



# SomSEN

## HORIZON

Volume 27 - number 36 – december 2024



Harry Marien Somsen (1946-2024)

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 go to 'View database' and choose:

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**Colophon****Somsen Horizon - Annual family magazine**

- \* is a digital publication of the Somsen Foundation and is published once a year.
- \* will be sent to family members and to interested parties in our family and family history.
- \* will only be sent to e-mail addresses known to us.
- \* is free of charge.
- \* voluntary contributions are always welcome (see our bank account numbers).
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Contributions for future editions can be sent to  
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**Objective of the Somsen Foundation****The aim of the Foundation is to:**

to preserve and promote solidarity between persons who bear the surname Somsen, who are or were related to them or who are interested in them.

**The Foundation tries to achieve its goal by, among other things:**

- \* conducting historical research into regional and family history;
- \* collecting historical documentation and genealogical data;
- \* the creation and management of a (family) archive and databases;
- \* the publication of a periodical;
- \* providing information to individuals, institutions and bodies;
- \* Organizing activities to achieve the goal of the foundation.

**Design Somsen Horizon:** Bert Hanekamp

**On the cover**

Harry Marien Somsen (1946-2024)

## Foreword

A year has passed since the previous and first digital issue of Somsen Horizon appeared in your e-mail. Now the 36th issue appears. A very eventful year is behind us.

Harry Somsen [146] died this year after a lengthy illness. You will find out more about him later in this issue. But with the death of Harry we have also lost a particularly important member of the board. Harry was our mainstay when it came to compiling our publications. He was the absolute linchpin in this.

Fortunately, Theo Somsen [227] has taken on much of his work and I am grateful to him for that.

We are also pleased that Dirk Somsen [136] has agreed to take a place on the board. Dirk is the son of our old genealogist, Dick Somsen [130] from Zwolle who passed away at an advanced age. We are incredibly happy with Dirk because he can continue the wonderful work, the life's work you could say, of his father. And we are also truly fortunate that Dirk knows a lot about ICT matters. Moreover, his father introduced him to the huge genealogical file that he had built up over many years. Welcome Dirk!



*Zelhem 2024 – The Board: Theo, Dirk and Johan, together with Harry Somsen's widow Ellie Somsen-Lieverdink.*

Due to personal circumstances, I am no longer fully employable. Especially because I don't stay in the Netherlands for a large part of the year. But as we announced a few years ago, we are sad to dissolve our family foundation. We then made the decision to let the foundation continue to exist on the back burner. But, of course, we cannot continue to do so indefinitely. Therefore, the question remains whether there are Somsens who feel in favor of making survival possible. You can register with one of the board members. It's not a lot of work.

What we also need a lot is as many [email addresses](#) of family members as possible. Our magazine is sent free of charge by email. So, if you know someone who is connected to our family, we are very grateful for his or her email address. We have previously announced that we do not need to receive donations because we can still draw on a bequest for the time being. In addition, we save a lot of costs by publishing Somsen Horizon digitally.

I wish you a lot of reading pleasure and a merry Christmas and a Happy 2025.

*Johan Somsen [1089], chairman*

## In Memoriam Harry Somsen [146]

by Johan Somsen [1089]

On March 6, 2024, Harry Somsen passed away after a long-term illness in his beloved village of Zelhem. In addition to the countless activities and board positions in Zelhem and the surrounding area, he was also a board member of our family foundation for many years.

I met Harry and his wife Ellie for the first time at the big worldwide Somsen reunion in IJzerlo in the summer of 1997. Although most of the 400 or so participants there were called Somsen, there were many who met for the first time and so it was with Harry and me.

But after that we had regular and later intensive contact with each other for 27 years because Harry, like many other Somsens, felt very attracted to the family foundation. In the first years, he did not have a board position, but he and his wife Elly were loyal visitors to the various meetings we organized at the time.

After I got to know him better, it was understandable that he was not immediately waiting for a place on our board because he was already up to his ears in countless positions and activities. He was active in almost everything that had to do with the history of his village of Zelhem and the surrounding area. From prehistoric times to the present day.

He was called a walking population register and that was certainly not an exaggeration. He knew a lot of details about his village and he played a central role in the creation of the museum in his hometown. He also organized a number of exhibitions of painters from the Achterhoek and he managed to conjure up their paintings everywhere.

It was therefore not at all surprising that he

Verdrietig heb ik te vroeg afscheid moeten nemen van  
mijn lieve en zorgzame man

Harry Somsen

- Harry Marien -

\* 25 april 1946 Zelhem † 6 maart 2024

Hij was een markant mens. En een geveer die, geheel belangeloos en vanuit onbaatzuchtigheid, alles voor iedereen wilde regelen en altijd klaarstond voor een ander.

Een man die bruiste, levenslustig was en vol optimisme tot het laatst de momenten pakte die zijn leven kleur gaven.

*Het is goed, maar wat zal ik hem missen.*

Ellie Somsen - Lieverdink

received a royal knighthood for all his merits and it also surprised no one that in 2017 he was named volunteer of the year in the large municipality of Bronckhorst of which Zelhem is a part.

We were fortunate that Harry came to support our board when we called on him. And we are very grateful to him for the tireless diligence and accuracy with which he has edited and laid out our publications for many years.

In December 2023, as a full board, Harry, Theo and I had nice dinner and of course his wife Elly was also present. He was always supported in his many activities by Elly and I sincerely wish her support in these difficult times. We miss him...

