

My Story and Other Writings

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To my Father, who only read one book in his life, and to my
Mother, who loved to read.

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Author's Preface

Dear Grandchildren,

This book began as weekly letters and short stories, most of which I wrote between 1997 and 2007, while living in Jerusalem, Israel. In my life I have known many changes – I have been a young Jewish Dutch woman, a refugee, and several times an immigrant. Some of the things which I lived through were very difficult for me, and for everyone at that time. Sometimes, with things like that, it is easier to write about them than to talk.

I wanted to put everything together and fill in some of the details. I believe that many of you are, or will be some day, interested in the history of your family. What exactly you will want to know I cannot be sure, but the War is everywhere discussed, and I have myself told my story to different people who have been interested in what happened during that time. I also wanted to write about things that I experienced and my thoughts and memories about them. While I was writing it, I felt as if I was sitting with the children, talking to them. I wanted my children and my grandchildren to know where I came from.

We already have Opa's story, and I felt that one day you would also like to hear the story of Your Oma. So this is My Story, or at least parts of it.

Before we start I would like to explain a little bit about how this book came to be. Originally, I wrote twenty two stories, which I sent out as emails to the family. In December 1999 I began to write, telling "My Story": I began with my earliest memories, and by what was originally story fifteen, written in July 2002, I had finished telling the sequence of my life until we had come back from Indonesia. After this point thoughts just came out of me — memories not necessarily connected to the sequence of my life. These stories you can find in the first two sections of the book ("My Story", and "Other Stories.") Some of these other stories, many times from later on in my life, I sent out in Letters to my Grandchildren; I have added an edited version of these letters in the third section of this book ("Letters to my Grandchildren".)

Every part of this book is part of my story, and I wanted to let my children know. But for me, the loose stories have sometimes a better feeling than the rest. I could have gone on with many things, and there are many stories which I haven't told. Most often, one story leads to another and then to another, and really it has no end. But I would like to begin by telling one more story which I haven't told, the story of the weekend that Opa died.

That Pesach Simon and Terry were in Asheville, and we celebrated Noah's and Simon's birthdays, which are at the end of March and the beginning of April. Together we all went to a restaurant, and had a good time. It was a nice restaurant.

That Shabbat evening Opa played rummi with Sara and Zvi. I was supposedly watching TV, but I listened to what was going on. It was all very enthusiastic — Sara was ten and Zvi was seven. They were happy about winning, but I could see Opa was tired. I was worried that it would be too much for him, but I didn't want to be the strict grandmother, or wife, and say something.

On Sunday morning Simon and his family had breakfast somewhere else — eating at our house was too difficult for me, because we were always left with too much food. So I gave Simon and Terry some money for breakfast. Later they all came to say goodbye, and went to Atlanta. That night we were prepared to have the Seder with Opa, me, Iliana Grams, her mother and daughter. I still had dishes for Pesach, but they were up in a cabinet, so I had asked the cleaning lady to come on Monday to help me with it.

That night, Opa started coughing and spitting up blood. I called the doctor, and by three o'clock in the morning we were in the emergency room. I had to sit there for six hours until he got a room. At some point I called the cleaning lady to tell her not to come. Opa had to go get x-rays, and I had to register him. It was a miserable night, and in the morning I called the family to tell them. Simon asked what to do. I told him to have the Seder as planned with the

Finkels and to come the next day. And then suddenly in the afternoon, Simon appeared in the hospital saying "What did you think, that I would leave my mother alone?"

Of course there was no Seder. Monday night was the first night of Pesach, and by Wednesday, the second day of the Holiday, Opa got worse. He was upset, and asked me to stay overnight; if he felt it was the end I have no idea. We talked to the doctor, because Opa said he didn't want the same treatment as a year and a half before. We got an instrument with morphine which we could control, and Opa fell asleep and never woke up.

Pesach for me... I have to force myself now. I still remember. I drove back home after the funeral home took him away, at five a.m. Simon had also come to the hospital, but because we had two cars I was driving alone, with Simon following behind me. At moments of great shock like this, you don't really realize what's going on, but I remember thinking to myself: "From this moment on I am alone; there is no-one next to me with whom to make decisions."

