours, which all had their individual meaning and as they got dressed into their elaborate costumes.

At the time Kerala was the only communist state in India and had a matrilinear society, i.e., it offered identity and security to women instead of men, giving them many rights, which did not exist elsewhere in India. The capital Cochin had held a large Jewish community and I was able to visit their synagogue.

Deciding not to go to Goa, the so-called hippy paradise on the coast further up north, I flew back to Bombay smelling again the pollution which hung above the city and from there got a flight back to London.

I remained a fan of K for a long time as he was intelligent and an iconoclast, who did not want to be a guru and to me the philosophy of his teachings made a lot of sense. Especially his video talks with David Bohm, the American theoretical physicist, much intrigued me. Bohm also understood neuropsychology and the philosophy of the mind and so made an interesting partner for K to have dialogues with. The talks often were quite cerebral, and it was lovely to see the way they embroidered on their thoughts reaching a form of consensus. Basically, they are about how our conceptual thinking creates our world. "You are the world", K used to say.



Krishnamurti Centre

Before the Study Centre was built after K's death, I used to sleep in the Brockwood school cloisters and observed him in the mornings as he came walking into the breakfast room, when we all used to sit in silence before starting our meals. He died in 1986, aged 91, and had by then talked for nearly 65 years with people all over the world, providing them with a mirror in which to reflect upon their own lives. I stayed numerous times in the specially built K Study Centre which was and still is a very special place. The surrounding countryside with its majestic trees, and especially The Grove, leave a much-loved imprint forever in my memory.

Now that I live again in Holland it may be more difficult to get there but we will see what happens. Never say never.

23. 1983-84 FIRST RETREAT AND MOVE TO DEVONSHIRE ROAD

Just before Christmas 1983 I was on my own and felt lonely when I spotted an advertisement in Time Out or City Limits about a Xmas retreat in Battle for five nights in Glencorse Prep. School organised by Friends of the Western Buddhist Order. I decided to go and soon liked the various rituals of lighting candles whilst we were chanting “Om Mani Padme Hum”, roughly translated as the jewel in the lotus and experienced some relieving emotional outbursts during some walks in the surrounding countryside.

When I met Michael Haggiag, owner of Aurum books, at a hippy countryside wedding of one of Sara’s friends I expressed to him my interest in Zen, as I admired the vitality and simplicity of the calligraphy, whereupon he kindly gave me an introduction to his teacher, Irmgard Schloegel, Zen Buddhist teacher. After two interviews with her at the Buddhist Society in Eccleston Square in 1983 I was allowed to become one of her students.

It was great to meet some fellow practitioners some of whom I became friends with, for instance, Barry, a professional gardener who later was to design the gardens of my newly bought house including making a wonderful pond for koi carps, frogs, and toads. Also, his Dutch partner, Marcelle Hanselaar, an artist and as they lived together in the basement of the Buddhist Society where she had her studio, meetings were easily arranged.

The Buddhist Society in Eccleston Square was a haven of peace and quietness. During the weekend sesshins or retreats we were able to unlock with the special residential key the gardens in the middle of the square. The changing seasons could be witnessed in the tall trees, shrubs, and flowers whilst stepping slowly over the graveled paths.

We bowed to each other, to our chairs and cushions and waited anxiously for our individual interviews reciting our koans. A large bell just outside the interview room had to be rung before entering and from this she and everyone else could hear the mental state the interviewee was in. Some strange sounds would sometime come out of the interview room as the koans were given a voice. Irmgard Schloegel, our teacher, was originally from Austria and trained for many years in Japan. She was later ordained by her teacher Suzuki Roshi during the summer sesshin which we all attended and from then on was known as Venerable Muyokiyoni. She was huge and impressive but underneath her formidable appearance she was quite gentle. I experienced her approach to the teachings as severe and almost calvinistisch. However, I learned much from her and towards the end our relationship we became quite close. After a sort of satori experience in my local post office, she wanted me to come and live in her Zen Centre but of course this was not possible for me, financially not having independent means nor the possibility of an inheritance.

The Sesshins at the Summer schools were hard but fruitful at the same time. But when Irmgard interfered too much in my private life, for instance, she did not agree to my Shiatsu studies thinking it wiser to concentrate on my work in television, whereas I was envisaging a change in my career. When Ajahn Sumedho of the Theravada Forest Sangha meditation tradition, gave a talk at the Buddhist Society I asked him afterwards a question about all those bowings to the Buddha which he answered with good humour and a big smile saying that perhaps I should investigate my ego. I took a liking to him, as a Californian his Western mind understood our problems and conditioning. He talked from his own experience as he was highly trained by the well-respected teacher Ajahn Chah of the Forest Sangha tradition in Northern Thailand. This tradition was more ritualistic and less severe than Zen and I just wanted to move on. I parted on good terms with Muyokoni, she sent me a warm card wishing me well and from then on, I started my training in the Theravada tradition attending many retreats in Amaravati monastery in Hampshire, the official opening of which I attended in 1986. The summer schools in Leicester I experienced as warm and more Sangha, community, orientated, and on one occasion I was asked to drive Ajahn Sumedho together with Maurice Walshe to Leicester. The teachings and psychology of the Buddha impress and inspire me till this very day and without them my experience of aging and existence in this life would be entirely different. Quite unimaginable in fact!

1984 August
Ven. Myoko-NI



Luan Por Sumedho
31 May 1986
Battersea Peace Pagoda

During my therapy sessions with Dr. Temple (I have just found one of his receipts: 3 sessions in May 1982: 42 pounds, with compliments, 25 Churchill Road, NW5) we started to examine why I could not have my own house, as I was unhappy with the lack of privacy and the noise coming from the flat above me.

Also, the screaming kids and constantly yapping dog from the next-door Irish neighbours got on my nerves. And so it was that I started cycling around the streets in West London looking for a house. As I always wanted to live near the river Thames I focused my attention on Chiswick, a lovely residential area with small cottage-



1986
Chithurst Monastery
Cottage

like houses on the estate of Lord Burlington who had built his country house, Chiswick House, a Palladio-style villa in the nearby landscaped park. And then I found just what I wanted at 51 Devonshire Road. The house had a small front garden and when I was able to inspect the inside, I found to my delight a back garden with surprisingly a large and mature apricot tree.

It was August 1984, and I remember this as an extremely tense period because the owners of the house, the Howarths, were waiting for the purchase of the house they had found in Norfolk to come through. On the 13th I wrote: "just one and half hours to go before exchanging contracts"! And what a friend David Pearson turned out to be. At the time he was still an architect working with Hammersmith Council. I typed out a complete report with his arguments convincing me that I should buy the house as it would mean a step on the property ladder and other many advantages of ownership. On the other hand, my Dutch friend Pascale's arguments were quite negative advising me to rent somewhere instead. At the time people in Holland were accustomed to renting their homes and purchasing property was rarely done.

Thank heavens I followed David's advice! I paid a deposit of 3.125 pounds whilst the remainder of 68.375 pounds was to be paid on completion. If it had not been for David, who knows, I might not have been able to buy this lovely little house where I now live here in Monnickendam.



1993
Devonshire Road
Garden
Julia

Anne Ward
in Garden

My solicitor Alan Edwards and his assistant Marilyn had become quite good friends since my battle with the Gordon Place landlady. Politically we were on the same left side of politics, and we enjoyed each other company. Alan had in the meantime set up his own solicitor's practice in Notting Hill Gate and mediated with the sale of the Beauclerc Road flat and the purchase of the house in Devonshire Road. It felt good to have such professional friends on my side.



51 Devonshire Road, my house
in Chiswick



1984
Frits helps
Devonshire
Road

24. MORE TV AND FILM RESEARCH

During all these emotional upheavals with the opposite sex my career was flourishing, and my capacities as a researcher were continuously called upon. From such an abundance of projects it is hard to pick on a few of these for some short descriptions.

In 1981 I was in contact with Island Records and am not sure how this came about. But I do remember that I was photographing a feature on “Women in Rock” and was allowed into the recording studio where the singer Sandy Denny sat beside the proprietor of Island Records, Chis Blackwell. He was a white Jamaican possibly descending from the plantation which produced the Crosse & Blackwell marmalade and passionate about reggae.

This is when I ran into Tom Hayes, the managing director, an amiable man, who hired me to work on a documentary about the life of their recording star, Bob Marley. Apart from working in their main office based in residential St. Peter’s Square in Hammersmith, (where my habit started always picking some lavender from the huge bushes outside the building) I also needed to be based in California for two months. The documentary’s director, Joe Mennell lived in expensive Marin County, just outside San Francisco. A large apartment was rented for me in nearby Corte Madera from where I could walk to his place which was also used as our office.

Bob had died in May earlier that year of a melanoma on his toe. So, to my greatest regret I never got to meet him. Being a religious Rastafarian, he had refused treatment and as the cancer spread it resulted in his death. Much as the Bible belt here in Holland now refuse the corona vaccination, they are the ones occupying all the hospital intensive care beds.

In Bob’s case it was not God, but Jah or Yahweh represented by the emperor Haile Selassie who would come to his aid which of course did not happen, and it infuriated me no end because he could so easily have been saved.

One black and white film I found in an archive was particularly hilarious. In 1966 Haile Selassie came on a visit to Jamaica and as the plane landed, he stood in the doorway, took one look at the wild crowd outside shaking their long dreadlocks he quickly dashed inside again. He was regarded as their god, the Lion of Judah, Jah. But I had no respect for this small sized man who let his people suffer from a terrible famine pretending to the outside world that this was not happening.

Through Bob’s lyrics and beautiful songs, I felt I got to know him quite intimately. In the cutting room I looked at masses of films taken at his home and during his concerts when I sang the harmonies moving my body in rhythm with his backing group, the I-Threes, the three women of which his wife Rita was one. It was also my job to track down all the numerous interviews and concerts he gave during his worldwide tours. I also indexed diligently all the different subjects he spoke about during these interviews. A massive amount of work!



1981, 25.10
42 years old
San Fran
Reggae Sunblast

But I loved it because I became passionate about Reggae and the earlier Ska music (and Bob!). I got to know the songs so well that as soon as I heard one tiny first note I would know which song was to follow. Later, Tom said: Elly knows everything about Bob. True I knew a lot but Roger Steffens in Los Angeles whom I consulted and visited a couple of times was a dedicated DJ with a huge reggae collection and knew tons more. He was a nice and friendly colleague.

Out of office hours I spent time on my own and was glad, therefore, that some of the other staff took me out on some occasions during the weekends. An amazingly exuberant Halloween party: wine tasting in nearby Nappa Valley, and even sailing in San Francisco Bay from where I could see Alcatraz prison. And I was able to visit lovely San Francisco, especially the well-known City Lights bookstore.



1981 California
Sailing
in the Bay

I thought the film director quite pretentious, with his sayings: Cool Runnings and so on, trying to be with it. He never got to finish the documentary, the reason why not is unknown to me but later another director, Kevin Macdonald brought the documentary out in 2012 using all the archive material I had found, getting compliments about it, but no credit to me. However, I am glad that all this material is now available on websites and that Bob is such an icon influencing a whole generation of young mostly black people worldwide “to stand up for their rights”.

One incidence stands out concerning my personal health. As I was eating a sandwich the bite caused me a horrendous pain: I had an infected molar. The dentist had huge hands but a most delicate manner. He put me in the comfortable armchair and gave me laughing gas for the pain. Laying there looking through a large wall-to-wall window overlooking the mountains of Marin County, I experienced the most amazing trip and best visit to a dentist ever!

Fortunately, I had decided early on in my career that whenever I found myself working in a faraway country, I would take some time off for myself before needing to get back to the editing rooms in London. And so, in California I took this opportunity and boarded the Greyhound bus out to Esalen in Big Sur, on the coast just off Highway 1.

During my massage workshop with Sara, I had learned about this New Age therapy centre which was set up in the 1960's and from where the Human Potential Movement started with Fritz Perl, Carl Rogers and the Gestalt movement. They ran encounter groups focusing on the mind-body connection.



1981
Otto and Essalen

Fortunately, I was able to attend one of their workshops and soon expressed my frustration with the film director, Joe. Next to me sat a young American man named Otto who was hitting back at “sister hit them with a rule”, recalling his catholic upbringing by strict punishing nuns.

There were three or four massage tables on a large wooden platform situated above the thundering Pacific Ocean. It was sheer bliss to be massaged here and Otto told me later that my approach to the table recalled the image of a puma. Sitting in the warm water of the round shaped pool in the grassy lawn we silently admired the sunset. Our meals were taken outside, all in all it was a heavenly experience and when the workshop was over Otto, and I stayed connected as friends.

We travelled a couple of times along the spectacular Highway 1 which runs besides the Pacific Ocean, the views were breathtaking. We visited Monterey's Cannery Row, made famous by John Steinbeck's novel, and stopped in Mount Carmel where I just missed my favourite landscape photographer Ansel Adams who had just left for New York.



1981
Stan Dale
Harbin Hot Springs



We travelled a couple of times along the spectacular Highway 1 which runs besides the Pacific Ocean, the views were breathtaking. We visited Monterey's Cannery Row, made famous by John Steinbeck's novel, and stopped in Mount Carmel where I just missed my favourite landscape photographer Ansel Adams who had just left for New York.

After Otto had gone back to Philadelphia, I stayed on to attend a sex workshop at Harbin Hot Springs led by Stan Dale, whose wife Helen organized Otto's lectures and meetings. I was used to being naked in company because of the massage workshops in Greece and Spain but for some it was highly embarrassing. Just now I found Stan's book on my shelf: "Fantasies can set you free". Opening it I read on the inside page: "For Elly –What a magnificent woman: Intelligent, potent, aware, sensitive, warm, political and real. Fantastic! Much love, Stan & Helen."

Stan was a transactional analyst, produced radio programmes and lectured at several universities. Otto and I stayed good friends meeting in London when he came on one of his lecture visits. He liked my local pubs by the river and the British beer, and often we enjoyed delicious meals in the nearby French "Dordogne" restaurant. The unfinished bottles of wine were corked and taken back home. We enjoyed each other company but I never slept with him. His wife Jean and their two daughters came to visit a couple of times as well.

Sadly, over the years I witnessed his physical deterioration due to MS. Apparently meeting me had changed his life: if I could work as a freelancer, so could he and consequently gave up his well-paid job lecturing at the prestigious Yale University and became an independent project management consultant which often brought him to London and especially to Henley Management Institute when we stayed in a hotel overlooking the river Thames. These are fond memories.

Several other people took me as their example and became freelancers whereas until then they liked the security of regular employment. For instance, Ken Morse, the rostrum camera man, and colleagues like James Barker, who worked with me at Flashback and Vicky Wegg Prosser and Taylor Downing on the series "What is a Family".

Via the grapevine I heard in November 1984 that Maxine Baker had talked with Frances Thorpe, head of the British Film Institute, who had told her that I was getting a good reputation. No more needs to be said, I was very good at my job, and it was the reason for my success as a freelance researcher. During an interview for the British Film and Video Council Magazine with Jim Ballantyne, he asked me: Why did I not become a producer or director as this was deemed the next step up? My answer was that I preferred to rove around, be independent, my own boss and not wanting to become involved in budgets and office politics.

Some of the people I enjoyed working with the most were the lecturers at BBC Open University, for which I regularly travelled to Milton Keynes, especially Professor Stuart Hall stands out. Originally from Jamaica he was professor of sociology and in charge of the course and accompanying tv series "Social Sciences, The State". Most of the lecturers I met seemed to be inclined towards Marxism, and therefore hating Thatcherism, as I did. To celebrate the end of the series I gave a party at my house and was sorry not to meet with them again.

My relationship with the colleagues of TV History Workshop was also a most satisfying one. One of the directors, Greg Lanning, I remember specially as being kind and clever and Rodney with his quiet smile. In 1984 we worked together on "Many Happy Returns" for the GLC, Greater London Council, a celebration of nearly 100 years of local government. The exhibition was in the shape of a massive birthday cake, decorated with candles and pink icing situated on the South Bank next to the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

Once inside the cake people could watch audio visual shows of the history of housing, hygiene, health, pollution, education and so on. I had researched all the photographs and old archive films. In the twenties and thirties people used to live in filth in the borough of Bermondsey, near the old dockyards on the river Thames. Nowadays it is a hip place, far too expensive for ordinary working people. But it was marvellous how I found a black and white film made in 1925 which showed how the Council fumigated the people's mattresses and were sending the small children for their tuberculosis cure all the way to a Swiss sanatorium. They certainly had their priorities right!

Londoners had always voted for a Labour council and when Margaret Thatcher came to power, she privatized many nationalised industries. Ken Livingstone, who was at the time the Labour mayor of London, hung a huge banner outside County Hall, which she could clearly see from the Westminster Parliament buildings just across the river stating the high number of unemployed people. This was of course much to her chagrin, just as it was intended.