# Homage to Harry Somsen

by Theo Somsen [227]

*That Harry Somsen has meant a lot to our Somsen Foundation, yes we know. But also others honored his efforts and memory.*

Harry loved the Achterhoek and his hometown Zelhem; so he committed himself to the Historical Society of Oud-Zelhem. For many years he successfully worked hard to collect as many paintings as possible by artists from Zelhem on the subject of 'Zelhem'. His death in March 2024 prompted his Historical Society to organize an exhibition of paintings that Harry managed to acquire over the years as early as the end of June 2024.

A surprising exhibition as some of the images show.

**Hommage aan Harry Somsen**

**ZELHEM** - Van 26 juni tot en met 21 september is er weer een prachtige expositie te zien van de Culturele Atlas Zelhem in Galerie Zelhem.

De in maart overleden Harry Somsen heeft een grote rol gespeeld in de totstandkoming van de Culturele Atlas Zelhem, een collectie schilderijen en tekeningen met maar één onderwerp: Zelhem. De expositie omvat oud en nieuw werk van bekende en minder bekende kunstenaars uit Zelhem. Bijzonder is een nieuw verworven en geschonken werk van Herman Knaake: gezicht op Zelhem vanaf de Halseweg. De expositie is tijdens de openingstijden van de Zelhemse bibliotheek gratis te bezoeken: dinsdag, woensdag en vrijdag van 10.00 tot 17.00 uur, donderdag van 13.00 tot 17.00 uur en zaterdag van 10.00 tot 14.00 uur. Op zondag en maandag is de galerie gesloten.

Nieuw in de collectie: Gezicht op Zelhem van Herman Knaake. Eigen foto

17.00 uur, donderdag van 13.00 tot 17.00 uur en zaterdag van 10.00 tot 14.00 uur. Op zondag en maandag is de galerie gesloten.

worden gebeld of gemaïld met Bert Elschoot, Secretaris Culturele Atlas Zelhem.

Voor meer inlichtingen kan

- 06-25076633
- bertelschoot@chello.nl



Gerda Wisselink – Coops Mill

Press release exhibition 26-06 to 21-09-2024



Exhibition Library Zelhem



Herman Knaake – Bird Shaft

## Liberation is something you will never forget!

by Theo Somsen [227]

In 2025 it will be 80 years since the Netherlands was liberated by American, British, Canadian and Polish troops. On 30 March 1945, the hamlet of De Haart in Aalten was liberated. Mien van Dijk-Somsen [975] was 21 years old at the time.

Her memories of the war and the liberation can be found via

<http://www.haart-info.nl/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/MienVanDijkSomsen.pdf>

There you will find, among other things, this passage.



Mien van Dijk-Somsen

March 28, 1945 was my father's birthday. In the evening a glass of fruit from a preserving bottle was drunk on it. At 8 o'clock in the evening there was a knock on the front door. A German staff of 6 men came storming in and they

had to have a room. The second night they left again on the way back to Germany.

But, I still want to say this.

When they left at night, they shook our hand and wished us well. They themselves, I think, were also

glad that the misery of the war was soon behind them.

Then a day later there was shooting at the farm, also with us, through the façade of the front house. We were in the basement. At one point we heard a vehicle drive into our yard. That was a Canadian, who drove into the yard.

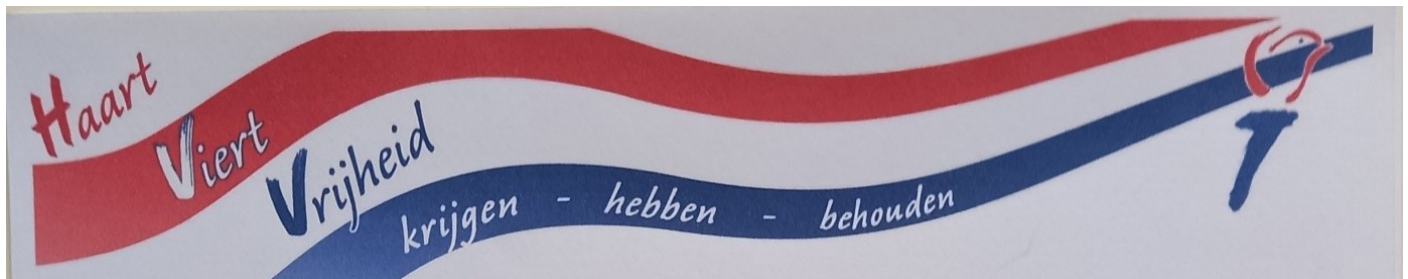
And who's sitting next to him?

My youngest sister!!!

...

We had on the farm ... a boy from Maastricht. That boy came out and saw the liberator. He stood in front of the tank, saluted and sang the 'Wilhelmus', the Dutch national anthem, in a loud voice... I can still see him singing!

So then the signal for us was: This is the liberation! I'll never forget that!



## Two centenarians Somsens

Mien (Willemina) van Dijk-Somsen passed away on September 6, 2024 at the age of 101. This makes her the oldest known Somsen. Until now, it has been Albert Somsen {333}, Baldwin, WI. 1890 – Baldwin, St. Croix, WI. 1990.