It's amazing still for me that I didn't cry, but I never cry. I never do. I wish I could. It sits in my throat like a knot, and there's nothing I can do. I haven't cried in God knows how long.*

*Perhaps the only time I remember when I *did* cry, was in 1959, when we were already living Asheville, N.C. At that time we had a big, expensive house, and we had also a mortgage. Opa Simon was in Amsterdam, and at a certain moment Pien called: "Noach," she said, "I think you should go see your father. I was just in Holland and he's not doing too well." Then Saar called, not to the home phone, but to the plant, with the same news. After this, Opa called me at home to ask if his passport was ready to go to Holland.

That night I went to the funeral home and said that I wanted to do a mitswa, that is, to help with the *tehara*, (I have written more on this subject in a story which I called “Helping the Dead”, which you can find on page 107.) By that time Jack was there.

Noach got an assignment from his work to go to Holland, so that he could see his father, and I was alone at home with the boys. I felt horrible: every time there was money spent on a trip, but there was never money for me. I needed a vacation badly. Just before Opa Simon died, in Adar Sheni, it was a Friday. I was cleaning the house – the bathroom – and crying bitterly. I felt my tears were enough to clean the floor. That was self pity.

Then Easter vacation came, and we went to Atlanta for two days. I was happy to be out of Asheville for vacation, but our obligations in Holland were not over yet, because there was, of course, Opa’s second wife. As long as she lived, we helped her too. But that, already, is another story.

Editor's Preface

My own involvement with the texts that follow began when I received the original emails which Oma wrote. In what seems to be a spontaneously reflective process, Oma began to write the story of her life, and send it out bit by bit, as it emerged, to her surroundings, and above all to her grandchildren, who she wanted to “know her story.” Then, almost two years ago, Oma decided she would like to bring together the different pieces she had written, correct them, and put them out as a book, with the help of a third party.

I was afraid that such a process of collation and correction would have the deleterious effect of destroying the personal touches of the storyteller herself, and that we would be left with an impersonal story — a “memory book” — following conventional and predetermined lines. It seemed clear to me that the original emails, and their order of appearance, convey a rich range of emotions and memories, which would be obliterated by translation into standardized English and a strict narrative framework. But though the original texts have a unique voice, they are not available to everyone, nor — because of their idiosyncratic language — are they always readily accessible.

With this in mind, and having thirty years of experience with the author herself, I took it upon myself to commit this act

of collation and correction. My aim was to produce a finished text which would be as close to the originals in intention and tone as possible. In light of this, I have left the sentence structure, and in some cases the word choice, in what could be termed “Dutch-English,” instead of standardized English. Concerning the structuring of the narrative, I chose to strengthen what I saw as the three core parts of Oma’s writing:

The My Story text: a narrative sequence which deals essentially with the impact of the Second World War, and the Holocaust, on her life;

Other Stories: short pieces which tend to span this narrative (for example, the story of the Sewing Machine, page 111, which serves as a prism through which the experience of the War is reflected);

Letters: texts which combine both letters and diary entries. The linchpin in these texts is often the date at which they were written.

These sections became the backbone of the book you now hold in your hands. While the first two sections are largely self-

explanatory, I would like to add some notes regarding the letters section.

First, I have left the letters somewhat more in Oma's phrasing and typesetting than the first two parts. This seemed right, as these are more personal texts which were addressed to the family. However, there is more to these letters than meets the eye. In this section we can see the repetitive nature of her memories, and how they surface in connection with the recurrence of certain dates which were crucial in her own history. At times it is almost as though the past and the present are two different time zones which overlap in her writing. If at times Oma can appear to be a living and breathing calendar, nowhere is this more apparent than in the letters.