A photograph of the big birthday cake on the South Bank shows me and my brother Frits standing just outside, and there is another one of him with the journalist Andrew, both raising a fist up in the air. Frits had come to London and helped me with the move to my new house. Again, a photo serves as a reminder, it shows him holding the carpet beater I was given by Tony, my neighbour, near my 2CV, Deux Chevaux, two horsepower, Dyane 6, the first car I owed, of which the interior showed huge yellow sunflowers. When Rita came over for a visit I drove to the Cotswolds where we stayed in an old-fashioned hotel, walking in the countryside, and climbing over the footpath's stiles.



1984
Greater London
Council



IAMHIST



Imola



1984
Elly and Frits

The series “What is a Family” produced by independent company, Flashback Production, for Channel 4 enabled me to attend history workshops during summer schools at Stirling University, Scotland. Vicky Wegg Prosser, one of the producers held regular meetings at her house; the relationship between us was always friendly and respectful. For one of the programmes called “The Exploding Nuclear Family” I was viewing a film in the National Film Archive which upset me very much. It showed a mother portrayed as a repressive force in her family haranguing her daughter, which made me so emotional that I had to leave the archive because memories of my own mother came flooding back.

IAMHIST, the letters stand for International Association for Media and History and is an organisation dedicated to historians, scholars, filmmakers, radio, television, archivists. I became a member and so met Professor Ken Short, the director and editor of the magazine. As he was an American historian of propaganda and mass media, we often bumped into each other as our research took us to the Public Record Office in Kew.

He made a remark I still remember as to the fact that I was not only good looking but was intelligent. Often when women opened their mouths, he would be disappointed at what came out. Ken's son Donald later became my assistant for a while which was great fun. Iamhist held a conference in Bologna which I attended during which I met with Dr. David Elwood who was based there and then went to Imola near the famous Ferrari racing course. We even took the train and made a trip to Florence where I admired the huge David sculpture of Michelangelo.

With me were Greg Lanning of History Workshop and another film director, John Petts. I worked with him at Granada Television and remembered his autobiographic film about growing up on a farm. There was not too much time for sightseeing as the conference took up most of our time. Working with historians and academics I found enjoyable and stimulating, possibly because they seemed less egocentric or superficial.

Two years before a blood test had shown that I was now menopausal and was prescribed HRT hormone tablets as I was still quite young, 42. It made me think of my mother who at the age of 44 gave birth to yet another child, Frits. I just accepted my situation as a *fait accompli* but may be this is when I decided, be it subconsciously, to sponsor an orphan girl via SOS Kinderdorpen in Thailand, little Nong. It was satisfying to see her grow up, often photographs were sent showing the presents I sent her. When she became 21 and had a profession as a hairdresser my sponsorship came to an end. I was far more upset when Basher became so ill that I had to have her put to sleep, so traumatic, I loved her so with her little white socks, "pull your socks up" I used to say to her. With Sara I drove to Bourne End near the Thames where we dug a hole in the meadow, put flowers from my garden on top of her, and peacefully buried her there. How different was the situation for Biffy a few years later when I was involved in another turbulent relationship; even though I took care of her I still feel regret that I was not more loving to her and left her with the vet instead of burying her like Basher.

25. JAPAN

Do I or do I not get the job? It was a tense moment as I was very keen. Early in 1986 I applied for the job as researcher on a documentary about Japan with the influential political writer and leftwing activist John Pilger who had several times won the Journalist of the Year award and was nationally held in high regard.

When I was taken on by Central Television my own status was raised with it. I noticed that freelance cameramen, producers and even some colleagues from the National Film Archive started to circle around me. I must admit it did give me a lovely sense of importance. It turned out that Pilger was not at all big headed and great to work with, so professional, amiable, and friendly. Even though he was the hot shot he was much nicer than his producer, Alan. Both came from Australia and had previously worked together on other documentaries.

So, heading for Tokyo, I decided to stop off in Hong Kong to manage my jetlag and wanting to meet up with my lovely friend Sumiko for a couple of nights. Unfortunately, Derek was away on business at the time, but Sumiko was a good guide showing me some of the highlights of Hong Kong. I had met her parents whilst they were on a visit to London and especially liked “Mamma Suzuki”, Sumiko’s mum. After I arrived in Tokyo, I had a delicious meal with them and on other occasions dined with Peter Popham, the writer, who later became quite well known as an expert on Asian culture.



1984
Easter
Elly, Biffy and
Basher

Japan
Nikki and me



Based in Tokyo for many months I stayed at great expense at the Tokyo Prince Hotel enabling me to use the Press Room and telephoning and faxing through my reports. Fortunately, I had Nikki working with me as interpreter whenever I needed her. As a freelancer she also worked for the BBC in Tokyo, was a single mother and we got on well together which felt supportive for me. This was much needed because I was landed in a totally different culture.

Our documentary entitled “Behind the Mask” was to investigate the myth of the Japanese success story. I was to put the whole documentary together, find people to interview; and the differing locations before the actual film crew arrived. As the daily cost of such a crew was terribly high, it all had to run smoothly, without a hitch and like clockwork.

We were to examine the lives of the so-called salary men, who appeared to be more engaged working in a slave relationship; not daring to take any holidays or going home on time as this showed disloyalty to the firm. Then there were the hidden number of suicides; also, the workers on the relentless conveyor belts of the Yamaha factories; and Sony was subcontracting work employing families who sat in their tiny rooms soldering the different parts for them.

The young children were pressured to do better in their education taking extra “cramming” private lessons in the evenings, their mothers were regarded as mama goons, dragons. The role of Emperor Hirohito during the war was also to be examined. Whilst viewing the black and white archive film footage I was saddened to see how young Kamikaze suicide pilots were embraced and had a white scarf wrapped around them before going on their assignments. They were to throw themselves and their planes on the enemy battle ships; never returning to tell their tales.

There were so many different interesting subjects to investigate and at times it became terribly exhausting and intense. None of the Japanese signs on the underground stations had English translations and I often had to make my own way across this huge city, for instance to the port of Kawasaki. This was situated in the eastern part of the densely populated industrial and heavily polluted zone on the outskirts of Tokyo. The inhabitants here were suffering from dreadful lung problems and I had to find some of them willing to be interviewed and filmed telling us about their health problems.

Despite the stress it was also exhilarating to spend so much time in this exhilarating culture. On my own I went to the Kabuki theatre, not understanding a word of what they were saying but enjoying the beautiful costumes and movements. And I participated in a traditional tea ceremony where I learned that the highly noble Samurai had to creep through the low and tiny entrance door having to put down their massive swords. As such a posture was bad for their ego and very humbling to them.

Through the London Zen Group I had been able to make some personal contacts in Tokyo, especially with one young woman whose family house I visited in the suburbs. We also rambled together with some of her other friends through the beautiful countryside where wild cherry trees were in blossom. The flowering of cherry trees is keenly followed all over Japan during springtime as it moves from the warmer south to the cooler north.

1986
Traditional
Teahouse



Fortunately, the blossoming reached Tokyo whilst the camera crew were there and so we filmed the hundreds of people, families, colleagues, lovers, what have you in the parks for the hanami, “seeing the flowers” ritual. Spreading mats under the trees, reserved on the previous evening, they put down overfull picnic baskets, bottles of beer and sake, microphones for the loud karaoke singing, I had not seen such abundance of happiness and feelings of hope which it represented. Apparently, it is a tradition going back to the third century.



Japan Crew



1986

David, Kevin, Christine and me

When the intensive period of filming was finished and the crew making their way back to London, I took the famous bullet train out of Tokyo catching a glimpse of Mount Fuji, the most iconic mountain in Japan, often painted by artists and praised in poetry. I stopped over in Kyoto, the old imperial city where I walked over the bare wooden floors of the old temples. Some of them squeaked and were called nightingale floors preventing thieves from entering undetected. I admired the powerfully painted eagles on the golden brocaded walls.

In Kyoto I met one of Myokiyoni students, an English academic who informed me that individuality in Japan was frowned upon, he told me: “it is like a nail sticking out of the coffin, they’ll quickly hammer it back in again”. This acknowledged my experience of finding it difficult to find people willing to be interviewed for the documentary and to stick their neck out.

I also visited our Roshi, who I had met in England during our yearly sesshins (retreats) during which we used to take some walks in the English countryside. Now I was able to meet him in his own temple situated in gardens manicured in Zen style with the gravel swept in concentric circles.

Continuing my journey, I found a traditional Japanese Inn in which I stayed for a few days, sleeping on a tatami mat in an otherwise bare room and was dressed in a kimono whilst attending the meal prepared in a traditional open hearth. Posing for a photo with the lady of the house she just about reached my chest. The same had happened with the Todas, the tribal people I stayed with in India. To most people in Asia, I must have had the appearance of a giant!

But it was time to get back to work and search for more archive films and photos in the National Archives in Washington, and so I had to fly around the world again. Washington became a place I much loved, visiting it numerous times and able to meet up with my dear colleagues there.

When after two months I finally was able to make my way home, feeling exhausted, I was glad to see the familiar face of my friend Anne at the airport who had come to meet me. Before leaving for Tokyo, I had gratefully accepted her advice to take Bach's Brandenburg Concerto's with me reducing any stress and anxiety during my work. The journey home in the taxi nearly caused me to have a breakdown; my brain felt highly stressed and strung out like a piece of drawn-out chewing gum. The driver rushed towards the traffic lights, braking hard at the last minute when they turned to red throwing us about. Fortunately, to my great relief we made it safely home. After completion of the documentary, John Pilger wrote me a note saying the documentary would not have been as rich without all my hard work. A great compliment, especially coming from him.



1986
With John Pilger

Visiting the nearby tea plantation, we had to cross a steep ravine using a long narrow bridge made from rope and when the man behind me started to run, making it swing violently, I was much shaken and scared. This was not funny.

1986
Japan
Wobbly Bridge



26. RAY – THE LAST ONE



1989
June, August
Beuzeville
Elly and Ray

Although I had a hectic and satisfying working life feelings of loneliness were an almost constant factor. Especially during the weekends, it felt almost like a physical pain. And so, on a Saturday afternoon wandered aimlessly around Habitat in nearby Hammersmith's shopping mall and walked sadly around the Mothercare shop with its small kids and baby clothing. Why did I have no children I asked myself and felt the pain of it. Going into the Lyric Theatre where jazz music was performed on Saturday's afternoons, I fortunately found my friends Sandy and Jerry there. A friend of theirs sitting at the bar kept looking around us. The big warm smile on his face had a charming effect on me. He soon came round to our table and introduced himself, his name was Ray McNulty. As he was known to my friends it seemed to be OK to meet with him again which we did a couple of times. It turned out that he was a builder and decorator and as the outside of my newly bought house needed painting, I gave him the job which he did together with his assistant Bubbles. From there our relationship developed.

During one of our sessions, I told Dr. Temple about him describing his background he soon mumbled: 'birds of the same feather' i.e., similar upbringing, and like me unable to form close and intimate relationships. If only he had spelled it out more clearly, but in his Freudian way, he did not go into details. His method and school of thinking was after all not transpersonal, which is more direct and confrontational, but relied on the transference process which can take a long time. Ray and I had experienced similar unloving backgrounds against which we turned our backs. But I was stubborn or as Temple used to say, "hard as granite" as I still innocently believed I could change people and make the world a happier place. It had become part of my conditioned behaviour pattern as I had tried it with my mother which had never worked either.

So, despite all the different omens, which should have warned me, I continued meeting with him as he was decorating the outside walls of my house. In September 86 I went with my friend Anne to stay on a farm near Montpellier and remember looking out for him to join us. That was the first promise he broke but despite the frustration I continued with him spending a holiday in Lanzarote, one of the Canaries islands. This is where my idea of renovating properties started following the example of his English friends who had done just that. I think it was the same longing for a place in the countryside which previously made me buy the derelict cottage in Wales. But now with Ray on my side this seemed to be more of a possibility as he was a professional builder. So I thought but it turned out to be pie in the sky.

During this period I was taking many workshops with my friend Sara in massage and studied hard to gain the recognised ITEC diplomas in massage, Shiatsu, Aromatherapy and other qualifications which took many intensive years to achieve. My aim was to eventually retire establishing my own Chiswick home practice. During my television work, I had travelled and lived abroad for many months, e.g., in Tokyo, in California, Indonesia, New York and numerous other places around the world. The fleetingness and superficiality of it all made me want to develop a profession where contact with other people were more sustaining and satisfying. I felt the need of a change in my profession.

1989
Beuzeville
Elly and
Shiatsu Book



Maybe I saw my chance to realise this when I met with Ray and was taken in by the opportunities which seemed to present themselves. I bought a super Citroen BX14RE and loved driving it, especially liking the suspension which gave the feeling of a flying carpet when going over rocky roads. Of course, he was also using my car also driving us up north to visit his brother Arthur and sister-in-law Kate in Sunderland spending Christmas with them. During this visit he was physically absent which was not unusual, but he presented me with some brilliant costume jewellery from the Butler and Wilson shop in Bond Street, expensive and used to show off, me and himself. Afterwards we drove to Wales where he loved spending his time in the pub with friends, leaving me on my own. If only I had been wise enough to cut my contact with him then and there because our relationship was so unsatisfying. But I had other ideas, blinkered as I was, thinking that given time he would or could change. How mad is that? Easy to say when wise afterwards.

Seeing some advertisements for renting Gites in Normandy, I rented one in the village of Beuzeville near the old harbour town of Honfleur, popular with the sailing community. It was so lovely driving along the stunning Cote de Fleury, frequented in the twenties when British people came to stay in the fashionable towns of Deauville and Trouville.

During this visit I came across a typical vernacular half-timbered thatched house with some land around it. As it was derelict it needed planning permission for renovation and yes, history was repeating itself! Fortunately, Ray was a craftsman and clever enough to prepare the necessary drawings for rebuilding the property. After some time, we were given the go-ahead and simultaneously for the huge derelict cider barn standing on its own small piece of land opposite the house.

What a dream it was! My idea was to build up a massage practice on both sides of the Channel, yes, I was thinking big! I was also under the ban of the Impressionists who had lived and worked nearby and around the town of Rouen. There would be time to explore the gardens of Monet, for instance. On top of that there was also the possibility of taking the train to Paris. It was perfect! Except that I had teamed up with the wrong person, this seemed to be the story of my relational life with men. I believed him when he repeatedly said that things would change once he was in France and that this would be the end of his “only wanting to play” attitude.

At first it all seemed well, and friends came to visit us in Normandy. The Prings came (possibly giving them the idea of buying their own place in Macon later) and I gave lovely Sally, their youngest daughter, a Shiatsu massage of which Roger made a little film. We used to have “breakfast in Beuzeville” in the local café, the owner becoming friendly with us. My brother Frits, Tineke and Jochem also came once, and Ray cooked steaks for them on the barbecue. Not for me though as I had already been a vegetarian for a long time. Ronnie also paid some visits and took us out for fabulous lunches in a nearby posh restaurant when we sat outside under a parasol in the lush garden. Bless his heart, he also lent us his little caravan to put on the land so we could be more comfortable and sleep on the site. All in all, it was very sociable and inspiring and happy times were had.

Whilst I continued working hard in London, most alternate weekends I used to take the ferry from Dover and drove to Beuzeville via Le Havre. Ray stayed behind in Normandy to get on with renovating the house with his best mate, Dave, to help him. This should have been another warning because Dave, who was on methadone trying to kick his heroin addiction, was not a likeable man.



1989
June August
Ray and France

One weekend the whole situation came to a tumultuous head. He did not come back during the night whilst the little caravan I slept in on my own rocked in the storm, with the rain wildly pelting down. I was scared. Poor Arthur and Kate who happened to be on a visit were sleeping in a tiny tent on the land. Ray just stayed away and, on his return, next morning I confronted him. It turned out that behind my back and in my absence, he was with another young woman and her little daughter and had not used my hard-earned money to renovate the house.



1989
Beuzeville
Ron
in June August

It was Ronnie, fortunately being there staying in a nearby hotel, who pushed my nose into the ugly fact that Ray was a con man, a confidence trickster. Being a man of the world, he realised straightaway what was going on. He told me: "don't believe he is going to finish with her and continue with you" because this is what Ray had promised me. Poor Ron, I remember being so upset and lighting one cigarette after another whilst he drove me all the way back to London. What a friend!

It took many arduous years to get Ray off my back and to legally untangle our affairs as I had been ignorant and idealistic enough to sign the deeds for the purchase of the house and barn in partnership. Therefore, he legally owned half of everything having contributed nothing except the drawings he made. Alan, good old Alan, my solicitor, had to work with a French legal firm to get me out of this awful situation. It nearly bankrupted me and would have taken everything I had worked for all my life.

At long last I had learned my lesson and thereafter had no more affaires, or liaisons that were not conducive to my wellbeing. Did all those sessions with Dr. Temple make any difference? He was such a good reliable support but when I asked my friend Maggie who is a therapist in the Transpersonal tradition, she exclaimed her disapproval of the Freudian transference approach. May be her approach or Gestalt would have been a more workable way for me, something more physical and direct.

