

From a land of Windmills to the Land Down Under

I was only 5 years old in 1951, so I didn't understand why my mother looked so sad. I was born in the village of Poortugaal, Rotterdam, 29th Nov. 1946. My mother Roos (Rose) Hordijk, born July 26th 1917. She was formerly Roos Van Luijk of Poortugaal. Her father had built the family home at F.V.D Poest Clement Laan 51, Poortugaal. This has been the home of her brother Chiel Van Luijk and wife Ma. My mother married my father Cornelis (Cor) Hordijk from Rotterdam. My mother had 6 siblings - Saar, Aagje, twins Machiel & Jan, Jaap & Jannie. My father was born in Rotterdam, and had 8 siblings still alive from a family of 13.

I have many happy memories of playing with my cousins, while our parents enjoyed cups of coffee and telling stories.soon our lives were about to change.

My father suffered from Rheumatoid Arthritis. During one of his visits to our family doctor my dad was told he needed to live in a warmer climate, or he would become crippled and in a wheelchair like his older brother Jan, who had died 5 years before. My dad's brother, Oom Marten and his family had migrated to Brisbane, Qld Australia the year before, so naturally this country was the choice. Leaving their beloved Holland was heartbreaking news especially for my mum, who was very close to her siblings. Many lived in Poortugaal.

They received a letter from the Australian Immigration department in March 1952, bearing news that we would be accepted. My dad was a carpenter, and Australia needed experienced tradespeople. On the 9th May 1952, after final parties and hugs to the relatives who came to say goodbye, we boarded the JOHAN VAN OLDENBARNVELT for the long 6 weeks journey by the sea to our new home. We first stayed with my dad's brother and his wife, my Oom Marten & Tante Krijna, in the Brisbane suburb of Paddington. The land around was very hilly, so different to the flat area of Poortugaal.

My parent were pleased that some of the passengers they made friends with, were settling in Brisbane also. Fortunately May was the last month before winter. Brisbane had mild winters compared to my Homeland in Poortugaal. The warmer weather would be beneficial to my dad's health issues. My father found work as a carpenter then joined the Qld Railways in charge of building several new bridges with pre-stressed concrete, as well as a Supervisor with various Construction companies over the following years.

With the help of his brother and a dutch friend dad built our wooden family home in Morningside. My father soon learnt that Australian carpenters use hardwood with house building (getting lots of splinters), unlike pine wood back in Holland. Both my parents had to learn to use Imperial measurements. After learning this, Australia changed to metric in the 1970's. They also had to learn the Australian Pounds, Shillings & Pence. This changed to dollars and cents in 1966.

My father had a short course in basic English before we left Poortugaal, which helped him, but my mother arrived without knowing any English. Another thing my father had to adapt to was driving on the left side of the road, and pass a driving test. First he bought a CZ motorbike, then our family car. After riding a pushbike for 30 years on flat country roads, this was a new experience to drive a manual car along the hilly roads. We also changed the spelling of our name so the pronunciation would be easier in our new country, as Oom Maarten had done. Thus we became the Hordyk family, and my name Jan became John.

Our family regularly went to the Dutch Presbyterian church in the city. This was especially good for my mother who felt very homesick. Our family soon made some life long friends. 2 years after our arrival my sister Raya Rose was born. This brought more joy to our family. A disappointment with

their new language was that Raya was to be called Trijntje Jaapje, after my parent mothers. At the hospital our dutch minister said this may be difficult for people to pronounce. After thinking about it, my parents agreed. When Raya was older, mum started to earn money, doing ironing and housekeeping to help the budget. She started to settle into the Aussie way of life, and gradually learnt her new language. I had adapted quickly into the way of life in Brisbane.

Some things were very strange to me at first. I started school shortly after we arrived. I didn't know a word of English. A boy my own age wanted to play with me. He had an oval shaped ball. I had only known Soccer balls which were round. I thought his was very strange. With this game you could run with the ball. I soon learnt this game was Rugby League, a very popular Australian game of football. I soon learnt the English language and made new friends. I was becoming a typical Aussie kid, running around in bare feet like the other kids. We never did that in Holland. Australian children love to explore the bushland. We always looked out for snakes. Other differences in the two countries was the summer mosquitoes and flies. We spoke dutch at home, and I will always be proud of the country of my birth. We went swimming during the long hot summers. I joined the swimming team at school and am proud to say I competed in their State Titles in both Primary and Secondary school.