If the first part of the book is Oma's story, the letters section records how she experiences the story in her daily life, during a period of over a year and a half. These letters are at once a journal, in which she records the changes in her surroundings, a platform for reminiscence, and a perpetual calendar which brings together all her descendants through the memorable dates of the living family members. Even the youngest generation in the family, Oma's great-grandchildren, will find some of their history recorded in these letters, a providence for future investigation.

In the process of preparing this book the original texts were backed up with a series of interviews, which were then transcribed and used to flesh out the originals. Additionally, hundreds of conversations of varying length and subject were held be-

tween the author and myself. When these conversations yielded additional material I added it to the text.

Ultimately, however, the choice of what to talk about, and how it is described, is Oma's, and reflects not only her memories and her emotions, but is also the portrayal of a certain ideal of what *should* be talked about. Family strife, competition, gossip, intimate details and problems, and above all financial dealings are hardly ever given the center stage; at times they are pointed out in an understated manner, at times they are merely hinted at, and at others they are entirely absent, the victims of self-censorship.

A case in point in this matter is the amount of space given to Noach, her husband. Details on the conjugal relationship are mainly absent; although – as in the story of Noach's disappearance in Indonesia – there can be a lot of emotion in the reticence. Though the book carries few details regarding him, Oma would often mention him in conversation, and express sorrow at his absence from her later years. It seems certain that part of her desire to write a book was brought on by the desire that her own story would live on next to Noach's memoirs, which had been composed in Dutch in 1979 and later published.[†]

[†]Chana Arnon-Benninga translated these memoirs into English. The relationship of Oma's book to Opa's memoirs ("Growing up in Eenrum: Memories of the First Quarter of the Century"; and "Wartime Memoirs") bears a slight elaboration. Though, naturally, there are many parallels, Oma was very adamant about telling *her* side of the story. We are exposed only to what influenced her, what she felt about her experiences and how she interpreted them, and things she knew about first hand. In some cases she has refrained from going into subjects which Opa had already

Another matter not much discussed is the period of her life after moving to Asheville, N.C., though several incidents from this period are related in the letters section.

For myself, I find many points in the following book worthy of further thought. I will satisfy myself with pointing them out, thereby — at the request of the author — keeping this preface to a minimum.

Points of note

- The mode of narration: history is reported as it was experienced, with a minimum of foreshadowing. At every moment the next event is unknown and unpredictable. For example, on arriving in Indonesia the narrative seems to assume they are going to become new colonial settlers — “little did they know”, as Oma says again and again, what would come next.
- The story discloses two major nervous-breakdowns in Oma’s life, both most likely having to do with over-stress. The first one is reported in fifth grade (see page 11), the second in Arnhem (see page 78.)[‡] Throughout the book the theme of tension and stress is one of the constants.
- Oma as a storyteller: many of the stories contained in this book are familiar to the author’s acquaintances, and have been retold often. In this respect they are a remnant of a vanished oral culture in which stories served many purposes. They were told for entertainment as well as for educational and philosophical purposes — answers to an on-going discourse on the eternal question “what is life?” For the author, life progressed many times “through the eye of a needle” — that is, only at great risk and through dire straits. At the same time, Oma’s storytelling shows us something of what it means to have close to a century of experiences in one’s consciousness: at every twist and turn memories arise, running into each other, shifting, blending.[§] She succeeds in bringing these memories to light with both emotion and understatement.
- Some perennial questions: particularly the question of Mother (the Law), and the special relationship of the author to the male line (love objects.) These themes are dealt with throughout the book, and also have the following stories devoted to them: “The Story my Grandfathers,” (see page 104); “My Mother, the War and After,” (see page

covered. Thus, in many respects, this book is complementary to *his* book, and the two should be read together.

[‡]The author herself does not entirely agree with this classification, on the grounds that the episode in 5th grade was diagnosed as a biological illness.

[§]One is reminded of Freud famous metaphor, in *Civilization and its Discontents*, in which he likened the human psyche to the city of Rome — except this is a Rome where all the different historical layers co-exist simultaneously. In Oma’s life too, as is made explicitly clear in this book, the experiences of childhood and particularly the war years, are continually present, or more exactly, they are constantly resurfacing.