However, it is no use looking for any scapegoats because the fact is that whilst growing up I had never experienced intimacy nor communication about one's feelings and was thrown totally unprepared into adulthood. Voila, the consequences, had I experienced unconditional love as a child, my emotional life would have been a lot easier.

Whilst I was busy researching the documentary series "Reaching for the Skies" for the BBC Pebble Mill in 1988 I would often drive with the series producer, Ivan Randall, to and from Birmingham. He sensed something was wrong and would ask me what it was, but I wished to keep my working and personal life separate. Fortunately, my good friends Anne, who I could phone at any time, and Ron stood by me during this traumatic episode in my life.



Beuzeville
Frits, Tineke,
Jochem and Elly

CHAPTER 27. BOTTER FILM, IWM, RFTS, POTTER

1987 Voyager – A National Geographic programme.

Having a good working relationship with Ivan Randall which went back to the Reaching for the Skies series, we often worked with John Gau productions, and this is when I proposed to him that I make my own documentary for National Geographic. The subject was the proposed reclaiming of land in the IJsselmeer, the big inland lake of the Netherlands and to my delight was given the go-ahead. In 1988 this was a huge environmental issue and we interviewed people who were either for or against the proposal. It was helpful that during a previous visit to Holland I participated in a traditional fishing boat race and had, therefore, some good contacts, my brother Frits also being one of the crew of sailors.

On the one side there were the bankers, who naturally thought it was an excellent idea seeing that money was to be made, one of these was smoking a fat cigar whilst talking to us. On the other side of the spectrum were those radically opposed to the whole idea. They needed the open space for their recreation and found that the country was already overflowing with milk, butter, and tulip bulbs. Why more land, they asked? The Netherlands is a very small country and with a population now reaching 17 million people or more, it was with much relief that the reclamation plan was not approved. For me it was great fun to fly in a helicopter above Holland and to once again race in the traditional fishing boats across the wide-open waters. The result was a good 20-minute documentary introduced by the well-known presenter Julian Pettiver for National Geographic. I felt quite proud.

The Imperial War Museum had almost become like a second home to me, driving along the Embankment I would arrive in the film archive early in the morning to be greeted by the friendly staff, Jane and Paul and David. Anne Fleming, head of the archive, was a mate of Maxine, and Jerry Kuehl worked there; they were regarded as a sort of mafia.

It was such a nice drive along the Embankment in my Citroen BX crossing the river at Lambeth and parking behind the museum.

Upon entering the viewing room my eyes would nearly pop out at the many huge piles of film cans stacked against the wall and waiting for my attention.

It was such a nice drive along the Embankment in my Citroen BX crossing the river at Lambeth and parking behind the museum.

Upon entering the viewing room my eyes would nearly pop out at the many huge piles of film cans stacked against the wall and waiting for my attention. Putting the films on the Steinbeck editing machine (I called it “baking cakes”) demanded great care because they were heavy and awkward to hold. Fortunately, never one of those large 35mm rolls of film slipped my grip and unrolled like spaghetti all over the floor. Nor did the film ever needed to be spliced and resealed because I did not break a film, some of which were fragile. All those millions of images I needed to select for the documentaries I was working on, marking the in and out parts with bits of white paper. The films were then sent to the laboratory for copying, all of which was very elaborate especially compared with today’s technology.

In the museum’s Archive & Research room I was able to read the many letters and diaries of soldiers and civilians on both sides of the war.

My favourite haunt was Soho, in the heart of London, where I climbed the stone staircases in the old buildings to find Pathe Newsreels where Larry was the friendliest person you could wish to meet and nearby there was Movietone News, with Irish Gerry. These were regular treasures troves; many films dating back to the twenties, I learned to imitate the Pathe Newsreel opening call of the cock and the lion’s roar of Movietone News. Most importantly, the National Film Archive part of the British Film Institute also had its location here. Countless times I used to come to Dean Street to research the extensive catalogues, card indexes and the films I ordered for viewing.

There were many pubs around, and the Blue Bell became quite a favourite where I often used to meet with colleagues like Jim Ballantyne for a drink during lunch or after work.

The place I least liked was the huge BBC building in White City, also called “the doughnut” because of its round shape. The car park was always overflowing, and I hated having to drive round and round until I finally reached the rooftop. But the extensive card index was a most valuable source for my research and, of course, gave me access to all the BBC films and documentaries. The “Beep” archive dates back to 1922 so you can imagine what a good source this was for my research.

The German film archive, the Bundesarchiv, situated in Koblenz, was where I researched and viewed the war filmed from their side. After a day of looking at many harrowing and propaganda films I made sure that the evenings were relaxing. The city is situated at the point where the rivers Rhine and Mosel converge, and I took the pleasure of enjoying the taste of the local white wines with my evening meals.

1987/88 Pebble Mill. The series “Reaching for the Skies” was divided into themes, like Lighter than Air, I remember watching the first flight over the Himalayas, the pilot sitting in the open air without oxygen tanks, a daring first at the time and being asked upon his return how it was the pilot smiled and said with British understatement, “all right”. And in Paris I admired and stood next to the tiny plane called “Spirit of St. Louis” in which Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic Ocean in 1927. They were real pioneers.

The least likeable theme was “Bomber”, and consequently the big Lancaster bomber became my least favourable plane whereas the Dakota, with its nicely shaped

round nose, the so-called workhorse during the war, was always a delight to look at. I would have liked to become a member of the supporter's club. During the series and without any specific effort on my part I had become an expert in the field of airplanes and the wars. The book of the series was published in 1989 in which the credit showed that it was a co-production of the BBC and the American network CBS. May be this is how the American tv production company called Anthony Potter Productions based in New York came to know about my work. Sometime later they contacted me, and I subsequently made many programmes with them.

Meeting with Tony Potter in October 1989 was the start of a long association when I was hired to work on several series like "Spies" about the World War II heroes of the resistance and highlighting the intelligence centre at Bletchley Park where Alan Turing cracked the Enigma code, an enciphering machine used by the Germans to send messages securely. At the Polish Sikorski Institute, I found such a machine and we recreated and filmed a scene using the machine. Through the grapevine I had heard that I was the best researcher, this was great to know. It seems that during this period onwards I was working on a variety of documentaries often assisted by Sandy, my friend and Donald Short.

Tony Potter was a nice gentleman who would call and tell me: all the work you have done for espionage was terrific! His associate partner was Colonel Howard a lovely and huggable gentleman. And because I had gained such an expertise on aeroplanes during the "Reaching for the Skies" series I was then asked by Anthony to work on a series for CBS called "Hunters in the Sky", highlighting various fighter pilots of different nationalities. Chris Shores was also involved in this having gained a reputation with his book "Air Aces" and together we did the interviews and filming. We got on like a house on fire and for the "Battle of Britain" series travelled to the surviving pilots' homes. Just before the interview I would check their clothes for dandruff and put some matting powder on shiny foreheads and noses, ready for me to ask the questions.



1987
Paris
Spirit of St Louis
Jochem Duin Archive

After a meeting and rendezvous of the pilots in Bath I travelled back to London on the train with Pete Townsend, the ex-fiancée of Princess Margaret. He was such a gentleman; in the book of the series which all the other pilots signed for me, he wrote: “nice travelling back with you”1990. She would have been a lot happier with him, I think.

At the end of each interview, I made sure to always thank them for liberating my country, Holland, especially as some of them still suffered horrendous pains from their burns having been shot down miraculously able to escape and make their way back to Britain.



1990

Battle of Britain
Pilots,
Chris Shores,
two pilots and Elly



1986

Ivan Randall

Other documentaries of the war were “D.Day” when I saw the horrendous battles inland and later the soldiers spread out over the beaches of Normandy desperately waiting for evacuation and also the bravery of the Polish forces.

“Nazi Gold” for the BBC turned my stomach round, watching on film how Mengele, the Nazi doctor at Auschwitz divided people coming straight out of the wagons onto the station for his medical experiments. I witnessed on archival film the liberation of the various extermination camps with the skeleton men, women, and children. These are unforgettable images.

But a nice interlude followed because on the 7th of May 1991 I get a call from Tony: I need to go to Moscow! This was a bit of a bombshell really. Gorbachev had just become the president of the Soviet Union in 1990 and was moving towards a policy of glasnost (“openness”). And so it was that I had the privilege to be the very first researcher ever allowed in the Russian State Krasnogorsk Documentary Film and Photo Archive, which was just outside Moscow! After queuing at the London Russian embassy for what seemed a very long time, I finally got my Visa. Upon my arrival in Moscow, I soon started my work with Alexander, my interpreter, who was a kind and soft-spoken person. The chauffeur took us to the outskirts along a road full of potholes and having arrived in the archive I soon discovered some amazing film footage like the “Night witches”, the name for women fighter pilots.

They were not just transporting aircraft around the country like the women in Britain but were actually dog fighting in the air.

Fortunately, we found some of these women pilots and interviewed them so they could tell us their stories.

Yuri the other person I was to work with was a misogynist, with dollar signs over his head, and a real mister know it all. The archive's administration did not want payment to the archive in dollars but in equipment replacing their outdated machines. For instance, an Arri processor worth 120.000 dollars but I am not sure about the exact details. I had a lovely time working there especially liking the woman I viewed all the films with. We often had our lunch together and used some sort of sign language.



1991
Moscow



1991
Moscow
The Americans

My apartment in one of Stalin's high skyscraper blocks was huge consisting of several rooms and solid furniture. Whenever I needed a taxi, I learned that it was helpful to hold up a packet of Marlborough cigarettes. It was the quickest way to get a ride. Shopping for some food was weird, because there were special shops for foreigners with dollars, the shelves crammed with everything you could ever need. I often bought some goods and gave them to Alexander who as a Russian had no access to the shop. This felt so unfair.

I ran into an American couple, the man had something to do with the Hubble telescope and together we went to a performance in the Bolshoi theatre where I enjoyed the opulence and the dancing. I also made a point to visit some of the ancient churches with their golden domes in the so-called Golden Ring, some dating back to the 13th century.

Here I was stunned by the icons painted by one of the greatest medieval Russian painters, Rublyov.

Just recently I saw in the Eye, the film museum in Amsterdam, the Russian film director Tarkovsky's epic film he made of the artist's life which was stunning.

My kind driver took me out for lunch in his dacha, meeting with his family and was able to see how some Russians spend their weekends. Such a contrast with the poverty I had seen in the city remembering one old woman standing on a corner holding out a laced handkerchief which she hoped to sell. There were big holes in the roads everywhere. Glasnost did not last long; the end came with a coup in August 1991. By this time, I was safely home and had invited Alexander to visit London where I introduced him to various colleagues, like Christine Whittaker and my American colleagues, David and Ken, a wonderful gay couple who assisted me on many occasions whilst researching documents and films in the National Archives in Washington.

It is just as well to remember that all my research took place before the internet was invented and I, therefore, was able to physically visit all those archives over the whole world. Fortunate indeed!

CHAPTER 28 INDONESIA AND OTHERS

Bill Cran, owner of the production company InVision had hired me to research material for "The Prize, the epic quest for Oil, Money and Power", a documentary series based on the Pulitzer prizewinning book written by Daniel Yergin. The subject of one of the programmes was: Shell and its earliest beginning in Sumatra as BP, Bataafse Petroleum, so I grabbed my chance and became the co-producer of this episode. Indonesia used to be one of the Dutch colonies and I had heard stories about it from both my brother Henk and uncle Frits who had been in military service there. Since then, I had been wanting to go and look for myself and this seemed a good opportunity.

I persuaded Bill to employ my mate Maxine with whom I had stayed friendly since our days at Granada TV, as Director of the programme telling him she had much experience in directing which was a white lie. As Richard Gibb, cameraman and partner Simmy, sound recordist, had also been circling around me like piranhas it finally paid off for them as I got them to come on board as they say. They had been many times to Bali, knew the island well, and I thought that as an experienced cameraman he'd probably be a better director than Maxine; so, we were covered anyway.

Unfortunately, my idealized teamwork did not work out as Maxine turned out to be quite a bully. Apparently, the TV Union, Equity, had made it a rule that if a crew travelled first-class by air work could be started the following morning. Those bureaucrats probably thought one would have slept and have no jetlag. Admittedly, first class travel was a delight, a little winding staircase took you to the upper deck, this was a lounge area with comfortable sofas, a table in the middle with newspapers, and drinks. Nonetheless, upon arrival I did suffer from jetlag but was made to work straightaway, Maxine being such a trade union fanatic. As a result, I could not shake it off throughout my whole stay there because of this idiotic rule.

You should have seen all the filming equipment as we were boarding the plane leaving from Heathrow. Masses of it.

Richard and Simmy came to greet us off the plane as we landed, fresh as daisies, as they had been in Indonesia for a while arranging some filming locations. No sympathy for my jetlag coming from them!

During the whole of our filming, we were constantly accompanied by an official of the Indonesian government. We flew from Djakarta to Sumatra where the original source of the oil was discovered in 1885 still existing as a small puddle in the ground. Amazing to think that the company Royal Dutch Shell made its fortune here! As we were filming near the Northern border, we were aware of the danger as the indigenous Atjehs often fought to reclaim their land.

Filming with a crew is an expensive business and there is always the pressure to get on with and I cannot vividly recall other places we filmed.

Maxine and Simmy got on like a house on fire both having been at boarding school, and catholic so they ganged together leaving me on my jet-lagged own. At the end of the filming and they had to get back to London both Simmy and Richard were really pissed off with me because I would not let Richard have my first class return ticket. Well done me that I did not buckle under their pressure!

After the filming was finished, I travelled on my own to Java to the old city of Batavia, originally built by the Dutch in typical colonial style. Now called Djakarta I visited the old colonial town where the Dutch style buildings were still intact, together with the local shipyards.

From there I went to Surabaya on the east coast of Java because my friend Judy Hammond had studied the art of batik there. Visiting one of the artist's studios I bought a large batik showing large green leaves intertwined with pink orchids which still adorns the wall of my living room today.

From there it was 40 km to Borobudur, the largest Buddhist temple in the world. I climbed to the top of the mountain at around 5 o'clock in the morning to watch the sunrise which is certainly is a magical experience. The silence and the views of the countryside towards the volcano made leaving difficult. I wondered around the stupas containing the beautiful Buddha statues and would have liked to stay much longer. But I did not have too much time because work was calling me back to London and to leave without visiting Bali was just not an option. Arriving on the island Simmy was there to greet me but ignored me thereafter; I guess because I was no longer of any use to her. With a little motorbike I crossed the countryside, visiting the many temples, whilst attending the traditional dances and many rituals. Lorne Blair who lived in a self-built local style house in Ubud, the artist centre in the middle of the island also was no longer interested in me. Probably because I no longer needed his photographs for the anthropological books I had worked on. So much for the commercial world of television. However, I stayed in some super small hotels, the mats I sat on overlooked small ponds with lotus flowers and I was glad, so few tourists were around at the time and that I felt in my element exploring this lush island on my little bike.



Elly, James Barker, The Prize



1992
Elly in the
boardroom
of Shell for
The Prize

Travelling in first class style back in London I was asked to go to Vienna to search for material in the OPEC archives. In the evenings I walked in the footsteps of Mozart, one of my favourite composers and attended a concert. My relationship with Maxine never cleared up after Indonesia and I avoided her feeling she had let me down.

In the book of the series The Prize published in 1991 the author Daniel Yergin wrote a dedication to me: "with appreciation for the opportunity to work with you ...and for your fine eye! Best wishes".

I must admit it feels good to be appreciated.

There had been so many other documentaries, for instance, with Jonathan Miller, a series on Museums of Madness, D.Day for Discovery Channel, and so on. Astonishing how I could produce all that work!

In 1996 I was based in Cairo, working on a documentary about the 1990-1991 Gulf War, but this time viewed from the Arabic side. My luxury room at the top floor of the Nile Hilton Hotel overlooked the river Nile with views of the pyramids in the distance which I was to visit a couple of times. The nearby Cairo Museum housed the treasures of Tutankhamun and other Egyptian pharaohs and so I went there as often as possible. Fortunately, there were no crowds of tourists. Holly, the producer was friendly, and I gave her a massage one evening to reduce her stress, we walked through the suks together and Greg Lanning was there also.

During my work I met some other famous people, like Dirk Bogarde who I visited in his Royal Dorchester hotel suite, to photograph him for TV Times. We got to talk about photography and discovered that we both had a favourite: the French photographer Lartigue. Dirk invited me to his place in the south of France, but I never took him up on it, of course. I think he liked my Dutch background as his father was half Flemish.

Paul McCartney's daughter Mary asked me to research a documentary about "Wings" the band he set up in 1971 with her mother Linda. Alison was my assistant at the time, and we found it quite hard to find film footage from across the world. We did our best. In the small preview theatre Paul sat in the seat behind me with next to him his then new girlfriend Heather. After heartily shaking my hand, he was humming along with all the tunes enjoying himself.

Although I was still researching, I was slowly winding down my television career wanting to concentrate on my massage practice and the training I was following at WPF to become a counsellor. I still worked on York notes, an educational series of booklets about films, having to clear the copyright.