Mien Somsen



Albert Somsen

## Dutch immigrants to Canada after WWII

by Willem Huinink

*Willem (Wim/Bill) Huinink is born in the last months of WWII into a family in hiding in Zevenhuizen, The Netherlands. He is the son of Gerhard Willem Huinink, 1910-1985 [1395], who was the son of Leida Berendina Somsen, 1884-1965 [1231].*

*As one of the first postwar immigrants and as a Somsen-descendant he wrote this story (re-written from an article of 2022 for another audience).*



*Willem & Gerry Huinink (Somsen Reunion 2022 – Holland Michigan).*

### De Waterman – 77 Years ago

77 Years ago, on June 26, 1947 the first sponsored immigrant boat (DE WATERMAN) landed in Montreal with 1,000 immigrants from the Netherlands on board.

We were the vanguard of the mass post-war immigration to Canada. The following is an attempt at describing the conditions involved in that journey.

### De Waterman – 75 Years ago

May 5, 1945 the Canadian Army finally drove the Nazi occupiers from the Netherlands. The

occupation had produced economic ruin to the country. Many people lost their lives to repressive actions by the Nazi forces, but the worst had been the seizure of most food products from the Netherlands and sending them to Germany. The western part of the country saw the literal starvation of thousands of Dutch citizens during the ‘Hunger Winter’ of 1944/45. Following the euphoria of the Liberation, the country still suffered from a lack of basic necessities for living. Many industries, and particularly farmers, had lost most of their equipment to the Nazi war effort, either for the



*The Dutch ambassador, Dr. J.H. Van Roijen, waves to his fellow citizens as De Waterman docks in Montreal.*

equipment itself or for the need for steel in the armaments supply. The following 2 years saw little relief from this loss with only a small amount of importing equipment being possible due to all countries working to recover from the war losses.

The other major problem of the time (pre and post war) was the lack of land for agricultural expansion and the Dutch government policies of strict control over passing on real estate within a family. The existing farms/industries seemed to offer little opportunity for young people in the foreseeable future.

Many Dutch people were actively looking to other countries that appeared to be offering much more promise. Many thousands had made enquiries and registered for emigration to

foreign countries including Australia, Canada, and the U.S.

In the meantime, the Canadian economy was healthy and particularly the agricultural industry suffered from a labour shortage. In March 1947 the Canadian and Dutch authorities came to an agreement that Agriculturists willing to work as farm laborers would be admitted to Canada. A sponsor must be in place and this sponsor was obligated to pay the workers \$75/month for family men, \$45 for single men, plus free housing.

Notifications went out to many families who had registered, that the boat – the SS Waterman - had been pressed into service and would sail on June 17, 1947 from Rotterdam. In the space of about 10 weeks final decisions had



to be made. Visas were dependent on health and security checks, businesses had to be transferred/closed down, employers notified and personal effects had to be packed, sold or given away and separation from families/friends all needed to be dealt with. Many were afraid that they would never see their loved ones again. (A number never did, for various reasons.)

On June 17, 1947 the ship was 'ready' for boarding. The previous day it had dropped off a load of Dutch soldiers returning from Indonesia. The decks had been hosed, garbage unloaded and the new crew was at the stations. Otherwise, it was still a troop ship – ill-suited to being a passenger liner. Sufficient good food and supplies were loaded. The boat was not docked, but anchored out in the harbour. A tender was used to ferry the passengers to the ship (50 people at a time) and a ship's ladder was used for boarding. Families with young children struggled to carry babies and toddlers up the long steep stair that swayed to the movement of the water. Once on board, you can imagine the shock of seeing the accommodations. The men and older boys were sent to one section where the beds were cramped bunk beds stacked 4 high with thin pads as mattresses, a sheet, a single blanket and a small pillow. The women and girls along with the children under the age of 10 went to separate areas of the ship where conditions were similar to the men's. Some of the families (minus the men) were lucky to be assigned to a cabin and some even shared a cabin. Boys over 10 were housed with the men while girls over 10 shared the bunk accommodations with the women who had no children. Approximately 70 single women – most of them, war brides – were on board. 160 single men came along to scout out the new land's suitability for their parents and siblings, and prepare for them to come later. The families were on average a couple with 3 children but there was one family with 13 children and another with 11.

The families soon found out that the troop ship conditions extended to the meals. Although there was plenty of good food, all passengers had to stand in line – cafeteria style – with a plate being handed to each, even the little ones. The plate had several divisions in it to keep the types of food separate - but on one plate. The food was to be eaten at long tables. This requirement was soon dispensed with. As soon as the ship exited the English Channel it hit a storm on the open ocean. That evening many of the passengers became sea-sick and a good number of family members were confined to their beds. Those who were not sick would bring some basic food down to the barracks so that the bed-ridden ones might try to eat at least a little bit. With so many being sick, people were vomiting at very inconvenient places. Open barrels were placed on the decks and they tried to aim the projectile food into them. In the men's quarters, the urinals were made of steel tanks cut in half and hung from the walls with drain pipes leading out to the open sea. They were a handy place to vomit into but a lot of food got stuck in the drains. The urinals started to fill up and with the swaying of the boat, the contents started sloshing from end to end and flooding over onto the floors. Needless to say, the sanitary conditions were far from ideal.

The storm abated the following day but some people were sick for the duration of the crossing. Those who were not, started to wander on the open decks and many of the children spent hours playing with their siblings or finding new friends. Older siblings looked after younger ones while their mothers were busy with babies or even confined to beds because of sea-sickness.