87); and “A Tribute to my Father,” (see page 93.)

- Exceptional knowledge of the date. As everyone who knows her can attest, and as is apparent throughout the book, the author is particularly attuned to dates. This holds true except for the period in Indonesia. This tells us something about her state of mind during this time, and her disorientation. It was also brought on by the change in seasons: Indonesia, being close to the equator, did not have the same steady cycle of seasons that she was used to from Holland.
 - Throughout the text the generic label “OK” specifies, very specifically, health concerns. For the author, nothing can be more important, and so in this short, two letter word, we see again Oma’s usage of understatement, which hides behind it a tremendous emotion.
 - Many psychological foundations of the family show up in the text: the idea of a “proper” birthday party, a “proper” vacation, a “proper hotel” and more.
 - Capitalization: the author’s capitalization bears some similarity to German, where all proper nouns are also capitalized. With Oma, one often gets the feeling that capitalization is meant to imply the very “thing-ness” of a thing. Not just “a hotel”, but “a Hotel.” Though I have tried to honor this usage in the present book, not all instances of its occurrence survive. For
- these, I must advise the reader to read the texts in the original.
 - Similarly, some people in the book are known by two different personal names, notably Chana/Aleid and Noach/Opa. Since there is a slight difference between the two usages, I have refrained from standardizing this.
 - Jewish holidays and terms have been left in the author’s original spelling, which seemed to me to be a remnant of Ashkenazic influence. The Dutch “g” should be pronounced as the Hebrew “h”, (for example “Gatan” = “Hatan”.)
 - Certain “redundancies” in the text as a whole still exist, but only because they are not really redundant. Rather, it seems that the author herself is telling and re-telling the story again and again, attempting to come to grips with what happened. The stories “A Tribute to my Mother” (page 87) and “The Story of my Sewing Machine” (page 111) are perhaps the most pronounced example of these ruminations, and in both an external perspective is utilized — the author’s mother, in one case, and of her sewing machine in the other — to re-live the experiences of the war.
 - One final point of note: when she left Holland, on the 14th of May, 1940, Helen Benninga left behind a family comprising several hundred members.[¶] Of

[¶]In the course of the production of this book a digitalization of several different family trees connected

these, we know today of 128 who perished at the hands of the Germans. Their names are listed in an appendix to this book, on page 149.

Noah Benninga
September 2008
Jerusalem, Israel

to the Benninga-Frank families was undertaken. The results, not yet complete, can be viewed on line: <http://www.myheritage.com/site-9775701/benninga-website>.

Part I.
My Story

1. Life in Holland Before the War

Earliest Memories from Groningen

Kindergarten in Groningen

I was born in Groningen, Holland, on October 18, 1913. My parents were Zadok Frank and Anna Frank-Goslinski, when my sister and I were born they were living in Groningen. Our address at that time was: *Gedempte Zuiderdiep* 146.

At the age of three I was sent to a private kindergarten (called *Bewaarschool*) on the Kromme Elleboog street, which in English would be “The Crooked Elbow.” (This street is still there, but the *Bewaarschool* is gone. It is a completely different building there now, built after the war, which is today a guesthouse for visiting university faculty. Simon used to stay there off and on when he went to Groningen, and I went there one time, too. I talked to the clerk behind the desk, and he was a very young man, not even thirty at that time; of course he didn’t know anything about the *Bewaarschool*.)

To go to this private kindergarten my parents had to pay a yearly fee of fl.20. At that time, the public kindergartens required all children to have their hair completely shaved off and I had such beautiful hair that

my mother refused to do it. I went to that kindergarten for three years.

I remember one person from this class, who was also a Jew; his son is now the Director of Beit Joles, (an old-age home for Dutch Jews in Haifa.) I think automatically I was always pulled to Jewish people, and there was at least one other Jewish child, who used to live across the street from us, who also went to that same place.