And nearer to my house in a modern block of offices just off Chiswick High Road Burlington Lane a series for OR Media. Just to top up my income.

A great advantage of my time as a researcher was that I could travel the world carrying out my research on the spot in all those different countries with their individual film and photo archives and interviewing the local people telling their stories. Internet and digital technology had not yet been invented; this would have made my work less interesting as all the required material would have been sent online. I would have been stuck behind a computer and a desk. Lucky for me!

My various individual outings after my work was finished were an absolute necessity as the daily workload, and the pressure; often struggling with jetlag was quite severe. At one time I seemed to be continuously travelling round the world and to Europe. Being away from home, my friends and lovely pussycats Biffy and Basher and the garden was often a real dilemma.

CHAPTER 29 RAMBLERS ASSOCIATION

What jolly good luck that I became a member of the Ramblers Association, the walkers' rights organization. Since my young days I always enjoyed walking around the meadows near Amsterdam, so it was just in my blood to continue walking with this association around the wonderful British countryside and enjoying holidays abroad with them. The members often turned out to be retired teachers, nurses, and really all sorts of nice people to spend time with. Often as we rambled across the fields, we'd ensured that the paths were kept open cutting away the brambles with secateurs, and I always carried a whistle just in case I was left behind whilst photographing or just lost in wonder.

The organisation went back as far as the thirties establishing the rights of walkers along the public footpaths. One of the battles during the thirties ensued with the gamekeepers of the Duke of Devonshire in the Peak District. Yes, the same Duke who owned the massive house in Piccadilly, London now the Royal Academy, also Chiswick House, (in what was then countryside to the west of London and yes, Devonshire Road where I lived in London with all the cottages on the estate. What a wealth of the aristocracy! Anyway, it was lucky for all of us that the protesters succeeded and established their walking rights. In the early nineties a millionaire property tycoon, a Dutchman, Nicholas van Hoogstraten tried to ban the walkers again, calling them "scum of the earth", by building a barn right across the footpath. It took a 13 year long legal battle to have the path re-opened again. So, it is good to belong to such a pressure group enabling ordinary people to enjoy and explore the countryside.

The West London branch to which I belonged posted their walks to us with directions of how to join the walks, for instance: Saturday, 15th June 1996: Charlbury circular, 10 miles, about 5 hours walking, easy pace, undulating. The leaders of the walk were mentioned, and from which station and platform to take the train from, and where the picnic or pub lunch would take place either in a particular village or else en route.

The walks took us also to different parts in Britain, for instance up North in the Peak and Lake District. It is with much gratitude I look back on all those impressive walks and the variety of countryside. Britain is a most beautiful island, an “emerald” island with such varying coastlines.



1996
Easter,
Morocco

In April 1996 I went with Ramblers Holidays Abroad to Morocco, my friend Sara came as well, and it was good to have her company. It is the only time I shared a room and double bed during a holiday because we knew each other so well. Whilst in Marrakech we also met up with my friend Dick Lawson and Fay enjoying a nice meal together. He was so impressed with Morocco that he later made it his home, marrying a very young Moroccan girl raising another family and earning his money guiding travellers on camels across the desert. High up in the Atlas Mountains we came across a Berber village with the local market and barbers to shave the men whilst their donkey's hooves were inspected. No cars anywhere to be seen or heard, this is the advantage of walking where they cannot get nearby.

I must have gotten the bug because in May/June that same year I was walking in Umbria in North Italy in and near Assisi, following in the footsteps of St. Francis to his retreat in the mountains where he fed and talked with the birds. In the Basilica di San Francesco we admired the Giotto frescoes which were much damaged by an earthquake the following year but lovingly restored. The Basilica of Saint Clare is where this mystic was buried having founded the first monastic religious order for women in the Franciscan tradition.

Getting away during the winter became something new for me and so I spent it that year in the Algarve, Portugal. I remember it well as among other things I really made advances on the leader walking leader, John. Oh dear, I visited him later in his Welsh home, when on driving around we located my cottage, meanwhile beautifully restored, just outside Newtown, tears, tears, I shed. His specially planned vegetarian menus for me were a kind thought.

But, oh my, how he snored, it was like thunder, never have I heard anything so loud, even from the next room it was unbearable. On top of it, poor man, he was impotent, and could not get an erection, using some sort of pump to try and get it up. How sad. It all turned out to be a fiasco anyway and I remember driving back from Wales across that mile long Severn suspension bridge in driving rain with failing windscreen wipers. Unforgettable and such a scary journey.

1999. To celebrate my 60th birthday I fulfilled my wish to spend a walking holiday in the foothills of the Himalayas in Nepal. My brother Henk in Canada did not like the idea at all because he wanted to celebrate my birthday with the whole family in London. Just think of all the organising I would have to do! No thank you! Instead, I rode on an elephant into the Chitwan jungle on my birthday. Much nicer!!

Usually, I went on walking holidays with the Ramblers Holidays Abroad but this time decided on HF Holidays as it was slightly more upmarket, for instance, instead of going all the way back with the bus again from Pokhara to Katmandu we were taken by a small plane. In 1999 Nepal was not so overcrowded as it is nowadays and as we were accompanied by local guides we were provided with a deeper experience of the country. Our sherpas would carry our loads and bottles of water often going ahead to set up the tents for our overnight stays in the mountains. In the morning they'd wake us up with a bowl of warm water to wash our faces and had dug latrines and set up a makeshift shower. Carefully walking along the steep mountain roads I concentrated hard so as not to fall but the sherpas ran past us like sure-footed mountain goats wearing just flip-flops; they were so agile and charming.



1999
Birthday Elly
Himalaya's
Nepal

I especially remember watching the early morning sunrise slowly painting the tip of Mount Everest golden before covering it completely with its glowing light. The closest we got to the top of Mount Everest was our view from a tiny airplane run by the appropriately called Buddha Air company which was an incredible experience. Whenever we settled down for a lunchtime stop the same Tibetan people would come and spread their ware, beads, little carpets, and jewellery. I bought a traditional bowl to use in meditation practice; it can be made to sing by drawing the wooden pestle along the edge. I took a photo of the woman demonstrating it and later our group took a photo of me doing the same but then in my London home. We were a nice small group of people and met a few times for re-unions. However, I could not understand why they felt the need to be always chatting whilst walking through the silent majestic countryside and valleys. One of the women remarked that if I wanted to be quiet, I should hire a porter and go on my own. She said it in a nice way, because we all got on well and they helped me to celebrate my birthday in style with cakes and little presents and so was Roger's a few days later. He was always gob smacked by all the colourful butterflies and would cry out: look at that! In sheer amazement. It was an incredibly good idea to go to Nepal for my 60th birthday.



2001-02
Cuba
Ramblers Holidays

Christmas and New Year 2001-2 I spent in Cuba as always with the reliable Ramblers Holidays. An island steeped in revolutionary history, the portraits of their national hero Che Guevara were all around, the colonial Spanish architecture some restored but many others in a dilapidated state. I just loved those wonderful old American cars of the fifties kept in perfect working order. We stood at the Bay of Pigs where the Americans tried to invade in 1961 which caused a nerve biting showdown between Russia and America.

Everywhere we heard the sparkling music, especially in the capital Havana, where we went into the Buena Vista Social Club; the American guitarist Ry Cooder had made this music internationally well-known. Of course, we just had to visit the bar where Hemingway used to drink his mojitos, made with lots of rum and fresh mint leaves, and stood still by the window of his house with his old typewriter still on the desk. I developed a liking for Castro and what he tried to achieve, namely free education, the best free health service and so on. There are many counterarguments as well, but I just like to stick to mine.

Once the island opens its doors and the Americans can settle here again, they will bring with them gambling houses and so on and capitalism will continue to do its exploitation.

Cuba



My dear friends, Chris (my travel companion in the ambulance in 1965) and her husband Joe used to live in Chester, then in Lancaster and finally moved to near Penrith in the Lake District, and lucky me I was able to visit them and explore all those places.

Not only that but I also stayed in Derek's (one of the K's Trustees) bed and breakfast place called "Yewtree" and from there explored Beatrix Potter's farms and surrounding countryside. Not only did she write and draw lovely children's books, but she was also a breeder of sheep and managed farms buying many acres of land thereby protecting the countryside from developers. Upon her death she left all of it to the National Trust, 14 farms in all and 4000 acres of land. What a woman and how thankful we can all be with her foresight.

Most of the time travelling in good company; but also exploring on my own, the countryside outside of London, across Britain and many other parts of this beautiful world. I am so very glad I took all these opportunities whilst I could!

30. LONDON LIFE

For several years, I was quite active and politically involved, for instance marching with CND, Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament and encircling the American base at Greenham Common with hundreds of women protesting against the US cruise missiles, arm in arm we surrounded the whole base. In Chiswick I got involved with the so-called "champagne socialists" (specially Evelyn and her partner who were well off and gave us parties in their house to keep the campaign rolling) because we worked hard to defeat Margaret Thatcher and to get Tony Blair of our Labour Party elected. And how disillusioned we became afterwards when he took the country into Iraq!

We were a wonderful team with Norma who lived further down my road and the actor Peter Howell with his finely chiseled nose who lived on the Glebe Estate, the next road along mine where many other actors lived, for instance Jane who had been married to Albert Finney and now worked as a therapist and there were a few others. Peter was also president of the local Fabian Society, the think tank of the Labour Party to which I also belonged. It was not long before I found myself on the Committee of the nearby William Morris Society near Hammersmith Bridge as I had fallen in love with the whole Arts and Crafts movement. Our outings to his house in the country, Kelmscott Manor, and visiting the other places where some of the Pre-Raphaelites painters had lived inspired me hugely.

It was so lucky to have such a very fine neighbour: Ian Morton, always willing to give a helping hand, freeing the toads entangled in the net across my pond to protect the koi carp from the herons; building a pergola; sharing his parties and accompanying me on the outdoor concerts at Ham House by the river.

We had picnics in the enclosures of the Henley Royal Regatta, which is one of the oldest rowing races in the world and organized by the prestigious Leander Club. As Ian had himself been a rower with this rowing club we were allowed within the compound. The dress code was very particular, women had to wear skirts, men were allowed in only with buttoned shirts and ties, even on very hot days. Ian is still a fine friend with whom I still stay in touch.

Across the road from us there was the little off license run, by Irish Lena and her son Neill who used to have inject himself with insulin but was nonetheless prone to having hypo's. They did not mind if we knocked on the door after the licensing hours as they were super friendly/

I took many singing lessons locally from Janet, and then gave performances in nearby Turnham Green church where I also joined the Meistersingers, a near professional choir.

I also became a member of our local Brentford and Chiswick Historical Society, always attending the local meetings, (I introduced my neighbour and friend Tessa), and all the lovely outings organised by them.

Pat who also came from Ireland came to clean my house, and as we became friendly often went to the Irish Club in Hammersmith where real draft Guinness was tapped, and Irish music and songs were taught. It is so good to have made time for all of this! Unfortunately, we fell out because I became involved in her family. Poor Pat had to give her first born away whilst still living in Ireland, the Roman Catholic rules being so strict for unmarried women. Only recently it comes to light how this happened to hundreds of women. But her illegitimate son found her, and they were finally reunited. However, it caused huge friction between him and Rick, Pat's husband who also happened to be the father of this illegitimate eldest son! Perhaps he felt threatened in his authority but some of the gentle remarks I made did not fall into good earth.

Sara Rochelle-Thomas, to use her posh surname, had been a close friend as she was introduced to me by Ronnie in the early 60's. She was a professional masseur and used to give me the best and most amazing intuitive massages. I started to take lessons from her qualifying with various diplomas as a result. Not long after she gave a retreat in a New Age wellness centre in the province of Andalucia, near Orgiva. It was called Cortijo Romero set in rolling countryside, with its own round swimming pool and only vegetarian food was served.



1984 Cortijo Romero



2003 Chiswick Hist. Society
June, Tess, Elly

I was her co-leader and really enjoyed this role. This was in 1984 and much later, in 1990, we were leading another healing retreat in Skyros, a wonderful Greek island. Of course, on the way back I just had to take the opportunity to visit the Acropolis in Athens again where I had not been since 1965. In 1994 we were leading yet another group teaching therapeutic massage in Grimstone Manor, an experimental commune situated in the wild countryside of Devon. We explored and walked in nearby rugged and wild Dartmoor Park, which is a huge National Park with its many wild ponies.

It seems that I was functioning well on one level but on another it seems I had difficulties coping emotionally as from 1992 onwards I was an outpatient in St. Bartholomews Hospital in East London. Apparently, I found my television work frustrating, and was suffering from a sense of isolation and uncertainty about the meaning of my life.

A course of anti-depressants was recommended, and at the same time I started to attend the Richmond Alcohol Counselling Service, as I had a real drinking problem. I had tried to move to Oxford, the well-known University town, but was let down by my friend Judy, who lived there in a small house. I was obviously looking for a life changing solution.

The consultant at St. Bart noticed that I was looking and sounding so well during my visit to him after my return from Grimstone Manor where I had enjoyed the fresh air and the company wanting to explore my own career in healing. But I did not have the finances to retire or stop my work in the media.

It is perhaps better not to make comparisons but even so Sara's problems seemed unsurmountable as she was in a violent relationship; her husband Chris often beating her and insisting on sex at night to enable him to fall asleep. Often, I was shown her blue bruises and it reminds me of the ones Christine, my colleague, showed as her husband kicked her when he or she was unable to sort out his petty cash receipts. I remember one holiday Sara came to stay with me in the winter of 1994/5 in Aqua Amarga, a small and isolated fishing village in the province of Almeria where I was to return to many times. I had rented an apartment within a few metres of the beautiful and quiet white beach.

When she arrived, in my mind I compared her to a wrung-out dish cloth, deprived of all energy, pale and exhausted, poor thing, she had such a hard time at home coping. After a few days she would brighten up with returned energy. One day we went for a ride in my rented car and drove up on a high hill to take closer look at the lighthouse. Having gone uphill on a paved path we decided to go back down using a different way.

Soon I was driving on an extremely narrow overgrown path with nettles and weeds on both sides and little bits of gravel underneath. It was obvious this path was never used. It was terribly narrow, and I was screaming with fear, just to calm myself and help me concentrate. It was so very steep with nothing to stop us falling over the edge into the abyss below. There was no way back or stopping, slowly inching forward was the only option. When we finally arrived safely back in the village, we told the locals about our adventure. They were so amazed and said that we had been driving on “the Wall of Death”. Unforgettable!

Sara and I had previously walked on the island of La Gomera, one of the more distant Canary Islands, walking in the National Park she told me about Nicholas Albery and his friends who used to overwinter in the caves of the island as did many other hippies. I was to meet him later during some walks and learned then about the Natural Death Centre which he initiated; one of the many social innovative ideas he had. Such a gentle person and how sad that he was killed as his mother backed the car out of the driveway.

He was befriended with Nicholas Saunders, who started the popular Neal's Yard wholefood complex in Covent Garden, a courtyard like a micro-village with many wholefood shops, restaurants and bars, a truly wonderful place.

I had met Nicholas before when he still lived in his Chelsea house as for my anthropological research, I wanted to meet two of his women friends who had taken photos of Ethiopian tribes. Entering his room downstairs, the backyard, normally a garden or concreted over as to make a small patio, was flooded with water forming a small lake on which exotic ducks were swimming around. A huge glass wall formed the barrier and separated us from them but leaving a small space at the bottom where they could come to feed. What a wonderful sight to behold in the middle of London!

In 1970 his first publication of “Alternative London” listing alternative tourist attractions had already appeared. These two wonderful persons were the forerunners of the alternative movement in England all those years ago. Their visions have become commonplace nowadays. Strangely enough, Saunders also died in a car crash in South Africa.

These people were from such different backgrounds to mine as I just had to plough on and continue working out how best to survive and keep on earning money. After I had introduced Sara to Lucy Liddell and to Joss of Gaia Books, they published books on massage and since moving back to Holland I lost contact with them. Sara seemed embarrassed when I hinted during our last holiday together that she should not criticize immigrants or other people who in her opinion abused the free National Health Service as she and Chris had never paid a penny into it but were gladly using the Service for their multiple operations and surgery. It was a question of the pot calling the kettle black.

Massage visite- kaartje



1998
Nicholas Albery, Sara,
Book 2001 Obit.



After qualifying in massage with Sara my interest extended to the field of essential oils, aromatherapy, and Shiatsu, graduating after four years of study and practical examinations with the British School of Shiatsu-Do and the Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine. Gabriel Mojay, the principal, was a lovely and sensitive teacher. The lessons and practical sessions taught me much about psycho-somatic disorders and the importance of healing touch. I was by now in my late fifties and still had to continue work in the media but gradually I was able to build up my own small massage practice at my Chiswick home. The personal contact with my clients was more meaningful and gratifying. In comparison the media contacts I had made over the years seemed more ephemeral although there were a few exceptions.