During the day, fathers were allowed into the women's quarters to help their wives with the chores of dressing and feeding the little ones. One day, as they were approaching land, someone spotted an iceberg. Anyone who could, got on deck to watch the new



*l > r: Gerhard Willem Huinink, Leny, Henk, Willem (Wim, Bill), Jozina (Josien) van Rooijen and Gerry. The Huinink family - Immigration photo, June 1947.*

phenomenon. One of the passengers, while standing at the railing, saw an object floating at some distance from the boat. He recognized it as a sea Mine – a remnant from the war 2 years earlier. He could see that the boat was in no danger of hitting it, so he did not draw attention to it in case it might cause a panic. Then land came into sight. Newfoundland on the left and Labrador on the right. As they passed between they could observe green hills, even low mountains. This was their new country. The next blessing was the calm waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (no more sea-sickness) and plenty of sunshine. The voyage now became a pleasant adventure for almost everyone on board. But surprise, surprise – they sailed a whole day and were told it would be another day before they would reach Quebec City. There the boat was held up for a number of hours while immigration officials boarded and other affairs were taken care of. Late afternoon they sailed again and at about 10:00 AM on the morning of June 26, 1947 the ship docked in Montreal. The whole harbor appeared to be aware of the special arrival.

There was a cacophony of ships horns from all over the port to welcome the newcomers to Canada. On the dock stood the Dutch ambassador to Canada and a Canadian official in charge of immigration. Speeches of welcome were made by both to the waiting crowds on the deck. It took most of the day to unload the travelers and transport them all to the Central Station – several blocks north – in the city. Red Cross workers were on hand, both at the dock and at the Station with food and drink and other treats.

#### **How to start in Canada?**

Most of the passengers knew where they were going already, but some just got to know this as they came to the station. A special train was making the run to Toronto (6 – 8 hours away). The coaches had been assembled specifically for the migrants and turned out to be the oldest, most dilapidated cars that could be in service. The ride was hot – 30/31deg. C - and stifling. Some tried to open the windows but the soot from the steam engine would be sucked into



*Gerry & Willem Huinink during the Somsen Reunion 2022 in Holland Michigan (together with the Meekel family of Renee Huinink, daughter of Gerry).*

the coaches. The view though, was exciting; there were lots of trees and green farm fields for most of the trip. A number of roads were paved (but not with gold). A few families – hired by sponsors in Eastern Ontario - were dropped off along the way. In Toronto's Union Station there was much chaos. Due to language problems a number of families were sent to the wrong trains. One family were supposed to go to Bradford but ended up being put on a train to Brantford. My family was to go to Thamesford and when we got off there, our sponsor was nowhere to be found. The stationmaster got to thinking – many people coming to Thamesford would take the train to Woodstock (different rail line) and arrange to be picked up there. He got on the telegraph to the Woodstock station and, sure enough, our sponsor was waiting there and wondering where his migrant family was. He then drove the 25 km back to Thamesford, only 6 km from his home, and picked us up there. Many sponsors were fair and well intentioned to the immigrants. For many families there were no major problem or abuse of the workers. There were, however, stories of families being housed in chicken coops or other dilapidated

structures with no reasonable sanitary facilities; stories of wind howling through the wood siding while trying to keep a young family warm; outhouses to be used in freezing weather; lack of windows for ventilation in one of the hottest summers on record – it was not easy for them. The minimum wage left little for saving to cover the transition from the sponsor farm to other employment.

It was a difficult time for most and we can't go into much detail on that, but definitely the majority of immigrants, having already gone through the depression and the WWII occupation, were thrifty enough and had the determination and faith to get through this as well.

75 years later, with 5 of us who were on the boat being members of the same church, we got together to 'celebrate' the fact that our families have done well – even extremely well – in the years that have gone by.

## Quinten Somsen: Downhill Mountain biking at a high level!

by Arnold Edgar Somsen [2041]

*Arnold Somsen is the proud father of the talented mountain biker Quinten Somsen. No wonder he is committed to his career and reports on it.*

### Season 2024

The year is not over yet, but 2024 will go down in the books as very special for our family. Earlier we reported in Somsen Newsletter (no. 19) that our boys are fanatical about downhill mountain biking. This has accelerated for our eldest 18-year-old son Quinten [5522] this year. He has been given the opportunity to ride in a team this season, the HR Racing Team. This year started with several training camps in Spain, Italy and Slovenia, among others. Of course, the team also brought benefits such as technical support and sponsorship. Quinten has also spent a lot of hours in the gym and on the exercise bike to prepare for the racing season.



*Quinten takes to the skies during training camp.*

### iXS Downhill Cup

Although the team mainly competes in World Cup races, we have chosen to ride several cups of different levels this year for orientation. In spring, Quinten started with two races of the iXS Downhill Cup, a cup with which he already has experience and which is in his comfort zone. The locations of these races in Winterberg and Willingen (Sauerland, Germany) are also very familiar to us because we have been coming here for years to bike. Unfortunately, the races did not go quite as planned, mainly due to extreme conditions (mud, mud, mud and more mud).

The real big work started for Quinten in June with a World Cup race (UCI Mountainbike World Series Downhill) in Leogang, Austria. Just to be present at this circus is very cool with all the media, pros, frenzied audience, etc. And of course, riding in the Orange shirt is also extremely cool! The race went well for Quinten despite tough conditions and a heavy throat problem. Fortunately, he has already been able to gain experience in Leogang's bike park in recent years, which certainly helped. In the end, he finished 81st, leaving about a quarter of the field behind. Not bad for a rookie!