My father took me many times to the kindergarten. He had a bicycle, and the men’s bicycle was different from the women’s bicycle — it had one of these bars. There was no little seat on the back, so I was sitting on that bar, and he was holding me, while he was riding me to the kindergarten. I had to hold on to the handlebars, and he, of course, did all the peddling, while at the same time keeping his hands close to me for my safety. And there was another thing I remember: there was a curb, I don’t know where, that was quite high, and he had to jump off that curb with the bike. And that was always exciting, and I remember the sound it used to make, something like puff. But I don’t think this was every morning. I think they made an arrangement with the people from across the street, and took turns taking us to school.



Lena, third row from the bottom, third from right (standing next to the teacher)

The Kindergarten on the Kromme Elleboog

My Parents Before I Was Born

I have just told something of what I remember from the story of my own childhood, but I would also like to tell a story which really starts a little before that. This is the story of a cousin of ours, Sally Boers, and how he came to live with my family for almost three years.

My mother was the youngest child of eight — she had five sisters and three brothers. At a certain time, her oldest sister — Eva — was married to Philip Boers and had children. According to my aunt and uncle, their oldest boy, Sally, was very difficult to handle because he was a very “wild” boy, and he “ruined” everything.

It happened one time, before my mother was married, that she came to visit my aunt and uncle, and while she was there she made some remarks that my aunt wasn't handling her son the right way. (Mother, of course, had been trained as a teacher). And my aunt said: “You know what? When you get married, you might take him at home for a certain time, as long as you can.” Sally must have been about ten years old at this time.

So, when my mother got married she got as a “present” her nephew, whom she had to handle, and my cousin was in my parents house until I was born, and it was a very difficult time. Now at that time, a woman who delivered a baby would stay in bed for ten days. And my mother, before Saar was born, took care for Sally, and prepared in advance ten blouses that he would wear during the ten days that she would be in bed — so that he would have enough to wear. And



The Marriage of Zadok Frank and Anna Goslinksi, 11 June 1911

on the tenth day that my mother was in bed, he came to her room, and said: “Tante Anna, I don't have anything to wear.” He had *ruined* all his blouses: he would hook them on nails, or tear them in one way or another. And my mother didn't know what to do — she couldn't get out of bed, it was not time yet. And I don't know how she handled it, if my father went out to buy some new blouses for him, but it was very difficult.

He stayed with us, that I have always heard, until I was born. And then he be-

came bar-mitzva and he went back home. Much and much later, after the war was over, he became a very nice man to us. He realized what had happened, and he wanted to help. At that time the war was already over, but we were still in Indonesia, and the situation there was difficult. He had been hidden during the war, and he wrote us that we should take care to come back to Holland as soon as possible — and that if we wouldn't be able to pay, he would pay for the trip. "*Kom terug naar Holland,*" he wrote, "*als jullie het niet kunnen betalen, zal ik ervoor betalen.*" If he could have done it or not, I don't know. He really was very good.

I went one time with Noach to visit him in the last part of his life, when he was living by himself, after his wife had passed away. He was alone, and he was ready to go — he died, I think, in *Beth Shalom*, a Jewish home in Amsterdam, some time after I had moved to America. He said to me: "Lena, do me a favor, take whatever you want, take something with you." But I didn't want to, that was not my feeling, to take things out of his house.*

*Sally Boers had a very difficult life, not only in childhood.

At first he was married to a woman and had a son, and he divorced the wife, and she and the son were killed by the Germans (the wife was German herself, but that didn't help them.) Then he married again, and had two girls — I never saw the girls — but that seemed to be a very unpleasant marriage, and he was divorced. And then he married a very strong woman, and that was a good marriage, but she died suddenly. All together he made a big mess out of his life, but inside he was a good man. It was difficult.



Anna Goslinski (right, age 25) and a friend, dressed in the fashion of the times. Picture taken in 1907, four years before Anna's marriage to Zadok Frank.



Zadok and Anna Frank, with their nephew Sally Boers, 1911. Anna, pregnant with her first child, stands behind the bench so as not to show her pregnancy; this was a superstitious custom at the time.