Over a period of about ten years, I had gained much benefit from the various therapeutic consultants and based on my own experience I found the practice of psychotherapy and counselling a creative process. This induced me to train in psychodynamic counselling at the WPF, Westminster Pastoral Foundation, based in Kensington. The Foundation was well-recognised by the traditional medical establishment and Kate Hartnup, with whom I had been in therapy for several years and who lived within walking distance became my supervisor. For three years I attended the course, enjoying the many seminars, passing the exams each successive year, and working with the various adult clients in the WPF's Therapy Clinical Service. However, I did not complete the whole course as I was nearing my retirement which would allow me more freedom and time. Not wishing to be tied down to a schedule with clients and weekly supervision sessions in a private practice I decided to stop. One of my fellow trainees, Jane Cherry, became a good friend and even though she has now moved to Nerja in Spain we are still in contact and are able to meet whenever I am there during the winter months.

31 MOVE TO MIDHURST, WEST SUSSEX.

During the many Buddhist Summer Schools which I attended I became friendly with Vivian Bell who lived in Midhurst, West Sussex. She was such a jovial and warm person always wearing a big smile and she offered to help me preparing the meal for the monks and nuns at Cittaviveka monastery as an offering or dana as it is called. This was in 1996; at my request a memorial service was to be held for Ron who had died the year before. Sister Candasiri, the senior nun, was leading the little ceremony; the planting of the tree in the grounds and the chanting of the nuns was deeply moving, tears welled up as I was overcome with sadness; the loss of a dear friend. He could have lived longer enjoying his life with Haruko but tragically a blood test was misinterpreted and so he died of cancer aged 70.



1986
Luan Por Sumedho
31 May
Battersea Pagoda

By this time, I was a frequent monastery visitor attending many retreats with Luan Por Sumedho and Sister Candasiri at Amaravati monastery in Hemel Hempstead driving up the M1 from London and staying in the garage of Cittaviveka monastery in Chithurst. In those early days around 1985 accommodation for guests were quite spartan especially in Amaravati: a complex of old school barracks. We felt like pioneers and during the winter it was terribly cold and draughty, as there was no insulation. But at the same time, it felt intimate when sitting in the Sala around LP Sumedho for his talk after breakfast. I had some favourite nuns and became quite close with one of them, Ajahn Rocana. She used to be a homeopath and together we were planning on making a documentary about the life of William Rhys Davies, the first person to bring the Pali texts to Britain. Surprisingly she told me she could see I was a loner, as if there was a sign on my forehead. Just as David Costa's girlfriend thought I would become a nun, that was during the late sixties.

. What insight they had! I look back on this whole period with much gratitude. I also met the scholar Maurice Walshe who came with me and LP Sumedho whilst I drove them to the summer school in Leicester and meeting him at his Berkhamstead home. Ajahn Rocana went on a pilgrimage to India and apparently with some foreboding she had prepared everything as if taking her final leave. She did die in India, but the details surrounding her death I did not get to know.

After the bomb explosion on a London bus in 2005 my wish became even more fervent to live nearer to nature. The house in Devonshire Road was lovely, and so was my good neighbour Ian. The social life around me was good but nearby Hogarth Roundabout was always congested. The M4 poured the commuters from the surrounding countryside into London and there were the overhead aeroplanes heading to Heathrow airport. On the other end of our road Chiswick High Road also became more and more congested. All in all, it did not contribute to a healthy environment and I became more aware of it.

One weekend I was visiting Vivian again in Midhurst, which is an old historic market town and conveniently located near Cittaviveka monastery in Chithurst. As I was walking along the High Street, I saw the sign: “one flat left” on a board just outside the Clock House, a wonderful 18th century Georgian building. I always loved 18th century architecture and this building looked marvellous; the estate agent further down the road showed me around the renovated ground floor flat. It was beautifully restored and looking at the photos of the spacious first floor flat I fell in love with it. The Georgian people used to entertain on the first floor, and it was, therefore, the most imposing floor of the whole building with high ceilings and windows. I decided then and there to buy it without having seen it, the reason why I could not see escapes me now. When Ineke came on a visit sometime later we were again accompanied by the estate agent who said: “now you get to see the flat for the first time”. We were not disappointed and were laughing with joy, as it was a great spacious apartment, beautifully converted, and I was able to move there in 2005. My friends John and Mary were amazing and really helped and supported me with the move, packing plates, dishes, and so on, into huge boxes.



2005
The Clock House
Midhurst



2006
Vivien
Chithurst
Monastery

But what sadness was to happen that same year within the family. My brother Wim had been suffering from throat cancer and I went to Holland to attend his funeral. The service was held in the Roman Catholic church in Edam and sitting next to Ineke I could hear her whispered anger about “the will of God” because her own son, my nephew, Jasper could despite heroic efforts not be saved. He was to die of cancer some three weeks later; he was just 30.

Before going back to Holland, I went to see him to say my last farewell. It tore at my heart. He did not want you to cry, so I sat on the divan, drank tea, and bravely talked with him and Eva, his girlfriend for half an hour. He looked so ill but was so gentle and I just about managed not to cry but fell into my brother’s arms who was waiting outside pouring out my tears. A tragic loss of a young, lovely energetic man. To lose a child is the most horrendous experience and I felt for his parents, Ineke and Frits and my other nephew Jochem, Jasper’s brother because they had always been close and the best of mates.

On his gravestone the words: “I have had 30 beautiful years” are written. How wise!

Having just moved from London to Chithurst, a difficult experience, I was now having to fly to and from Holland a couple of times, once turning up at Gatwick Airport having to turn all the way back home because dense fog kept the planes grounded. I started to feel stressed and having had to stay on my own at the Fortuna hotel in Edam when I arrived back in Midhurst, I felt in need of some support for myself. Upon contacting the local MacMillan Cancer Support team one counsellor came to my home with whom I had supportive talks. With other grieving people I attended the annual memorial service in December held in the local church. Inside the church a little ceremony was held, we poured water over a stone which we had chosen out of a large bowl. Later I saw that his name was added in beautiful calligraphic writing in the church’s memorial volume. Outside the church I had hung his name amongst the many others in the huge Christmas tree. All of this supported and helped me to grieve. My chosen grey with white stripes stone lies at the feet of my Buddha statue in the garden here in Monnickendam. If only he was still alive and would come across that little white canal bridge to visit me!

Midhurst has such a variety of ancient buildings, 94 of them were listed and covered different periods in history. Opposite me the quaint Ye Olde Teashoppe with its collections of hundreds of teapots in all different shapes and sizes was a good meeting place. Here came the people from Brockwood Park, for tea and walks along the river Rother, and to visit the ruins of the Tudor Cowdray House. Family from Holland came and stayed, Anneke and Job, who ate his first fish and chips from a newspaper whilst he sat on the bench outside the Clock House. With Frits and Tineke we visited the many seaside villages and the oak beamed old pubs. Ineke and Pieter came and joined me for a walk on the South Downs when unknown to me beforehand we had to descent a very steep hill to get back to Cocking village for our cream tea. I enjoyed watching the polo, joined the local Third Age group for walks and talks, the photography club, and the local Quakers. I fell in love with the beautiful countryside riding my bike along the narrow lanes with the high hedges often coming across horse and rider and often parked my car in nearby Cocking to ramble over the spectacular South Downs with its breathtaking views. With Jochem and Judith we picked the ripe strawberries in a nearby field and Jane came to pick berries with me first crossing a large lavender field. Lunches in local villages were always a delight, glorious flowers in gardens everywhere and sometimes cricket on the lawn.



2005, John and Mary in Midhurst

Nearby was the cathedral city of Chichester, which also had a good theatre and a small film club where you sat on small tables and have a drink from the bar. With John and Mary, we explored the stately home Petworth House where I was a regular visitor, the grounds with its ancient trees and deer a sheer delight. Many scenes for films like *Downton Abbey* and others were shot here and in the other National Trust stately homes in the area. I treated Anne to lunch in the Elizabethan restaurant and showed her around the bookshop based in a seventeenth century house with creaking floors, small staircases and easy comfortable chairs placed among the book stands.

It took you back a hundred years in time. The local library was housed in three Elizabethan cottages, all interconnected and in North Street one could find real bargains in the many charity shops, Cancer Care, Heart Foundation and so on. As most people in this area were well-heeled the clothes in there often looked brand new. The alternative shop called *Down to Earth* became my focus for getting my health food, bio vegetables, vitamins and so on and thus I became friendly with Carol, the owner. We are still good friends, and it was she who talked me through my decision to have brain surgery done but more of this later. With her husband Steve she lives outside Midhurst in a cottage in the woods and just recently completed her PHD in functional medicine, so she is now a Dr. She gives me advice on my diet, and this is just the sort of support one needs especially in old age when you don't want to take conventional medicine but remain in tune with the body and use mother nature's abundance of healing herbs and foods. With Vivien I explored the high viewpoints overlooking the valleys and the spectacular nature but after I had lived in Midhurst for just a few years Vivien's daughter convinced her to sell up and move nearer to her in an isolated place in France. She was my spiritual friend as we frequently went to the monastery to meditate, to attend the various ceremonies and talks with the Abbot Ajahn Sucitto who also held small group meetings specially for elderly people. Ah!! Writing about this I do miss it all.

32. PILGRIMAGE

In 2007 Vivien told me about her pilgrimage to India walking in the footsteps of the Buddha. She was so impressed, and it sounded such a good experience that I decided to go too. It was not an ordinary tour arranged by a travel company but by Shantum Seth, Indian, a Buddhist practitioner and teacher in the tradition of Zen master, Thich Nhat Hanh who lived in Delhi with his family and Vivien said that he kept his groups small. He had accompanied many other people including some well-known ones Buddhists like Thich Nhat Hanh himself, Joan Halifax Roshi, Larry Rosenberg etc. With these recommendations it felt good to go on this pilgrimage with him, especially as my interest in the Buddha's teachings had deepened over many years.

Feroza, who also lived in Midhurst and had become a friend wanted to go on the pilgrimage as well. We booked a taxi to take us to Gatwick airport a few days before the actual start of the pilgrimage so we could get rid of our jet lag. We had found a place to stay at called Narender Farm run by a white couple, I think Feroza did not like them very much regarding them as colonial people, she herself came from an Indian/Suriname background and went off on the first morning to buy little bracelets for the Indian children living in the grounds of the farm. It was just as well that we went a few days earlier as I discovered I could not possibly share a room with Feroza because she made such loud snorting noises during her sleep. When we met with Shantum in Delhi I told him that I wanted single rooms during our travels and, of course, had to pay extra!

The Buddha had recommended that those with faith should visit four places, the sights of which will arouse strong emotion, namely where he was born, where he attained enlightenment, where he first taught the Dharma or Law of Nature, and where he attained Nirvana or in other words where he died.

For his place of birth, Lumbini, situated in Nepal we had to get a special one-day visa to cross the border. Then Bodh Gaya where the Buddha sat in meditation under the Bodhi tree, until he discovered the truth of suffering and the way out of it, followed by the Deer Park at Sarnath where he gave his first talk on the Middle Way, the Four Noble Truths, and the Eightfold Path and finally to Kushinagar where he died and was cremated at the age of 80.

One of the sights which still resonates within me is Vulture Peak situated on one of the mountain tops from where the Buddha used to watch the sunset over the distant hills and in silence we did too. Also, the deer park with its deer still roaming around, coming near the fence and it is another image which still inspires me. I imagine the Buddha feeding the deer, walking about, and talking with the crowd of people. I would have liked to have been there!

An early morning boat trip along the Ganges took us past the bathing ghats and burning corpses on the wooded pyres. We walked through the countryside, crossing dried out riverbeds, where the smell of human feces was quite strong, through villages off the beaten track, and all the time Shantum would sit us down, reading from an ancient text whilst we visited these various places.

The pilgrimage lasted 16 days and with some fellow-travelers I was able to bond especially with the only other Dutch person, Margriet Versteeg with whom I am still in touch. Together in Bodh Gaya we walked over the steppingstones where the Buddha had walked in deep meditation. We consulted a Tibetan healer who felt our pulses and prescribed medicine for Margriet. We bought beads in what seemed just one huge marketplace, the goods spread out on huge sheets over the many pathways.

I felt the pilgrimage to be beneficial as I got to know the Buddha as a man, a human being, with all the same struggles we have. His wisdom, insights and philosophy are a huge source of inspiration to this day, and I cannot image my life without it.



photo group pilgrimage India

We were with 21 people which I did not consider a small group, and the dynamics of such a group can be quite tiring after a while. As I had booked a stay in the Krishnamurti Study Centre in Rishi Valley I went my own way when the pilgrimage had officially ended. Only Peter of our group came with me to the airport where I got a flight to Bangalore taking the opportunity to stay at the K school there. The others went on to Dharam Sala, where the Tibetan Dalai Lama lived.

My email exchanges with Geetha Varadan, guest person for The Study Centre had been welcoming, explaining in detail the bus route from Bangalore to Madanapalle (where K was born) from where I could get a taxi to the Centre.

It was my first visit and I stayed from the 6th of February until the 6th of March 2007 in a cottage on the campus of the school. From the cottage I walked the path to the Study Centre which housed a well-stocked library of books, audio, and video cassettes. My study deepened my respect for K's teachings, and I also learned more about the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna and others. One favourite book was: "I Am That" containing the teachings of Sri Nisargadatta who, like K, did not propound any ideology or religion. He unwrapped the mystery of the self through questions and answers like Socrates before him. As I am leafing through the book for the first time since ages, I feel it shall be a source of inspiration for years to come, hoping I shall be given some more time. I am 82 now and so there is more of my history behind me than in front of me.

Rishi Valley is breathtakingly beautiful, the site for the school was chosen by K for its serenity in a landscape of fields with scattered villages surrounded by ancient granite hills with striking rock formations. At the school pupils came from different backgrounds but bursaries were provided for the ones who could not afford it. On the campus there also was a school where rural children were educated free of charge. And moreover, there was and probably still is a rural health centre run by a husband-and-wife team, both doctors, treating the local villagers. I have seen the queues of waiting patients outside the clinic and watched the dedication with which these people were seen to. The whole place inspired and captivated me.

I often attended the early morning meetings with the school students; sometimes they played some music after sitting in silence for some time.

Krishna used to bring my food to the cottage, but it was also possible to eat with the students in the main hall. Or large tables were set out in the garden near the director's house where the guests could join for lunch and have some good conversations. I remember vividly Derek arriving with a special sauce he had made. Some of the walks I undertook with the other guests through the fields and climbing the granite rocks, quite arduous but so pleasant. I can understand why some had their own cottages built there returning every winter, Derek, one of the trustees was one of them, he also owns the B&B place Yewfield in the Lake District (I stayed there once) and the restaurant Zeffirellis (his favourite film director) for fine vegetarian cuisine and with its own cinema above it.

With my friends Christine and Joe, who live not too far away from Ambleside we had a great meal there on one of my birthdays and saw a film afterwards, the title of which I forget, I think it was about Ruskin's wife.

Rita, another trustee, also built her own home in the grounds of the RV school returning there every winter. She had worked for Lufthansa enabling her to get good deals for K during all his worldwide travels.

Gisele organised the yearly talks and walks in Murren, Switzerland which I attended one year and was gob smacked by its location, the sport chalet in which we stayed faced at a close distance the three majestic mountains: Jungfrau, Eicher, and Munch.

I am sure I could feel the energy bouncing up against my chest. It is here that I followed the lessons in Qigong from Bernhard Kaschek.

Also, during one of our extended walks up the mountains covered with wildflowers I met Friedrich Grohe who had become very close to K during the last years of his life. He used to own the well-known sanitary bathroom installations but passed the business on to his son and now dedicated himself to K newsletters and calendars with his own wonderful photographs which I receive annually. I was to meet Derek and Gisele again later in Brockwood Park, we had all aged but still going strong until now that is.

33. 2007-8 RISHI VALLEY, PONDICHERRY

Until now I had not realised how quickly I went back to India but going through some of my notes, it appears that I arrived back in Midhurst from my pilgrimage and first visit to Rishi Valley on the 7th of March 2007 with Virgin Airways. And then flew out again 8 months later that year on the 4th of December, returning on the 5th of March 2008. A stay of another three months in India. Amazing! This time I flew with Emirates Airlines changing at Dubai, its airport looked like huge extended glittery palaces and from there on to Chennai with Air India.

This time I arrived directly in Vasanta Vihar the Headquarters of the K Foundation in Madras as it was then still called to a warm welcome and embrace by Jayant whom I met before in Rishi Valley and who was now in charge here. The nearby road was now much busier, and the planes were flying overhead very closely so that sleep was difficult. Soon I was to meet with the Indian student women establishing a good relationship with them and met with Steve White, ex teacher at Brockwood Park School. It was he who told me about his stay in Auroville and a two week stay in the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Others were also telling me about these places and meeting one of the Rishi Valley teachers, Ishwari, who was a devotee, and her husband Japan, my curiosity was aroused.