### European Downhill Cup

The next highlight was the participation in the European Downhill Cup in Lenzerheide. A beautiful location in the Swiss Alps. Unfortunately, there was a lot of rain that weekend and the already challenging course turned into a slippery and sliding fest. Where the entire German team went home because they thought it was too intense, Quinten defended the Dutch honour by finishing the entire race, resulting in a nice final position.

### Panticosa

Our usual summer holiday was split into two



*Quinten after the race in Leogang with his proud parents: Thirza Somsen-Beaumont en Arnold Somsen.*

shorter holidays especially for racing, where we were able to take part in four races. The absolute highlight was the European Cup race in picturesque Panticosa, located in the beautiful Spanish Pyrenees. Quinten was in top form here and achieved a final position in 11th!

**European Championship**

Another highlight was the MTB Downhill European Championship in Champéry, Switzerland. Again, an insanely beautiful location in the Alps. We had beautiful weather,



*Snow-capped peaks during run in the Swiss alps.*

fun for the parents but the track became so unbelievably dry that descending into the loose sand on this very steep course became a huge challenge. Quinten managed to recover mentally and finished the race, which was an achievement in itself.

**On stage in Switzerland**

It is now October 2024 and Quinten and I are back in Switzerland in Bellwald (not a punishment though) for the last race of this season.



*Quinten on the podium after the final in Bellwald.*

After the necessary tire changes, we rode the final and Quinten finished on the podium with a super good descent. What a great way to end the season!

All in all, a year to remember. It took a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get everything done this year in terms of planning, organization, finances, materials, etc.

But it has been well worth the effort and has given us memories for life!

## Jan and Anna in Baldwin, Wisconsin (part 2)

by Theo Somsen [227]



*Jan and Anna Somsen-Kemink [351-353] from Amsterdam visited their first cousins in 1949. Descendants of Somsens from the Achterhoek (Gelderland), who once emigrated to the United States.*

*Jan and Anna kept a diary about this period of almost three months: 31 May - 22 August 1949. In this episode you will find the sequel and a selection of their experiences in Baldwin, Wisconsin.*

### Friday 1 July 1949

A little later the phone rings and it is cousin Mina [Minnie: Harmina Hendrika Somsen- 320] who invites us to come and visit her and her husband [Willem Wernlund-321] for a day. She lives nearby. So we go there at half past eleven. Mina is already waiting for us. She already knows us because she was there last night. So we only have to get to know her husband, who is already 74 years old.

Mina herself is 71, she is very kind and caring by nature and is also very happy that we are

here and can now talk to each other. ...

Mina and her husband live here in a beautiful house. They handed over the farm to their son Jan [Jan Hendrik-802]. This farm was 140 acres in size and they now live off their money. You can see that they have worked hard in their lives, like all the farmers here. After all, they defy wind and weather and do a lot of work. ... However, we go further and then come to their own farm, a nice big farm, mixed farm. 20 Dairy cows, which are electrically milked 2 times a day. Furthermore, their son and his wife [Arlene in Beest-809] work the farm; They have their



*Rosa Mae, Minnie/Mina Somsen, Willem Wernlund, Margaretha (Photos 1934)*

hands full of work. ...

Here comes the farmer's wife: a young stout woman of about 20 years of age with her young son, a big boy [Russell John-3859]. Her husband is 34 years old.



*Jan Somsen and Arlene te Beest,  
wedding 30-05-1945*

### Sunday 3 July 1949

No sooner have we entered the church than the person who hands us a leaflet from the church as a member asks us if we are from Holland. To my affirmative answer and counter-question, he tells me that his name is Huitink and that he is from Winterswijk. ...

In the service, Rev. Muyskens presides and reads ps. 19, preaches on the 14th verse. The women's choir sings alternately and flowers decorate the stage. The sermon is easy to follow, especially now that it is a well-known psalm.

When we left the church, the pastor stood in the door and shook hands with all of us. He asked me if I had understood anything of the sermon. To Anna, who was walking a little behind me, he said: "Hello Mrs. Somsen, I have already spoken to your boss."

### Wednesday 6 July 1949

To Woodville to William Somsen [William-326], the mayor of the place. He is in his store



*Harry & Willem Somsen*

inspecting eggs, because he trades in eggs and also has an elevator for his flour and grain business, which he runs with his brother Harry [340] and son Raymond [Raymond Adrian-810]. He treats us to strawberries with ice cream, which tastes good to us with the heat.



*Sally Forman [811] + Paula, Jan, Cindy, Bill,  
Mary + Raymond Somsen*



*Woodville Elevator*

#### Thursday 7 July 1949

With Mina and her daughter and children...  
By car to the forests to pick wild raspberries.  
We go into the primeval forests; The first part has been cut down, the tree stumps are still in the ground by the hundreds. The cattle graze these wild grassy fields, which in my opinion do not contain much food, but it is claimed that this is the case. Now we pick red and black raspberries at the edge of the forest. Here you can see a piece of unspoiled nature.  
At half past eight we go back home. We picked a fairly large pan full. I'm still listening to all kinds of sounds coming from the woods. A troop of young cattle is right behind Anna, before she notices it.