A young Zadok and Anna Frank

The Jewish Holidays

When I was a young girl my parents belonged to an Orthodox Synagogue, at that time the only synagogues that existed in Holland. I remember very clearly the time of the holidays, and particularly Simchas Torah, which was the last in the series of holidays in the Fall. It is the time that the congregation finished reading the Torah and at the same time we also began the cycle again.

Well before Jom Kippur two men were asked to be Gatan Tora and Gatan Bereishis — they were chosen to be part of a ceremony which I found very elegant and delicate. On Kol Nidrei evening it was announced who would be the Hatanim, and two chairs — special ones — would be placed in the synagogue for them. At this time these two men were very important for the congregation. It cost money. Poor people couldn't be it.

When I was about eight, my father and his brother were asked to be these two men. This came just after they had opened their big new store, and was surely connected to a change in their social status. My uncle, being the oldest, was the Gatan Torah and my father was the Gatan Berieshis.

On Kol Nedrei evening these two men were guided into the synagogue. On the pulpit were the two big chairs, and each of the men sat on one of them. The evening of Simchas Torah was a big celebration for the congregation, and the children of the Hebrew classes all got a little bag made by the wives of the two men, with all kind of candies in it. Also, the children were brought to



In June of 1916 a third sister in the Frank family was born. But Evelinetje was a premature baby. Most of her short life she spent in a special hospital, and one time she was brought home to visit the family. She was very small, almost like a very special doll.

Evelientje Frank, 1917

one of the Hebrew classes and there someone told them a story about the Holiday.

The next day there was a reception at the home of the oldest Gatan, and the Shabbath after there was a reception at the home of the second Gatan. So on this year one reception was at our Uncle's house, and the other one was at *our* house.

I always liked these celebrations, especially because my sister and I were still young, about ten and eight years, respec-



June 1914: Saar Frank 2.5 years old, Lena Frank 9 months old



1916: Saar 4 years old, Lena 2.5

The Sisters Frank

tively, but old enough to remember. These events gave me at least something: you had a feeling that people took notice of you, that you were not one of the low people anymore. I got this feeling also through my parents. The whole thing gave some character, and I still like to think about it.

At the same time the piano came, but I didn't like that much because of the pressure — but that is another story...

Family Celebrations

Growing up within a large group of relatives, there were several highlights and of course also difficulties. The highlights were the celebrations. There were several 25th Wedding Anniversary celebrations to which all of the relatives were invited. It was often my Mother and an Uncle who sat down together about three months before the celebration was scheduled, and wrote a skit. In a notebook they wrote down who was participating and what they would put on. I remember one time they created a classroom by borrowing a black board and some benches from the Jewish school. Then they dressed up as children. I can still see my father, a tall and heavy man, walking in with shorts and my mother with a braid hanging down her back. My uncle was the teacher and “the pupils” mentioned certain typical things about the couple. Also original songs were made up and the whole family was singing them together. The preparation and rehearsals used to be in our house in the dining room and my sister and I enjoyed them very much.

While we know that it is a blessing to have a big family, a child doesn't always appreciate it. At the holidays, for example, on the first day of Rosh Hashanah, we had to go to visit all the uncles and aunts — 14 altogether — which my sister and I didn't like at all. On the second day, all the grown-up cousins came to our house, meaning around 30-40 people. This same number also came on birthdays.

At the time that I was about 15 years old, a new Hebrew teacher came to Groningen and arranged a Youth Service on Friday nights and Shabbat mornings. He taught the boys to read from the Torah and say the Haphtarah. The girls were taught to follow the service. There were always some parents there to help. At the age of 18, you were not allowed to go anymore to these youth services. At my request, my father paid for a seat for me in the big Synagogue. Several of my friends ended up in Palestine/Israel and the wife of the Hebrew teacher lived here in Beit Bart until she passed away in 2006.



The first house and store of Zadok and Anna Frank, on Gedeemptezuiderdiep 146. (Note the sign over the first building on the right, "Frank's Goedkoopewinkel"). Sara and Helena Frank were born in this house.