2007-2008
Elly in India
Rishi Valey



At Vasanta Vihar the greetings with Derek and later with Rita (“do you still do the QiGong?” was her first question) felt like meeting with old friends. Colin Foster was also there, and it felt like one big family. Sometime later I learned that a young man, Krishna, had been a teacher or student at Brockwood and was now living in Auroville community – another “family” connection.

Geetha had arranged a taxi to Rishi Valley for us; a long drive with just one stop. I lent Rita my warm scarf to wrap around herself in the car which I regretted later as I got a cold from the draught. Glad to get away from the planes’ noise I was however sorry to say goodbye to the dawn chorus of the koel birds and the little lizard with its loud cackle.

What a lovely cottage I was given in the grounds of Rishi Valley school, SC3, so spacious, a mosquito net hanging over the bed, tables, a little terrace outside with comfortable chairs and table. Colin Foster was a bit envious, but I had booked long in advance. He was another person to tell me that he liked Maharshi and so did Luke, the Belgian chap who I was to meet again later in France, spending a long weekend there with Jacomijn and Peter Jonkers of the Dutch K society.

Geetha almost immediately took me into her confidence telling me about her mother's immanent death. I comforted her and gave her a little lavender bag to give to her mum. And so, I became her confidential person which in a way I later regretted because I came to know about the internal personal affairs of the school and, as we know, in every community there is trouble.

Apparently, K had brought her to RV where she restored the library, and the building, but her marriage was frowned upon and Hans, Radhika's husband, hated her; these were the principals of the school.

My personal relationships with everyone were cordial, being heartily greeted and invited to take part in the lunches set out at long tables in the gardens. Marina and Martin of the Dutch Krishnamurti Society were staying in a cottage nearby from where I could hear his loud singing of Schubert songs applauded by Antonio, (not from Brockwood). The three of them had great fun, but I was cross when she burned my little immersion heater, I had lent her. With this I used to make my companionable early morning cup of tea which I was to miss dreadfully during the remainder of my stay and travels. She came with me to visit the Health Clinic, and I photographed them on their bikes in the countryside giving each other a kiss. He also performed for Radhika and Hans in their house, Marina accompanying him. He was quite a good tenor, but I could hear the flaws despite twenty years or so of lessons!

Walking to the Study Centre along a little path with bougainvillea blossoms everywhere and hoopoes in the bushes I could also hear the coppersmith and brainfever birds. It was wonderful to go on walks and do some birdwatching especially spotting the colibri or kingfishers on the wires crossing the valleys. Some trips were organised by the school with students participating and I was able to join.

I am really blossoming here, enjoying my studies in the airy library, lovingly furnished, watching some of the K videos; later following Derek up the path to his favourite spot: the top of Horsley Hill which overlooked a huge stretch of the rustic countryside. Often, I walked with my Indian friends Vijendra and Nirwala, through the countryside stopping to drink fresh coconuts milk. As they were housemasters this enabled me to meet with their students often reading to them which was good for their English. I am introduced to classical Indian music and singers, taking some drawing lessons and meeting with the music teacher at his home.



2007-2008
With Mirai

One of the loveliest people I was to meet and get close to was Mirai, whose 17-year-old twin daughters were students at the school. She worked with Unesco to endorse women programmes for self-development. We celebrated Pongal together, the Hindu harvest festival, when all the cows get scrubbed clean and their horns decorated in vivid colours. At night they were led round the huge village fire and so I was able to get so close to Indian village life and culture. As 75 % of the local villagers work for Rishi Valley it facilitated contact.

We were also invited Geetha's house and had stimulating conversations. I especially remember one evening late in December when Derek invited a whole class of kids to sit on the balcony of his house whilst he told them a story. They were spellbound and Marina said afterwards that it was something I could learn.

Helena and Cavalho both from the Brockwood Park school also arrived and one night standing on a roof top we did some sky gazing. Cavalho turned out to be quite an expert, pointing out the various star signs; and for the first time I was able to see mine clearly, Scorpio! Both were friendly and welcoming, and I learned that he came from Brazil and had a little boy there. After a while other people arrive, Gisele, who organized the yearly Murren talks and her doctor friend arrived from Kerala, and with Rita they watch K videos at their respective private homes. I feel excluded as I sit on my terrace watching them pass by. From then on, I silently called them the Mafia.

And then I met with Elana who used to ride on her motorbike from Pondyerry and again heard more about Tiruvannamalai and the Ashram; the musician I had a meal with also liked the place. She continued to tell me about a beach massage Healing Centre, just outside Auroville. Just my sort of place I thought.

When Rita passed by her place asking her where she came from, the answer she got was: nowhere. Oh dear, that did not go down very well.

Elena and I were to meet several times more in Auroville.

I learned from others that they too found conversations at the lunch tables quite tiresome (Colin and Marina). When Japan came to visit his wife Ishwari, the teacher at the Rishi Valley School, I was told that he would show me around the Ashram and that the Buddhist nun Thanasanti was staying there. Unfortunately, she was one of my least favourite nuns from Amaravati. Also, there was an Englishman there, called Goodman who acted as an anchor person having written many books about Sri Ramana Maharshi.

It was so lovely and warm, 34 degrees in Rishi Valley. The lemongrass was in process of being shredded, the dairy was full of cows and milk, all hard work but Tamil Nadu is a relatively rich state in India and all the Rishi Valley people were dedicated to developing the local ecology and the villager's standard of living. However, I was less amused when I saw the house that Radhika and Hans had built for themselves by their architect daughter: a pompous classical Georgian style building not at all in keeping with the local vernacular style. It looked so colonial and what would the villagers have thought, I wondered. I once saw Hans looking at Geetha with real hatred in his eyes but as he was her boss, she tried to disregard him. Phew!

It showed me that they were not enlightened people or brought K's teachings into their daily life.

It is quite possible I realize now that I was the only one telling them about the books from the library I was reading, one about Jesus in India, also about Maria Magdalena and others.

They found this stimulating because Radhika once called out, you don't come and eat with us anymore whereupon I explained that the conversations (and small talk but did not say that) interrupted my thoughts and reflections too much.

It is amazing the people one meets in RV, for instance Meilan from Beijing but with connections in Florida. She was on a Fulbright Scholarship and Mirai told me that she must be very bright to get this. We got on very well together and often the three of us would have lunch together, or I went with Meilan to the Rural Education Centre where younger children were educated telling them stories accompanied by wonderful shadow puppets. I now wonder, did she bring those with her from China?

One day in the dining hall the poet Giev told me to construct my talk which I was to give in the morning in front of a class full of students. This came about because I had met K and could tell the class about Holland, the geography, the battles against the sea and so on. Next morning, I am so relieved because it went well; Anu and the teachers hugged me, and I felt so much love for those kids. I felt so at one with the world and intended to keep my notes for another time. It helped that the pigeons behind me sitting on their nest under the roof beams contributed to the atmosphere. Nirmala sat at the back and Gieve came as well to greet me. My voice had been loud, calm, and clear. All in all, this was a lovely experience for me, and it felt gratifying when afterwards one little boy came running to my cottage to ask me a question.

Another new person arrived on the scene: John from New York where he worked on a golf course during the summer but spending his winters here in India, surfing and so on, mostly staying in Pondicherry and Auroville telling me how crowded and booked these places get. He told Meilan and me about the Chinese economy, the upper coming economic power and that it would be useful to study the Chinese language. Also, that riots would break out when the stock market crashed. Later in the year of 2008 the stock market did crash, and I now wonder how come that he was so well informed.

Apparently, his main reason for being at the RV school every year was to visit the nearby Ashram of Mother Meera. He told us that he would book a taxi and take us along, that is Geetha, who dressed in white, Meilan and me. I felt a bit sceptical but when I saw the Ashram with the many orphan children she cared for it changed my mind. Sitting quietly in a neon lit room with about another 40 people waiting for her to appear felt special. John had explained the procedure to us. One joined the queue and when it was your turn, kneeled in front of her, whereupon she then holds your temples. When after a while she lets go, you were to look up to her eyes and that when she closed hers your session had finished. John also explained to us that in Germany where she lives around 600 people regularly come to her village and queue there for Darshan (devotion), so we were extremely lucky with just the 40 of us. Looking into her eyes I could have kneeled before her much longer, her eyes penetrated deeply and shone on me with such love and light, it was hard to leave her. John told me afterwards that the chemistry between us had worked, and that something special had happened. This is how it felt for me too.

Towards the end of my stay in RV (Rishi Valley) I listened and appreciated the dawn chorus more intensely and loved the pitter patter of the sheep's hooves along the country lanes.

Krishna was to bring me my last breakfast, and my last dinner at Geetha's with her husband Sailendran and Meilan. Next morning Sailendran hugged me farewell; Ramola did not hug, and at the last-minute Krishna came running with two dosas, sandwiches. I had embraced the tree near my cottage, it was such an emotional farewell. What wonderful friends I left behind not only Western but many Indian and local people. Gopal who managed the guests, Krishna, my special caretaker, whose son I also met, and who always brought me the most wonderful food, and the lovely woman who cleaned my cottage, Naragasaloem who I gave 200 rupees as a tip. We also embraced. It was to be the last time that I was in Rishi Valley and as I write this it fills me with sadness that I unfortunately made the decision not to go back there the following winter but went to Auroville instead. And how did this come about, why did this happen?

Having heard so much from various people about Sri Ramana Maharshi I had decided to go on a visit there and from RV made my way there by autobus. And so it was that on the 1st of February 2008 I found myself in his Ashram. As the philosophy and wisdom of the Buddha and Krishnamurti made much sense to me I had not yet read any of the books about R.M. It was obvious to the devotees in the ashram that I had newly arrived as I was shouted at having to leave my shoes in a certain place and not sitting at the right side inside the building. Not at all kind or gentle.

When I met with Japan he was able to move me to another little room next to the nun Thanasanti whom I hugged and later joined on a walk around the holy mountain

Arunachala where we visited a swami who lived in a cave and kindly brewed up some tea for us.

However, for the first time since my arrival in India I had diarrhea badly. This was probably due to the food in the ashram served on banana leaves which had been freshly washed down with water. It may have been the water but for many days thereafter I was vomiting and felt really sick. Japan kindly offered that I could stay in his house, just across the road from the ashram; his wife Ishwari telephoned from RV and asked after me; she was quite concerned.

Apparently, they bought their house 20 years ago, with a lovely view on mountain Arunachala but now there was a very busy road in front of it, with many lorries blaring and hooting past, the cars and dust and other buildings blocking the view. Their child was 14 at the time I was there which meant that in another two years they would be able to travel.

Many of the Rishi Valley schoolteachers had their own children educated in the school there as it had one of the best standards in India and the school was situated amid beautiful surroundings.

Having asked to meet up with David Goodman he joined me whilst I was standing in a queue for food but unfortunately I was ill prepared and had no ready questions for him, which made me feel quite foolish. Quite embarrassing really but I guess I still felt myself to be the tv researcher. Only when I had returned home and upon reading the book "Living by the words of Bhagavan" written by Goodman I'd have some questions then. At the time of my visit though I was merely curious having heard so much about the ashram but really wanting to get to the Quiet Healing Centre as recommended by Elana and longing to be near the ocean, away from all the dust and noise.

Arriving in February 2008, I find it to be a Centre right near the beach and one of the first things I noticed in my room are the lampshades and bedcovers, looking so homely and in sharp contrast to the bare rooms in the ashram. There are many facilities for all sorts of therapies, different massages, and a large warm water bath in which to float soundlessly like a baby in the womb. Whilst eating the fresh food in the little restaurant, I noticed a woman walking with a certain air which intrigued me. Hardly did I know at the time how close we would become later. John at RV had recommended me to Gaia Garden guesthouse, run by a Dutchman called Gerard originally from Drenthe who as a biologist came to live in Auroville in 1972.

Although Tibor and I had been in Auroville in 1979 to meet up with one of the inhabitants; a woman who was known to David Arnott whom I'd met at Brockwood, I hardly recalled the place except the beach and guesthouse at nearby Pondicherry where I was photographed laying in the arms of Tibor.

In 1968 the Charter of Auroville had been proclaimed by the Mother, the spiritual collaborator of Sr. Aurobindo when soil had been brought in from 124 different nations and 23 Indian States, it was to be a collective experiment of people living in harmony.

In 2008 it was therefore 40 years since this proclamation was passed and what I had not realized was that by this time the guesthouses were fully booked. Often months in advance as the winter temperature was then mild, 30 degrees or so and only a bit humid. I was, therefore, one of those many tourists and ended up having to sleep in Gerard's office who made me pay the same price as for one of the rooms. Indeed, his place was built with loving care and in the communal kitchen there was an amicable atmosphere.

Elena came round showing me the different places and telling me that it was unnecessary to cook in Auroville as there were so many eating facilities. Visiting Krishna (ex Brockwood student or teacher) and his wife Bipa it seemed they had a lovely down to earth, organic lifestyle. Karin, a German woman I met whilst having lunch recommended me to a Jackie of the Guest Service Centre through whom I finally ended up in “Tenderness”, where the guesthouses were run by a local Indian family. To my surprise this is where I met that nice woman from the Quiet Healing Centre again. Her name was Christienne who came from Paris and had rented another house at Tenderness. Like me she preferred being close to an Indian family. We soon became good buddies and met at a spiritual level as well. Her story of how she came to India on her own is quite a longwinded and complicated one. The reason for her being in India was because of a huge row with her son and daughter. Through all the many difficulties she later ended up with an Indian son, Raja, and a family of orphans she adopted in Pondicherry. We ate our favourite mango ice-cream together, I watched her learning to swim, and we visited the formerly French enclave of Pondicherry. The French atmosphere there was refreshing; so many treelined avenues with colonial style houses, such a quiet sense of order. And that is saying something because just a few moments away there were the dusty roads with cars and lorries thundering past blaring their horns.

2008
India Pondicherry
Ashram Auroville
with Christiane



As Haruko was interested in some photographs for the library I made my way to Mahabalipuram, a 7th century temple based on the shore of the Bay of Bengal. The carvings of the temple architecture were intricate and detailed, my love especially went out to the carved elephants dotted around the place. How we met Raj, the local Auroville Indian boy, I cannot remember the details, but it seems Christienne became almost like a mother to him. Afterwards she gave him 7000 Rupees so that he could study for his Masters in England. Sometime later I wrote letters vouching for him and enabling him to obtain his visa, to enter GB and study at Portsmouth University.

Through Colette, who like Christienne, was also French but longtime inhabitant of Pondicherry, we get introduced to Couleur du Monde, a charity sponsoring widowed women and their children. It was then that I was introduced to my own family, a mother, Mrs. Vasanthi, with her two beautiful daughters. Giving just one massage a week when back in Britain would enable me to sponsor them, I had thought. The time spent with Christienne was the best of companionship I had experienced but was unfortunately interrupted by Raj, and then later by her friendship with Colette; her husband was to arrive in March, but I had gone back to Midhurst by then.

On the way back I met with Peter who turned out to be a TV editor of documentaries and sat next to me in the plane to Dubai. He knew Andrew Singer with whom I had worked on many anthropological tv series, so we had much to chat about. Peter and his Indian wife intended to live in two places: in Ramsgate on the Kentish coast and in their Indian village. One of the topics of our conversation was the loudspeakers in his village blearing out their music; the noise being much too high in decibels and way over the legal limit. His intention was to start a campaign. In "Tenderness" I could hear it too, in fact in most of the villages in India this was my experience; the loudspeakers starting with chanting and music at the crack of dawn.

On the 7th of March 2008 I was back in Midhurst. Picked up from Gatwick Airport by Ian from 3 Countries Taxis, it was like culture shock driving along such silent noiseless roads. He stopped at Tesco's supermarket in Haslemere for me to get some food and finally found myself back in my comfortable, spacious apartment. What a luxury it was to be able to actually sit again for the first time on a toilet seat! And how good it felt to talk with family and friends again. I had made up my mind to return to India again later that year in December 2008.

34. AUROVILLE 6TH DECEMBER 2008

Re-reading this chapter I felt some deeply upsetting emotions. It became clear to me that throughout my life it was difficult for me to ask other people for support or their opinion not letting them near the way I was feeling. Always having to be independent, resolving matters on my own, I had learned from an early age. One of the Buddha's teachings is about impermanence and how things continually change. Yet I returned to Auroville expecting my intimate relationship with Christiane to be the same as before. This may have been wishful thinking at a subconscious level. It was the same idealistic idea I had expecting lovely teamwork with my mates when I got them the job filming in Indonesia. Raja had promised me a place in his Indian village but apparently, he had built a bungalow specially for me, situated near his own place out in the sticks. It was nowhere near his Indian village as I had imagined. In my mind I envisioned something like the little house "Tenderness" with the nearby family of Ganesh and his lovely children which I had rented during my last visit.

The bungalow had no hot water, but most horrible of all, it had no glass windows, but just wire mesh so I could hear all the outside noises and felt the cold wind blowing through at night. In the morning everything felt damp. The noise was horrific, every morning at 5.30 am the music started blaring incredibly loudly through the speakers and it felt like torture. The same Krishna songs at high decibels and again when it got dark at the early hour of 6.30 pm. just imagine those long evenings!