Our family continued to enjoy the dutch traditional celebrations, like Sinterklaas on the 5th December at the dutch church. We also shared the Australian custom of Santa Claus coming on the eve of Christmas 24th December (that's OK for a kid). This time of the year was when my mother felt homesick for her sisters and brothers. The only communication my mother had with them was letter writing, which she looked forward to receiving news from Poortugaal and Vlaardingen.

Family birthdays were a special time. My parents would invite my dad's brother and family over, and our new dutch friends. The women would work in the kitchen preparing the meal, while the men would sit in our lounge and smoke Dutch Cigars for this special occasion. The climate being opposite in Australia, my birthday was now in the heat of summer, not in the coldness of a snowy winter. My parents missed iceskating back in Holland, however we were able to enjoy iceskating in a man made rink in a suburb not too far away. Since my own children were born, they all loved helping my mother (Oma) making Oliebollen, even though it is hot in Australia for 'Oud en nieuw'.

I met my wife Lesley who is Australian, when we were 17 years old. Lesley was very interested in learning to speak dutch, and bought a Dutch/English book. We were married 4 years later in 1968. My mother visited Holland in 1969 for the first time since leaving. After our 2nd daughter was born in 1973, both my parents decided to visit their relatives in Holland. We decided to join them. I was looking forward to returning for the first time in 22 years, and proud to show my birthplace to my wife and children. It was April 1974. We travelled with our 2 daughters aged 2 1/2 years and 8 months old. I was proud to show them off. Brisbane had been badly flooded 3 months before.

It was wonderful to see my relatives one more. Lesley even tried out her limited dutch. We had a few laughs. Sometimes my mum would get excited and talk English to her siblings, and dutch to Lesley. Belinda our oldest daughter played happily with her Van Luijk cousin Leon, and neither understood each other's language. My relatives had turns showing us various places in Holland. Belinda especially enjoyed De Efteling, while Lesley was in awe of the Tulips of Keukenhof.

Since then Lesley and I have visited Poortugaal twice. We stayed with cousins Janny and Sijbrand Van der Boom. Janny is the daughter of my mother's sister Aagje. We both love the village of Poortugaal, and seeing my family again. Although I speak dutch quite well, there are some technical words that I have trouble translating.

I'm pleased we visited my Oom Chiel Van Luijk in 2013 on our last visit to Poortugaal. He died November 2015. We enjoyed a game of Sjoelbak with my cousin Jan Van Luijk - son of Jan Van Luijk who was the twin of Oom Chiel. Oom Jan's wife Tante Agnes was very good for her age. We couldn't leave Holland without eating a Raw Herring. Lesley and I did this at the market..... delicious.

Lesley and I have been married for almost 48 years. I was a Fitter & Turner for most of my working life, maintaining Earthmoving machinery. Lesley worked as a Personal Carer at an Aged Care facility. We both are retired now. We have 3 daughters Belinda (Bel)married to Suresh, Janine(Nene) divorced, who lives in Texas USA with her son Tyler & daughter Jasmine, and Elisha (Ellie) married to Earl with one daughter Sheyenne. The children call me Opa. We keep in contact with my Van der Boom and Van Luijk cousins in Poortugaal. Through Facebook we keep up with news and photos. Also my father's nephew Sjaak Hordijk through e-mails.

We live in Tewantin near Noosa and Raya lives in Bokarina. Both are not far from the Ocean and beautiful Surf beaches. I am a member of the Noosa Masters swimming Club. I am also a member of the Noosa Men's Club. Since joining I have made a huge dining room table for Belinda, a coffee table and several wooden toys for the Kindergarten where Belinda is a Leader.

Raya and her husband Barry have 2 children. Aaron and fiancée Rebecca, and Leesa and her husband Steve who have a daughter Imarni and a new baby due in July. Raya visited Holland for a few months when she was a young lady, staying with relatives and getting to learn about the culture of Holland.

Both my parents have passed away, but to our family, Poortugaal will always be a special part of our heart and lives, as we continue to keep in touch with the family through Facebook and phone calls on birthdays. Lesley & I wrote a book nearly 20 years ago which included stories of my childhood in Holland. There are several copies to ensure our grandchildren will know about their dutch heritage.

John Cornelis Hordyk
(Jan Hordijk)