After several years, when the business was going well, the brothers Frank could expand. They bought a building on Oosterstraat 72, and the corner of Kattendiep. This is a picture of the building before it was renovated, taken in 1918.



Advertisement for the Frank Brothers, originally distributed as an ink-blotter (or Vloei).



New store on Oosterstraat after the renovations. The business was quite successful in the early 20's and survived until the German occupation in 1940.

You can read more about the Business of the brothers Frank on page125

The Businees of the Brothers Frank

Elementary School and My Sickness in Fifth Grade

I just finished telling you about the time of my kindergarten; now I would like to continue with my time in elementary school.

As all of you know, my birthday is in October. And so, in September, before I was six years old, I began going to the first grade. Saar and I went to a semi-private all girls' school. Lessons were given six days a week, in two sessions, with a two hour break for lunch. Mornings classes were from 8:45 to 11:45 and in the afternoons the classes were from 2:00 to 4:00. On Wednesdays and Saturdays we had shorter days, starting at the regular time, 8:45, and continuing until 12:30, with no afternoon session. To get to school we had to walk about ten to fifteen minutes each direction, and most often we walked this distance four times a day. On Sunday morning, as well as on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, we had Hebrew School between 4:15 and 5:15 p.m. And for me there were also piano lessons.

Elementary school was a lot of pressure. Besides the regular school hours we also had afternoon activities: on Mondays and Thursdays I had piano lessons at 4:00 p.m., and Hebrew school started at 4:15 p.m. The piano was status — my mother got a piano at the age of forty as a present. At that time I was nine. My parents' situation had improved financially, and she wanted us to play the piano. The piano lessons took place only three minutes away from the school, but they started exactly when classes were over. This meant that I had to run to these



Saar Frank (first on right) in a typical Dutch classroom, C. 1925

lessons, which lasted only twenty minutes. From there I would run to Hebrew School, which took about fifteen to twenty minutes. I would arrive fifteen minutes after everyone had already started and was, of course, exhausted. I played the piano until I got sick, and after that I quit.

When we left home in the afternoons, Mother always gave us a sandwich to eat on the way, but most of the time I only ate it on the way back home, around 5:15 p.m. We would be home around 5:30, and shortly after that Father would return, and we would all have dinner together. After dinner we had to do our homework, and I think that I was never in bed until about 9:30 or later.

Practicing my piano lessons was often done during the time we were home for lunch, which was not a very long time. And on Wednesdays, even though school was out at 12:30, we had Hebrew lessons in the afternoon

Although we went to school also on Saturdays, on these days we were not allowed to

write. How did this happen? Before she was married my mother used to be a teacher in a very small place, Sleen, in Drente, which had a few Jewish families, who sent their children to school five days a week. They didn't want to send their children to school on Shabbat. My mother went to talk to these families and said: "Listen, I'm Jewish too. I know exactly all the rules, but there's always something that I am talking about on Shabbat that is good for the children to hear so why don't you send your child? They don't have to write, and I'll take care that the child will not fall behind. So why not take him to be with children on Shabbat?" This was something she invented. (Although they kept the religion, my father didn't wear a yarmulke, like many Jews at that time. I always say that my father would not have had problems later, if he had lived, to go to a conservative shul.)

In any case, when Saar and I started school Mother felt that she should follow what she had preached, and send her own children to school on Shabbat. There was another Jewish girl in my class, but she didn't come to school on Shabbat. I think the other children might have asked why I didn't write on Saturdays, but there wasn't any big discussion on the matter.

By the time I entered the fifth grade I was almost ten years old, and very soon after school started I began acting peculiarly: my writing and my walking were bad and everything was wrong: I had no power over my right hand and leg. It was as though the entire right side was paralyzed, and I had no power. Writing and walking

became difficult. I think I noticed it myself before anyone was aware of it. We had once a week for arithmetic a very particular thing: we got a piece of paper and the teacher gave us an arithmetic problem — for instance, you go into the post office and you need stamps, you buy ten for five cents, and so on, and you give the clerk ten guilders; how much do you get back? And then the teacher took a pen or a ruler and you had to write the answer down. I worked out the answer in my head, but I couldn't write it on the paper. When I tried it came out crookedly written, and it was very irritating. Sometimes I got a bad mark when I shouldn't have had one — I knew the answer by heart, but couldn't write it. Finally, my mother went to school because of the grades to talk to the teacher.