On several occasions Raja asked me for money, and as we never arranged a rental fee, I bought a fridge and other items for the bungalow. He also asked if I could support the Dollander Teaching centre with 20 or 30 pounds per month. This centre was set up by Christiane and her architect husband enabling village children to re-take their exams which they had failed the first-time round. Unlike them I could not be a sponsor as I only had a small pension.

Once I was crazy enough to go with him on the back of his bike to visit to his father in hospital who was seriously ill with a bad infection. I could have caught some disease myself. His mother was also there by her husband's bed and pointing to her ears suggesting I should buy her little golden earrings for which Raja later apologized. Of course, to them I must have appeared a rich Western woman. But I realized this much later.

Some people I came across told me that the bungalow's situation was too far away and that I would, therefore, not experience the real Aurovillean life. So there; this was a real disappointment and many times I underwent incredible feelings of loneliness.

It was really heartening to meet up with Kirsten, who was from the Amaravati Retreat Centre. We had some pleasant times together, going to the nearby beach and lunching at Repos where "the beautiful people" came together. The beach had two separate entrances, one for us and one for them, like a sort of apartheid. Naturally we took the entrance to where the local Indian people were bathing.

On my own I was able to visit the shrine of Mother in Pondicherry which was bedecked with flowers whilst devotees were sitting around in hushed silence. At the time I did not know much about Mother or Sri Aurobindo. But I noticed that it was very crowded everywhere, and many places were booked up months in advance and so I could not find different accommodation.

It turned out that Christiane was fully occupied with her large family of seven orphans; all needing to get communion dresses and having to do their homework during the Christmas period. She was also expecting her husband, Serge to join her and, of course, there was Colette of Couleur du Monde. To spend Christmas with such a large family Christiane had rented a large house in Pondicherry. It was a lovely place, and I had dinner with her on the balcony but then, as would often happen, to my dismay Raja arrived. One night I was able to stay with her and washing my hair under a shower of warm water felt like a real luxury. Many times, I missed our intimate conversations because of Raja's presence.

After just one week I desperately wanted to leave and got in touch with Rishi Valley and talked on the phone with Mirai and Geetha's husband. When Geetha herself finally phoned me back in the new year she told me I could come and stay near or next to Mirai. I think money withheld me because it would cost 100 pounds for a 7-hour journey by taxi and then needing to come back again for my return flight leaving from Chennai. By this time, I wanted to return home anyway.

I also telephoned Vasantha Vihar in Chennai, but Vijendra told me it was fully booked like everywhere else. To my regret I realize now that I should have listened to the hairdresser who so neatly removed the hairs of my moustache by pulling them out between cotton threads. She told me about a doctor in Pondicherry who rented out a quiet room in his house. It would have been so nice to spend time in that elegant French town. Why the hell did I not listen? What is it about me? So stubborn. I remember Temple saying that I was like granite and did not listen to him. And so, I persevered, possibly because I felt tied down by my booked return flight, but I could have moved. To this day I still do not understand. I felt quite homesick and anxious that my Midhurst apartment would be sold enabling me to move to Monnickendam. But more of this later.

During one of my previous visits, I had made a reservation which allowed me to enter the Inner Chamber of the Matrimandir, which was the soul of Auroville and built in a large open grass covered area, called Peace. The golden dome of the round building glistened in the sunshine and once inside all the surrounds were made of white marble walls, one's stockinged feet sank into deep white carpeting, and in the centre a pure crystal-glass globe reflected the rays of the sun. The peace and silent concentration inside there were of a deeply felt experience of great beauty.

Mother had envisaged that this place was to develop a new consciousness because: All of life is Yoga. She did not want it to be a religion because this only divided humankind, as K also used to extort and with which I am in total agreement.

Celebrating the New Year at the Matrimandir was a highlight. Rajavelu, to use his full name, and I went on his motorbike at 5.30 whilst it was still dark. A great bonfire was lit, chanting and messages from Mother arose, and as dawn was breaking over the golden Dome people made large patterns with flower petals on the grassy banks. To my great surprise I saw Shantum Seth (from my pilgrimage) walking towards me, it was as if we were drawn to each other like magnets. I told him about the retreat I was intending to do with Thich Nhat Tan in Apeldoorn when I was back in Holland, and he said there was a great sangha there.

Meantime, back in my draughty bungalow I was reading quite a lot, for instance Barack Obama's biography which I later gave to Krishna when we visited him. Also, a book by Pema Chodron: Places that really scare you, and there were many others.

The road to Pundy, as Pondicherry was fondly abbreviated, was dusty, dirty, and usually full of traffic. Although Ben with his little motorized car was extremely helpful and always on call it was still bothersome to get to the town.

In the office of *Couleur du Monde* I was to meet again with Mrs. Vasanti and was told through an interpreter of her move to the countryside where she now lived with some relatives. I was surprised that the two girls were not with her, and that Colette was unaware of the fact that they had moved to a village, a 4-hour bus drive away. I wondered who was going to supervise the two girls' education and how was I to know who benefitted from my yearly 250 pounds sponsorship? I lost my trust in the organisation and asked for the return of my money. Colette got upset when I did not attend the evening meetings with the widowed women, she said I showed no solidarity, but seemed unaware of the horrible journey I would have to make in the dark. I could have explained this to her in a clear manner.

Having introduced Raja to Krishna, who lived in Auroville community and was an ex Brockwood student, it was arranged that both his father in Portsmouth and his sister Emma would help Raja with his studies in England. By this time, I felt I had done my very best for him, providing the necessary references so that he was able to obtain a visa enabling him to study for a year at Portsmouth University. Raja and I had no real connection; I felt he was not part of Auroville's vision and aspiration and was reminded of Ronnie's saying: you cannot get a silk purse from a pig's ear. I was glad, therefore, to bring this whole period to an end.

Because I had never visited Sri Lanka, a Buddhist country and being so close to it, I went to Yatra Nova, Auroville's Travel Agency asking them to book me a flight with Indian Airlines leaving on the 6th of January 2009 from Chennai to Colombo. The return flight was dated the 16th of January. I was "to do" Sri Lanka in 10 nights and 11 days following the cultural trail and was thereby one of those tourists I silently disliked. At the time it was dangerous to be in Sri Lanka as the Tamil Tigers were active. There had been a suicide bomber in Colombo and many conflicting reports were doing the rounds, but the heavy fighting took place in the North and as I could stay in the Southern area I decided to go.

With Seara Travels in Negombo I booked a car with driver who would take me through the well-known cultural triangle of Sri Lanka; the various guest houses and breakfasts were included in the price. But first I needed to get better as I felt unwell. In the comfortable hotel I spent my first few nights and found that my legs were completely covered with red spots. I consulted a doctor in the local hospital who put me on antibiotics. All the damp and cold of the bungalow together with the plane's flight got me at last. Unfortunately, it turned out that it was the wedding season and near the large swimming pool one wedding after the other took place. The various bands played loud music using large speakers sufficient for any pop concert. The young brides first appeared in white, sat on a sort of decorated throne surrounded by flowers, and then later appeared again but now dressed in red, as if they were deflowered. Really strange.

Dilup was to be my driver and guide staying with me throughout the tour. In Negombo, a town on the west coast, an uncle of Tineke Steur, my brother Frits' partner, Herman Steur had founded the Family Help Program, a charity to house the many poor widows. The village was built in a Dutch style of housing, but unfortunately there was not time for me to visit. I had decided to visit Herman who by this time had moved further inland for fear of the Tamils fighting near Colombo although they had been fought back to the north during my stay. He was 80 at the time, had suffered two heart attacks and apparently longed for Holland; especially the food and felt so glad that he was able to watch Dutch TV.

After all those many years and still longing for Holland! I felt sorry for him. He expressed his admiration that I had climbed all the way to the top of Lion's Rock; and that at my age, 70 at the time. And so did I really because it was remarkably high, nearly 600 feet (180 meters) and I was only wearing crocs! I had a photograph taken of me at the feet of the giant lion's feet. Having reached the top and walked along the ruins of the 5th century palaces it was wonderful to sit down and enjoy from high up the magnificent view across the landscape in which huge Buddha statutes could be seen.

2009
Sri Lanka
Top of the Lions Rock



Sri Lanka is endowed with so many wonderful temples and caves decorated with colourful frescoes, and especially the site Polonnaruwa impressed me. This is where I sat a long time to admire the Buddha stone statues exquisitely sculpted in the walls of a granite rock; some were nearly 15 meters long.

Near Ella, one of the most popular hill stations, I visited the local largest tea factory and saw a photo of Mr. Pickwick and the seat from where he would look over the tea plantations. The landscape had incredible high mountains like Adam's Peak and most gorgeous views with several waterfalls. Of course, I only gained just an impression during those few days because I never stayed long enough in any one place. High up in the hill station I was cold and glad of my hoody and warm socks and was able to visit a Buddhist monk.

During a little ceremony he tied the white cord of blessings around my left wrist, which Raja later asked me about.

Returning from one of my mountains climbs I bumped into a family, young children with their parents and started chanting: Buddhham Saranam Gachami, taking refuge in the Buddha, they were so surprised and chanted it with me. We smiled and were happy with each other. In Kandy it was busy and difficult to get to the Temple of the Tooth and I noticed a few Muslims around. My last hotel was lovely; situated on the beach I was able to watch the night sky with its trillions of stars.

The drive back to the airport had been a bit scary, as there were still many security checks on the road. It was only recently that the Tamils had been driven away from this area.

The first thing I noticed when arriving back at the Shakti community at 5 o'clock in the morning was as the taxi driver said, "Temple music".

Raja arrived on his bike with a student and soon I was back in my cold and damp place among the trees wondering how I could have endured it for so long. He showed me some photos of the inauguration of the Dollander Education Centre showing Christiane in 7th heaven, and Serge, Colette and so on and when he again mentioned money I overreacted. It was not a good last day, and I was glad to disappear in a taxi leaving it all behind me.



2009
At the Bottom of the
Lions Rock
With Villagers

Whilst in Sri Lanka standing on the beach and telephoning Ineke on the 9th of January 2009 I heard that the house in Monnickendam was mine! And having exchanged emails and conversations with Ineke and others I was longing to get back to Midhurst and start to arrange a house move. I had sent a card to Kate Hartnup in Chiswick telling her of my move to Holland and that I would come and say goodbye. I was not to know that when I finally did, she had had a stroke, but I brought a big bunch of flowers and met with her son who kept himself in the background. She had been such a support during all those years of training as a psychodynamic counsellor with Westminster Pastoral Foundation.

35. 2009 MOVE TO MONNICKENDAM, HOLLAND

Why did I want to move back to Holland and not stay in wonderful West Sussex and the comfortable apartment in the Clock House? Unfortunately, the other remaining flats, apart from the ground floor one, were sold to people who using them as an investment rented them out. This meant a fluctuating flock of residents, often they were students, and the sound insulation was just not adequate. Above me one resident had a large dog, when it wagged its tail whilst laying on the floor, I could hear it through the ceiling.

Ineke and Pieter came on a visit and walking on the South Downs they found the descent very steep, but we were rewarded with tea and cake in Cocking's teahouse. On another visit we went to look at some houses for sale in Chichester and Petersfield as I decided to move again. It was then that Ineke said: if you are going to move, why don't you move back with us, i.e., to Monnickendam.

Every year I had spent some of my holidays in my brother's large modern house on the outskirts but one year stayed in Ineke's house in the old centre of Monnickendam whilst they were on holiday in Bali. It was then that I went cycling around asking myself: can I live here, can I live here.... I had always liked the huge skies of Holland, the clouds and also being surrounded by meadows and water. With the local estate agent, a tall young woman, I viewed some properties and one occasion Ineke's friend Ageeth came along, handy as she was trained as an architect.

When Ineke and Peter came back from their visit to Bali, Ineke looked at some housing websites and found a house for sale just around the corner from her, situated on a small canal. It seemed perfect for one person and as it was advertised just one day on the website, she went around to the local estate agent early next morning at opening time. She wanted to be first and spoke with the same young woman I had viewed some properties with. Together with her, Pieter and Ineke viewed the house for me and enthusiastically telephoned and told me all about it. I came over for a viewing and bought it cash in the winter of 2008/2009. Ineke's arrangements and mediations on my behalf were of an outstanding nature and I am not sure how I would have managed without her.

Cees Bont, the other estate agent, told me using a Dutch expression: Het staat op je lijf geschreven, i.e., it is written on your body, meaning it fits your requirement completely. And, he added, that I would still be on my own but have people around me and passing by my windows. He wisely advised that if I did not move then and there the financial crisis of 2008 meant that the pound would lose its value and I would miss the boat. I regarded it as a little jewel whilst there in my draughty bungalow and learned from Ineke's email that there was now a sign on the house: Verkocht. Sold. Local people said: A woman from England has bought it. At the time it was -9 degrees Celsius there and people were skating on the canals and the nearby Gouw Sea.

As I was still in Sri Lanka and heard that the house was mine, I decided to return home to Midhurst earlier than planned. My friends John and Mary once again being such amazing supports helping me with all the packing. But it was not a good year for selling my apartment as the financial crisis in 2008 hit us all and unfortunately, I had to reduce the price of my apartment considerably.



07-04-2009
Moving
to Monnickendam

And so it was that in April 2009 I moved back to my roots not far from where I was born in Amsterdam North to the old harbour town of Monnickendam after having lived and worked in Great Britain for 50 years.

It was a huge culture shock, the language so very different from the one in my brain, the concepts, the ideas, the traffic on the right side of the road, it took many years of adjusting. And, of course, I had also left many of my English friends behind.

Quite soon I heard about the HOVO, Higher Education for Older people, i.e., the over 50's, run by the University of Amsterdam, and enrolled for many of the lectures with philosophy one of the main subjects.



2009
 Single ticket
 Pulborough- Gatwick

As a volunteer I set up the website of Oral History for the Society of Old Monnickendam so that it looked professional: the camera angle, the background behind the interviewees (no lampshades sticking out of their heads and so on), the many questions and so on. Interviewing the older generation of Monnickendam I heard some amazing stories and at the same time got to know the town more intimately. With a little team I volunteered for about 9 years and the local Society was pleased to have a person with BBC experience. It continues successfully to this day.



Monnickendam Haven

36. 2012 BRAIN SURGERY

A dramatic change in my life occurred in October 2011 when after an MRI scan, I was told by the ear, nose and throat specialist Dr. Smit that a small wart was discovered on my right equilibrium nerve. He did not spell it out but in November the neurosurgeon told me it was a small tumor; fortunately, it was benign. For years I suffered from dizziness and hardly being able to keep my balance which as I now knew was hardly surprising as the tumor was attached to the equilibrium nerve.

I wanted to find out, therefore, if it had been there for some years and telephoned the ENT department of Chichester Hospital asking them to have another look at the MRI scan, they took some years ago. Talking with Dr. Hammans he acknowledged that indeed a tiny tumor was already present but had been overlooked by them and that the CPA tumor was 4 mm. They had dismissed my complaints thinking I was imagining the whole thing. But the tumor was now 9 mm, so although small it was growing!



I started to research various websites as I had asked for a second opinion and found a brain surgeon with some 15 years' experience in removing such a tumor in Leiden University Medical College, Dr. Van der Meij. His secretary Coby turned out to be a great comfort, and I also liked the assistant surgeon, Dr. Jansen. After a long debate with Carol Granger in Midhurst we concluded it best to have the tumor, to call it by its proper name: an acoustic or vestibular schwannoma, removed surgically rather than the Gamma knife laser treatments to make it shrink. And, as Dr. van der Meij said: "weg is weg", gone is gone and no further worrying thoughts: is it growing again?

With fellow sufferers I was able to attend meetings in Leiden where films were shown of the surgical operation (awesome!) and questions were answered by those having undergone the operation. The cranium needed to be cut open, from behind the right ear upwards, finding precisely that tiny corner and bridge through which a variety of nerves crossed. To remove the tumor, the equilibrium nerve needed to be cut leaving me with just one balancing organ and one-sided hearing. I was intensely grateful that the operation had been a success because later I saw one or two patients in the waiting room of the LUMC with lopsided faces because their facial nerve had been touched.

The first one to greet me when I recovered from the anesthetic was Ineke and apparently, I babbled quite a lot of nonsense. Both Ineke and Pieter were a good and steady support; Mary had come with me the evening before the operation; my brother Frits came to various consultations I had with Dr.vd. Meij, who asked, “Did I realise I would be deaf on one side”? and so on. Tineke came too. Recovering at home I got much help from Robertjan, who put a tv and videorecorder at the end of my bed. He is the son of Anita, whose mum is the daughter of my sister-in-law Tiny in Edam. During the following years he was the one to help me with getting a Bose system, a new digital television, iPhone, iPad, and computer screens.