#### Saturday 9 July 1949



*Herman Somsen*

The new car of cousin Herman [Herman N.-330] is brought home. It's a nice luxury Nash, 6 people. When viewing the car, I crawled into the back of the cityback. Anna closed it behind

me and I had to say "please" before I could get out. But I dealt with her later.

#### Sunday 10 July 1949

Around 3 o'clock Henry [John Henry/Jan Hendrik-342] comes to visit with his wife and 2 children from Bloomer (Wisc.).



*Doris Leola Wahl [343] + Shirley Ray,  
John Henry Somsen + Roger Alan*



*Christian Reformed Church*

He is the youngest cousin we had not yet seen or spoken to. He is 47 years old, sociable type, and we soon have contact with each other. He works at the dairy factory as an inspector.  
After lunch we will go to the Christian Reformed Church, where Rev. Everhuis preaches. ...  
For about an hour we talked outside the church with people of the Achterhoek, that we have to visit soon.

*To be continued*



## At home in the past

### Family life, culture and faith of the Somsens at 'De Snieder'.

#### Part 1: Our Family Life

*by Erik Somsen [701]*

*In the previous Somsen Horizon (Nr 35, 2023) I wrote an article about farm life at the Achterhoek farm of 'Somsen at The Snieder' in the hamlet of Lintelo near Aalten, where I grew up.*

*It is a summary of parts of my book 'Vrogger Thuus', which gives a picture of a vanished world in the post-war years between 1950 and 1970.*

*This time: Our Family Life.*



*Our family in 1959: mother, father, Rinia, Anja, Arry, grandmother, grandfather and Erik.*

#### **Our Family Life**

At the beginning of the sixties in the last century we lived as a family – father and mother [Arent Jan [495] married on 29-9-1948 to Wilhelmina Luiten [497] and four growing children [Frederik Jan Somsen (Erik) [701],

Johanna Gesina (Anja) [703], Hendriana Wilhelmina (Rinia) [707], Arent Jan (Arry) [705] - together with grandpa and grandmother [Frederik Jan Somsen [486] married on 15-5-1919 to Hendrika Wilhelmina Tammel [491] at the farm 'De Snieder'.

Three generations under one roof was quite normal at many farms in the east of the country at that time. There was no old-age provision yet and the children took care of their parents until their death and at the same time grandparents were babysitters and co-educators.

### Farmer's rhythm

As I told you last time, life with us followed the rhythm of the day, week and season. A daily rhythm of getting up early, milking, feeding cattle, mucking out, outdoor work, hot food at noon, feeding cows and pigs again at the end of the afternoon, bread meal, milking, another plate of porridge before going to sleep and then early to bed. A weekly rhythm with Sunday as a rest day and going to church and in the afternoon to Sunday school. Monday laundry day, the laundry hung to dry on the clothesline in the orchard. Thursday was market day in Aalten and father or mother always did some shopping. Friday was cleaning day.

On Saturdays we had to do chores as children and our weekly wash was also done. When I was a child, we didn't have a shower. Mother washed us in a large zinc basin. Around 1960, De Snieder was an average, mixed agricultural company with more than 13 hectares of arable and grassland, 10 dairy cows with accompanying young stock, a workhorse, a few sows with piglets, about 25 fattening pigs and about a hundred chickens. The season, nature, and the weather determined the nature and rhythm of the farm's work throughout the year.



Via a dirt road you arrived at 'De Snieder'.

### Living, 'our home'

Via an unpaved dirt road you came to 'de Snieder' – *our house* – which stood with the back to the road. You entered through the large partition door and stood in the cowshed and stable. With three generations and our livestock we lived under one roof. We lived in the front part of the farm (*veurhuus*), in the back part (*achterhuus*) were the stables for the cows and pigs and the hay and straw were stored there. Right next to the cowshed was the old kitchen of grandpa and grandma. We as a young family lived in the front house where you came through the hallway. During the day we lived in the small kitchen where there was a stove. The front room at the end of the hallway was the 'beautiful room' and we only used it when visitors came and later also on Sundays. There was a coal-fired fireplace for heating. Father and mother had their bedroom downstairs, we children slept upstairs in simple rooms with thin plywood sheets. In winter it froze just as hard inside as outside and the ice flowers were on the windows. We were given a hot water bottle to take to bed and lay under woollen blankets with a heavy stitched blanket on top. When it froze the condensation on the blankets was frozen in the morning and when it was snow, the snow blew under the tiles and in the morning it lay in the attic of our bedroom and on our beds. Because of the thin wooden partitions it was very noisy and you could hear each other. This was certainly the case in the days when the girls brought friends home, sometimes I heard more than was meant for my ears.

The bedroom and beautiful room of grandpa and grandma were also in the front house. We used the same hallway and there was also the telephone. There wasn't much privacy in the house. Next to the hallway was our basement. Here our winter stock was kept in preserving bottles and Cologne jars with pickled vegetables, fruit and meat.

Behind the cowshed was the loo, *the toilet*. That was a wooden plank with a round hole in the middle - through which we did our business - that ended in a well. To wipe our behind we used newspaper that mother had cut into



*Hendrika Wilhelmina Somsen-Tammel and  
Frederik Jan Somsen.  
Grandma and grandpa in the front room of  
'De Snieder', 1961.*

pieces. It wasn't until 1960 that we got a toilet with water flush and a shower. Then we also started using toilet paper.

