

HENRY NORTHROP SOMSEN: A HOMAGE*by Theo Somsen [227]*

Just imagine: you are 92 years of age and you learn that there is going to be a reunion at about a day's drive from your home.

Doesn't it make sense that you think in such a situation: 'Ah, that's nothing for me; I'm far too old for that'.



It seems to make sense indeed, but this didn't go for Henry N. Somsen [2456] from Rochester, Minnesota. (See photo)

He was there; this now 93-year-old descendant of Hendrik Jan Somsen [577] who was the first male Somsen who emigrated from IJzerlo, Aalten in 1851.

In a complicated way Henry became the proud possessor of a ten-pound Dutch Authorized Version of the Bible, which Hendrik Jan carried along to the USA with difficulty.

Henry grew up in New Ulm, MN., the town where he also worked as a lawyer and where he lived with his family. With his family he visited Aalten 40

years ago and he also travelled through The Netherlands and Europe.

At the reunion of 1997 Henry was accompanied by his son Steve and his partner Eva. Many of us will remember Steve from the reunion in Aalten in 1997 where planted the lime-tree at the Japikshuis in IJzerlo on that hot Sunday afternoon.

During the Baldwin reunion Henry stole the hearts of all the participants. He certainly harvested admiration because of his presence. But he also compelled admiration because of his vitality and his interest in the other participants. But he made himself really unforgettable on Sunday morning, August 4!

After the revelation of the **memorial stone** near the grave of Jan Hendrik Somsen [308], the ancestor of the Baldwin Somsen branch, Henry stepped forward and took the floor.

Everybody realised that this was a very unique moment indeed and everybody listened very attentively, especially since everything that Henry said came straight from his heart. He started to indicate that all of us owe a lot to the initiatives to create ties between the Somsens and their relatives. Then he stressed the great diversity of possibilities the Somsen Foundation is offering us, like a website, the family magazine and a reunion like this. His plea (of course a lawyer cannot deny his real identity) aroused great enthusiasm to organise another reunion in The Netherlands in **five** years.

Do you think it is surprising that after this all those present closed Henry Northrop Somsen in their hearts forever?! ■



Speech of Henry N. Somsen at the Memorial Stone