2012
Brain Surgery

So amiable and a true friend and support. My friend Anna from Naarden made lunch and was the first to walk with me after the operation, whilst I pushed a walker as my balance was all over the place and needed to be retrained. During my recovery none of my neighbours came round asking if I needed anything or bringing some soup, whatever. That was quite weird because they had promised so much help. But overall, I was thankful that all this happened whilst living here in Monnickendam and not in Midhurst because I would have lacked the support from family and friends.

However, before the planned surgical operation on the 28th of March 2012, I so much wanted to see the Leonardo da Vinci exhibition in London's National Gallery.

As I mentioned this to my neighbour Fritz, he said he would like to come with me. We were to spend some glorious few days from the 19th to the 24th of January 2012 staying in separate rooms at Foubert's, the funky little Italian hotel and restaurant in Turnham Green Terrace, near to where I used to live in Devonshire Road, so it was familiar territory for me. We walked around Covent Garden having lunch and a glass of white wine in one of the restaurants, and for the first time went up in the London Eye. We took a boat ride across the Thames by night with Jane, and had an early morning drink with June, my lovely friend, who had invited her brother Jim and his Dutch wife Margreet. Fritz was amazed that they were drinking sherry at such an early hour! I did not know it then, but it was the last time I was to see June because she died aged 92 later that year whilst sitting in her chair listening to the BBC radio news.



2012
Holidays in London

My old friend Anne Ward came to Foubert's for a meal and together with Fritz we had dinner at my neighbour Ian's house; his partner Ray having cooked the meal. We were also treated to a special dinner at John and Mary's which also enabled us to admire their various collections of artifacts. All in it was a great social time, and London life at its best.



2012
Anne Ward

After the operation I wrote an article for a national magazine describing the difficulties in adjusting to the problems of balance and one-sided hearing; the hearing aids I needed to wear and so on, ending with the words: "Life is so fragile". Since the surgery in 2009 I have not taken one drop of alcohol, which was surprisingly easy considering my love of good wines. But for most people around me it was more difficult; it was almost like smoking in the old days when people offered cigarettes and encouraged or insisted for you to take one.

Not knowing how the surgery would turn out, and having made my testament, just in case, I felt upon recovery the need to become more authentic and preferred to have a crystal-clear mind not clouded by the effects of alcohol in order develop my spirituality. Not wasting any precious time that was left to me in this life. From a purely physical point of view, I needed to train my brain adapting it to having just one equilibrium organ and to maintain my balance.



Elly in Spain

Many decades ago, my spritely friend Barbara Taylor started the Hen Coop; a group of women wanting to grow old disgracefully, although I attended a few meetings it soon became clear that my intention was to grow old gracefully; growing being the key word and, hopefully, wiser. And making more time available for reflection, meditation, and contemplation. No more outings with “Pitto” the neighbourhood society or attending tv football matches in the nearby Weeshuis. It just did not suit me anymore, once people had some alcohol inside them, they changed, and it all became too superficial. But this did not stop me from overwintering in the white mountain villages of southern Spain for a couple of years. From 1993 onwards I went on many visits, flying to Almeria and in a rented car driving along the coastal road to the village of San Juan de los Terreros, staying in a rented apartment overlooking the sea. Julia came to share and Sandy with Laurien, who later said that I was jealous of Dick’s partner because she married him and lived in his lovely villa amidst an orange tree orchard with swimming pool. She was wrong because it was not my scene, keeping up with Joneses and so on.

During the eighties I attended several workshops at El Bloque, a retreat and health centre run by Dolf whose mother was a Gestalt therapist. Apparently, it is now called the Sacarest Evolutionair Centre and is run on the Buddhist principle of Dana, or generosity. Flying to Alicante, I made my way 5 kilometers inland near the village of Altea, where the Centre was situated in the most rugged and wild countryside. It was a divine place and Dolf was to buy more and more of the surrounding land to prevent developers spoiling the landscape.

Some of the experiences we shared during the workshop were quite cathartic, releasing hidden emotional pain. These tended to be short-lived when returning to normal daily life as was proved when Annie, a fellow retreatant came to visit me in London. Completely engulfed in her own world and emotions we hardly had any conversations. I had similar experiences with workshops run by Spectrum in London where one had to shout and beat at cushions to let the wounds and pain come out. One of the leaders looked at me and said: this is painful for you because it brings back memories of your father beating your sister, so you don’t have to do this.

As Kate Hartnup, my therapist in Chiswick later told me, these so-called healings were short-lived, acting as plasters on a wound; one needed to dig deeper and pay careful attention to what was stored up in the unconscious.

Once I moved to Holland, I started to rent houses during the winter months in the white mountain villages of Andalusia: Competa and Canillas de Albaida, making some lovely friends during our long walks, especially the very gentle and sportive Mary-Rose, who would drive her 4x4 into the Almajara mountains, a National Reserve, sometimes having a picnic before our walk into the wilderness. We came across one or two hide outs from where the partisans fought against Franco. She later bought a villa with a clear view to La Maroma, the highest peak of the Sierra de Tejeda. We still exchange emails to this day. Christmas time in Malaga was a real treat, the Picasso Museum was open, and in one of the many outdoor restaurants I found vegetarian food. Realizing that I might be visiting Spain for the last time I made a trip to Gibraltar, astonished at entering a totally British enclave, and stayed several days in Cordoba. Upon entering the Mezquita cathedral my female guide told me I had experienced the “Stendhal syndrome”. This 19th century author had been overwhelmed by the tombs in Florence and now my eyes filled with tears: I was flabbergasted by the sheer beauty of the multitude of arches and the dazzling light falling between them. It took my breath away and could not imagine that the building of this mosque started in the 8th century.



With Mary-Rose in Spain

Whilst I was still working and earning money and not having any children of my own, I decided to sponsor a little baby girl called Nong, an orphan with SOS Kinderdorpen in Thailand, providing her with an education until she became independent and could find work as a hairdresser thus saving her from prostitution as was the case for so many young girls. I would have liked to continue with this charity but, unfortunately, I am somewhat unsure of my future financial situation as this depends on how old I will be when I die. Nearer the time this could be a testament re-consideration but, in the meantime, I have an “eating up my bricks” mortgage.

When I came back to live in Holland in 2009, I was fortunate to meet with spiritual teachers like Jotika Hermesen of Sangha Metta attending various retreats with her in the forested grounds of the Theosophical Society just outside Naarden. When meeting physically was no longer possible due to the contagious Corona virus, the internet and Zoom (one good thing that came out of the epidemic!) turned out to be a real blessing as we were able to continue our meetings online. This also made me feel less isolated and supported my meditation practice.

Another blessing is the Shambala Centre of which I became a member some years ago. Although it is different from the Vipassana insight meditation tradition I was used to, I found the atmosphere in the building very peaceful, and it has the advantage of being situated within walking distance of the Rijksmuseum. I was made to feel welcome especially by Hans Zwart who is the anchor person and together with Marieke we celebrated some of my birthdays with coffee and cake. Their lovely presents from the gemstone corner shop I really treasure. And again, when the Corona virus forced us to stay at home, we continued our early morning meditations via Zoom.

Even though the virus crisis appears to have passed we still log on early in the morning. I especially like the fact that there is no “leader” or “group” feeling. One just sits quietly and says goodbye at the end of the sessions with friendly waves and smiles.



Nong
S.O.S. Kinderdorp
Thailand



2011
Retreat
Naarden

Having participated in quite a few retreats in both England and in Holland my need seems to be for more solitude and personal introspection without the distraction of other people around me. Even though I live on my own, there are too many duties and distractions at home and fortunately, I discovered that there are quite a few monasteries around the country which have guest rooms. Like the Dominicus Monastery in Huissen where I also attended workshops in philosophy, writing, spiritual development, and so on. Others are situated in nearby places like Egmond and Heiloo also offering opportunities for reflective self-retreats, mainly short ones. Sometimes I wonder: what would it be like to do a Having participated in quite a few retreats in both England and in Holland my need seems to be for more solitude and personal introspection without the distraction of other people around me. Even though I live on my own, there are too many duties and distractions at home and fortunately, I discovered that there are quite a few monasteries around the country which have guest rooms. Like the Dominicus Monastery in Huissen where I also attended workshops in philosophy, writing, spiritual development, and so on. Others are situated in nearby places like Egmond and Heiloo also offering opportunities for reflective self-retreats, mainly short ones. Sometimes I wonder: what would it be like to do a three-month retreat?

Occasionally, that gnawing feeling comes to the surface: was Irmgard right when she said: I was sitting on the fence. But then I tell myself that she had really no idea how hard I had to work for my upkeep.

During one of the online retreats Jotika remarked, smiling gently, that I had quite a few tools in my toolbox and without being conceited I found this to be true.

Since the sixties I had been interested in philosophy, and in the late eighties this extended to Buddhism, spirituality generally and mysticism, and felt no need for further instructions. Just a day to day practice would be good.

In the Buddha I found a scientist of the mind; and found I could work with the three characteristics of existence he expounded. In the old Pali language these are: anicca, dukkha and anatta, i.e., impermanence, suffering or dissatisfaction, and no-self or uncontrollability.

It was Meister Eckhart, the late medieval theologian and philosopher who wrote: "God is inside, we are outside", and that we cannot use God as a cow, praying as if asking for milk and butter. His book "About God I want to remain silent" (rough translation) remains one of my favourites.

During one of the Eckhart Society meetings in the 12th century St. Bartholomew Church in the City of London (it is a wonder that it survived the Blitz) I listened to the debates and especially to what John O'Donohue was saying. It turned out that he was an Irish philosopher and poet who wrote the book "Anam Cara", or soul friend, which is an introduction to the Spiritual Wisdom of the Celtic World as stated on the front cover.

During lunchtime I sat on my own in one of the niches when he passed by. Seeing me, he turned back and shook me by the hand. I was seen by him and that felt good! Jim Ballantyne sent me a newspaper cutting with the news that John had unexpectedly died in Avignon, too young at the age of 52. I would have liked to meet him more often; his books and philosophy remain inspirational to this day.

In Amsterdam I attended a cursus about the influential 17th century Dutch philosopher Spinoza and became a member of the society; also attending a course at the HOVO about his lifework, “Ethica”, the most difficult texts ever written. When he wrote about God he really meant: Nature and being so radical it is not surprising that he was expelled by his Jewish community. Simply said: for him God was Nature just as it was the “Light” inside everyone for the Quakers. To me this was all less dogmatic and could be worked with in a hopefully transformative way.

There are many more people who influenced my thinking, for instance Carl Jung, who for instance states that the issue of loneliness which seems rampant these days is due to having no communication about issues which are important to you. Am I lonely, or do I enjoy my solitude? A question I ask myself from time to time but overall, I must admit I like solitude. The friends I had in the past have all died, Rita, Pascale, Rudi, and Mary who is suffering from dementia, and dear Ineke is suffering from Alzheimer, a dreadful process to witness.

Rilke: Letters to a young friend:

One of my friends told me she still had conversations with her husband who died a few years ago, asking him many questions she did not ask at the time. It is the same for me, it is a year ago since my brother Frits died, and I still hear him say: I once threw an axe at our father! Why did I not ask any further? Could I have helped my sister Annie more when she was so stressed about her relationship?

It is as well to be forgiving and compassionate towards oneself remembering the rhythm of time one was in, John O'Donohue wrote in *Anam Cara*. In our family we never learned to communicate, and now the rhythm of old age opens the space to remember, but also to forgive, to accept and to let be.

Could I sing fully convinced with Edith Piaf: *Je ne regrette rien*? Not to have married, not to have any children, perhaps a different career, not in the media? These are all questions one can ask oneself, but my gut feeling agrees with what one Buddhist teachers once said: “Life is just a process”, a lot has to do with luck or cause and effect.

In *Anam Cara* there is a quote from prophet Haggai: “You have sown so much but harvested so little” and John goes on to say that Old Age (I am now 82) can be a wonderful time to develop the art of inner harvesting. I feel this book will help me to do just that because it fulfills my spiritual needs.

The gratitude I feel towards the many authors is undeniably immense. My bookshelves and notebooks are a real treasure trove. There are so many authors I am grateful to and to the psychoanalysts like Erich Fromm, Winnicott and Irvin Yalom among many others, also Buddhist teachers like Luan Por Sumedho, Thich Nhat Hanh and so many great writers like Rilke, Tolstoy, Woolf, Shakespeare, too many to mention them all.

More and more I feel the necessity from time to time to be like a lone elephant in the woods, finding refuge on my own island and reflecting on the Buddha's and other philosophers' teachings, all of it is enriching my life.

The summer is on its way, and the hope is there to explore the countryside on my e-bike, spotting the various birds, making trips to interesting places, the need to go abroad is no longer a necessity for me. At the same time following my different cultural interests whilst reading and literature remained my greatest hobby.

Since the Corona epidemic I have been staying closer to home; having the sandy beaches of the North Sea nearby is a real blessing, and when not in quarantine I was able to make long walks on Texel, one of the Waddenzee islands



2013
Elly
Celebration Day
New King



Elly in Spain



37. EPILOGUE

My life story written here was conceived in chronological order providing me with a clearer overview of several important events during my lifetime and I feel it has somewhat served its purpose. So much had to be left out though!

I am reminded of Plato's saying: The unexamined life is not worth living.

Whereupon the writer Kurt Vonnegut wrote: "But what if the examined life turns out to be a clunker (oude rommel) as well"

No more needs to be said. It is the way it is.



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A SELECTION OF RESEARCH CREDITS

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|---|---|
| <p>1995 ORIGIN OF MAN. Granada TV/Arts & Entertainment Network.
Four-part documentary series about human evolution</p> <p>1992/3 D DAY. Discovery Channel.
European archives</p> <p>1991/2 THE PRIZE. Invision Productions for BBC1/WGBH/NHK.
A series of eight documentaries based on the Pulitzer prize-winning book of the same title on the history of oil, money and power and all the social/environmental implications.</p> <p>1991 SPIES. Arts & Entertainment Network.
A twenty-six part series covering the history of espionage and intelligence from the earliest days, WWI, WWII, the Cold War etc. incl. Russian archive research.</p> <p>1990 MUSEUMS OF MADNESS. Brook Productions for the BBC.
A series of six documentaries on the history of psychiatry and relevant treatments, depicting social/historical themes. Archival sources used in GB, Europe and USA.</p> <p>1990/89 HUNTERS IN THE SKY. CBS.
A series of twelve documentaries about Fighter Aces of World War II; finding, interviewing and filming the pilots; archival film and photographs, using international sources including the Moscow Krasnogorsk archive.</p> <p>1989 REACHING FOR THE SKIES. John Gou Productions for BBC/CBS.
A series of twelve documentaries about the history of aviation from its earliest days to present developments. Films about the early 1900's, the twenties, the thirties etc. to reflect the background against which aviation developed - including programmes on World War I and II.</p> <p>1988 OUR WORKING LIVES. BBC.
Two programmes in a series of documentaries on industry, social conditions, and the workplace.</p> <p>1988 OUT OF THE DOLL'S HOUSE. BBC.
Two programmes in a series of eight documentaries on women's life in the 20th century.</p> | <p>1985 STRANGERS ABROAD. Central TV.
A series of six documentaries with André Singer chronicling the lives of major anthropologists using archival films of the periods concerned.</p> <p>1985 PICTURES OF WOMEN. Channel 4.
Five feminist writers on different continents illustrating their political/philosophical viewpoints with newsreel and television films.</p> <p>1985 WRITING ON THE WALL. Brook Productions for the BBC.
A cultural history of the seventies produced by Philip Whitehead.</p> <p>1984 WAR DIARIES OF HAROLD MACMILLAN. BBC.
Based on the book written by Harold Macmillan and illustrated with archival films of WW II, politicians, social situations etc.</p> <p>1984 MANY HAPPY RETURNS - TV HISTORY WORKSHOP. GLC.
A celebration of nearly 100 years of local government in London in the shape of a large birthday cake on the South Bank. An audio-visual show of the history of housing, hygiene, health, pollution, education.</p> <p>1983 WHAT IS A FAMILY? Flashback Productions for Channel 4.
A series of ten documentaries portraying the image of the family during the 20th century using archival films, both fictional and non-fictional, TV drama and documentaries from 1900 to 1980.</p> <p>1983 THE STATE. BBC Open University Social Sciences with Stuart Hall.
Ten programmes covering governments from various continents, from Africa to Latin America, the CIA, multi-national companies' use of propaganda.</p> <p>1982 BOB MARLEY. Island Records.
His life showing interviews, archival film of Haile Selassie, Ethiopia, American roots and Jamaica.</p> <p>1980 CAMERA. Granada TV. Gus MacDonald.
Series on early photographers, worldwide, social and political conditions etc.</p> |
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“I especially remember watching the early morning sunrise slowly painting the tip of Mount Everest golden before covering it completely with it’s glowing light”



Dutch born, Elly Beintema emigrated on her own to the UK at the age of 19, still young. Her questioning spirit and curiosity led her to a lifelong exploration of experiences and new ideas.

This book describes the remarkable journey of that shy girl from Amsterdam North to the confident woman that stands on top of the world.

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