### Food and Drink

For breakfast we ate pancakes every morning that grandma baked for us early in the morning on the wood stove. Pancakes with bacon for the adults and without bacon for the kids. At the time of slaughter we ate mash of berries. We also got a plate of porridge at breakfast. After breakfast mother read a piece from the children's Bible and a leaf from the tear-off calendar. Before and after breakfast Dad led in prayer.

At 10:00 it was coffee time, then coffee was drunk in the kitchen of grandma and grandpa. We drank coffee with boiled, fresh cow's milk. When the coffee cooled down a bit, a skin came on it. A lot of people liked that, I hated it and ut it onto my saucer with a spoon. The adults ate a slice of bread with cheese or bacon with their coffee. We children got a slice of cake.

At noon we had a hot meal. We had to eat what was on the menu: mostly potatoes, vegetables, meat, mashed together. In winter we also often ate pea soup with pork and smoked sausage and stews of kale, sauerkraut or carrots. For dessert we usually got porridge. We ate everything from one deep plate - soup, potatoes, vegetables, meat and porridge - and

with one hand with the fork with which we mashed everything together. After the meal Father read a passage from the Bible. Before and after dinner he led in prayer. At half past one the radio went on and we listened to the 'Messages for Agriculture and Horticulture' with the weather forecast and then the News Reports. Then we had to be quiet as children.

We had our own vegetable garden that was taken care of by our grandparents where all kinds of vegetables were grown. It was pure organic vegetable gardening with no pesticides or fertilizers. The love for the farm lay in a small orchard with old-fashioned fruit varieties. There



*Anja and Rinia cherry-picking.*

were also some berry bushes, gooseberries and red currants.

Around five o'clock, before milking time, we ate bread. Mother cut the sandwiches from a loaf of bread with a bread knife. On the sandwiches we spread butter with cheese, sausage, apple-strawberry jam as toppings. Usually we also got a boiled egg and sometimes a fried egg. At the time of slaughter we had liverwurst, schinke (raw, dried ham), heufdkeze (sour will). Only on father's and mother's birthdays and festive occasions did we get white bread rolls and raisin bread. Then there was also cooked gammon on the table. At the end of the day father and mother and grandpa and grandma

ate a plate of porridge. About ten o'clock the day was over and they went to bed. Alcohol was only served on birthdays and special occasions. Father drank beer and gin, grandpa beer and brandy. The women were usually given a glass of sweet fruit wine or eggnog. It was very common for men to smoke at that time. Father and grandfather occasionally smoked a cigarette or cigar. At all visits and parties, cigars and cigarettes were on the table in a glass. The room was sometimes blue with smoke.

### The adults in our house

Father was head of the family and made all the decisions. He was quite dominant, self-confident and unyielding. He preferred to make his own plan and was tenacious. You didn't always know his exact intentions and he didn't show the back of his tongue. *'Yes, yes, lets first see what it is like and then we can decide what to'*, was his characteristic saying.

He didn't express himself that much about sensitive subjects or he just found it difficult to talk about them. He didn't want to talk much about the war either. In retrospect, we found out from his letters and archival research what he had experienced as a conscripted soldier and resistance fighter during the Second World War had a greater impact on him than we realized.

Mother was a sweet, caring woman. She was always busy from early morning until late at night. She had a double job, a housewife and a farmer's wife. In addition to the entire household she also always helped at the farm, milking twice a day and helping with the work on the land. She had a lot of support from her faith. She always wanted to keep the peace and was self-effacing. It was not always easy for mother to live with her parents-in-law. Her and her mother-in-law's personalities were quite different and their personalities sometimes chafed.

Grandpa Somsen was a quiet, contemplative man. He was economical by nature, the light could not be turned on too quickly in the evening and had to be turned off immediately when you left a room. He always called us



*The laundry hangs on the clothesline at 'De Snieder' 1965.*

out on it when we were a bit sloppy about it. He taught me a lot about nature. Grandpa had a worn-out hip and was in a lot of pain and limped. Every now and then some kind of magnetizer came. Some laughed at people like that, others adored them. Grandma Somsen was a closed woman, she didn't say much. She could be a bit grumpy at times. She was a bit distant and I was never able to get a good sense of her.

### Games and outings

There was plenty to do for us as children, it was a true 'children's paradise'. We played with things that were present on the farm. We built our huts in junk corners and behind the barn and bushes. We also played with all kind of things that we got from nature. You could make a whistle out of a willow twig, a bow and arrow from the branch of a hazel. We had our own play forest, on the sandy path to our farm.

As a child I had my first vegetable garden behind the bakehouse. There was also an old sludge cellar with an old plank as a closure. That plank wasn't too good, because one time Anja fell through it into the sludge cellar. Fortunately it was shallow and she escaped with a fright.

In our youth friends often came to play with us. In the attic in the hay we made entire corridor systems. We also played 'father and mother' and 'doctor'. In this way we discovered the secrets of life in a playful way.

I didn't have many toys and what I did have I got on my birthday or at Sinterklaas. That



*Erik and Anja playing in the sandbox near the bakehouse, 1954.*



*Anja, Erik, Hilbert, Arry and Rinia, 1963.*

Sinterklaas, I thought that was a strange guy, the first time he came to us he was still wearing his Manchester pants and a bedspread over his smock. On his head a paper miter and a beard of white cotton wool. He looked very much like someone I knew and I recognized that voice somehow, he talked just like uncle Jan van de Kemper. As gifts we received some simple toys and some useful things such as a pair of hand-knitted mittens.

We didn't go on holiday when I was a child. That was also difficult because the work at the farm had to continue and I had to help out at the farm from an early age. Occasionally we went out with father and mother on the bike for an afternoon. Then they took us to a playground. When we were a bit older mom and dad took us out for a day once a year. Then we went to Arnhem by train and by trolleybus to Burgers Zoo and the Open Air Museum.

### Another little brother

On Boxing Day 1962 we got another brother, Hilbert [*Jan Hilbert* [709]]. When we got from Sunday school's Christmas party at the end of the day it was snowing. It kept snowing all night. A strong easterly wind in combination with drifting snow resulted in high snow dunes. The next morning 'De Snieder' was completely snowed in and closed off from the outside world.

Father picked up the nurse with a horse and cart from her home at a farm a little further away because the roads had become impassable because of the snow. The winter that followed was harsh and legendary. On January 18, 1963, the twelfth Elfstedentocht, eleven city skating tour, was held, which has gone down into history as the toughest Elfstedentocht ever.

### New Zealand relatives

We found it very special that we had relatives in New Zealand: aunt Riek [*Hendrika Wilhelmina (Riek) Somsen* [496]] and uncle Louw [*Louw Lei* [498]] and our niece Marika [*Marieke Wilhelmina Lei* [1118]] and cousin Ricky [*Cedric Lei* [1119]]. Aunt Riek was father's only sister and emigrated to New Zealand in the year I was born in 1950. We maintained contact with our overseas family by means of letters, which were sent by airmail.

In 1961 aunt Riek, uncle Louw and our cousins from New Zealand came to the Netherlands for more than half a year. During that time they usually stayed at 'De Snieder'. Marika, our cousin, went with us to primary school. Little did she know that she would later emigrate to



*Out and about with Aunt Riek and Uncle Louw's car, 1961.  
Father sitting in the car, standing: mother, aunt Riek, Erik, Anja, niece Marika.*

the Netherlands and teach there herself as a teacher and continue to live in the Netherlands. During their stay in the Netherlands my uncle and aunt had a car. That was one of the few cars in Lintelo at that time and in any case very special for us and it generated a lot of attention.

### Changes

At the end of the fifties the first modernizations came at 'De Snieder': in 1959 we received a telephone, a black bacelite device that hung in the hallway. In 1960 we could wash ourselves - once a week on Saturdays - under the shower instead of in a washhouse and we got a toilet instead of the old loo. We got our first car in the early sixties. In our childhood, the only contact with the outside world came in through the radio and the newspaper. It wasn't until the mid-sixties that we got a black-and-white televisionset at 'De Snieder', which was in grandpa and grandma's kitchen. A refrigerator didn't come into the house until the late 1960s. In the sixties everything changed on more

fronts at 'De Snieder'. Due to the intensification and increase in scale in agriculture we got more cows, pigs and chickens. Slurry cellars were built, a tractor and new machines were bought. What was previously unthinkable was suddenly allowed, we were allowed to take dance lessons and even father and mother were involved in this entertainment.

'De Snieder' was a family farm that was run independently as much as possible. We lived within a small, closed world of family, community and church. We were part of a close-knit community with care for the neighbours, traditions and customs and we lived within a Christian Reformed culture that guided our lives. I'll tell you more about that next time in part 2: 'Culture and faith'.

*To be continued*

## Somsen, genealogical family file.

In this section our genealogical advisor Dirk Somsen [136] from Halsteren informs you about the family reports. We thank everyone who has informed us about happy or sad events in the family. This makes it possible to keep the genealogical file 'up to date' and to report about it in the Horizon and Newsletter.

On our website <http://www.somsen.org/Genealogie/index.html> you can view the entire genealogical file. This on-line information is updated up to and including November 2024. We appreciate sharing this with our relatives. Please think of us at events in your family. We would appreciate it very much if you would send your family messages (preferably with a photo) to [somseogenealogie@djsomsen.nl](mailto:somseogenealogie@djsomsen.nl) or by post to: D.J. Somsen Verduinsbos 10 4661 NW Halsteren.

### FAMILYREPORT

#### Born, Married: No updates received

#### Deceased:

2023-12-31: Johanna Geertruida (Annie) Freriks-Somsen [1967], 79 jaar, Doetinchem

2024-01-04: Hendrika Johanna (Dieka) Vrieze-Somsen [1804], 88 years old, Rekken

2024-03-02: Gerardina Johanna (Dike) Stadler-Bakker [527], 90 years old, Zuidhoorn

2024-03-06: Harry Marien Somsen [146], 77 years old, Zelhem

2024-07-20: Dirk (Dick) Somsen [408], 83 years old, Winterswijk

2024-07-27: Nicolaas (Nico) Overduin [401], 91 years old, Amersfoort

2024-09-06: Willemina (Mien) Van Dijk - Somsen [975], 101 years old, Winterswijk



*Dike Stadler-Bakker [527] Harry Somsen [146] Dick Somsen [408] Mien van Dijk [975]*



*Vincent van Gogh – Sterrennacht / Starry Night*

**We wish you a merry, pleasant, blessed and merry Christmas!**



*Charlie Brown & Snoopy*

**And a prosperous and happy New Year!**