The teacher, when my mother went to see what she thought about it, told her I was spoiled and they should be stricter. Soon, my parents noticed that this was not the right approach, and when my mother consulted the teacher again, she agreed that I might be sick. And so it came about that one Saturday morning, instead of going to school, my mother told me I should stay home to help her.

What happened was that she had asked our doctor to come, as though for her, all the while having the intention that he should pay attention to me. She must have visited the doctor and told him about me, and she had arranged for him to come one Shabbat morning, while my father was at shul. She would take care that I'd be home. I remember she said that it was cold, and my mother always had terrible headaches,

and she didn't want to be alone in the house. She said I could miss a Shabbat morning and spend it with her, and I was happy to stay at home. But really, it was all arranged in advance, for the doctor. He came as though to treat my mother, but hardly paid any attention to her. After he had examined her, he turned around and asked: "What is going on with you?" He examined me and said "You know what we'll do? We'll put you in bed."

The doctor had advised that I should be in bed and get lots and lots of rest, and so for ten weeks I was in a room where, most of the time, the drapes were closed, because I needed rest. It was a very hard time both for me and for the family. At first my bed was in the dining room, where the windows were open and the drapes were easier to close than in the living room. The drapes were opened a little bit when the sun was shining. In the nights I went back to the bedroom.

At first, I was very happy to be in bed. An uncle of mine had a stationery store and got at that time a lot of funny postcards. He gave me a whole bunch of them just so I could look at them, and I loved them very much. I also received letters from my classmates, and friends brought all kind of fruits and goodies.

I had all sort of children's funny picture cards, and I was happy to rest. I don't remember being bored. I think I was mentally too sick and exhausted. By the time I did start feeling bored the maid was already helping me to walk again.

My mother was the youngest of her family and of course most of her sisters were

very much worried about "My Being Sick." One of my mother's sisters lived in Amsterdam and had a maid from Germany. (In that time, 1924, a lot of people had a maid from Germany. A lot of young women came over the border to serve as maids, because the salaries were nice and most of time they were well-treated, and they knew how to work.) My aunt in Amsterdam knew how to cook because they had a hotel for a long time, but she didn't know to thread a needle. And now she had a nice maid who loved to sew. She did a lot of cleaning together with the maid, and when I got sick she came up with the idea to buy fabrics and have the maid make something for me. And after I got sick I got a big package with a pajama in it — and that was the first time I wore a pajama. I don't know if there were any toys in this package, the pajama was the main thing. I was very often in bed and was restless, so the pajama was nicer than a night gown and afterwards came another and another — since you needed more than one. And since that time I have always worn pajamas.

Another thing that happened was this: the teacher, who at first told my mother that I must have been spoiled, felt of course guilty, because I was really sick. This is how I came to receive letters from my classmates, and in addition she also came to visit me while I was recovering, bringing with her a long box of dates, of the most expensive kind. When she asked if I liked them, instead of saying politely "Yes, thank you" I replied with a plain "NO." My mother felt very insulted by my behavior, but to this

day I don't feel bad at all, because I didn't like her.

In the summer, with school out for a few weeks and better weather outside, the doctor thought I should go to another climate and the best way to do this was to go to Winterswijk, near the German border, where my mother's oldest sister lived. She was a sweet woman, but she had no idea how to treat me or what to do with me. She thought I'd help her around the house, but I still needed a lot of rest. My father came there on and off when his work brought him near the area.

After I was there for a few days, friends of my aunt and uncle who had a dog got some puppies and I was allowed to choose one of them. I was excited and wrote to my parents. In Groningen we lived twenty-six steps up, and my mother was very much against the whole idea, until my father came one time and saw the little Teckel puppy, and fell in love with him too.* After that my mother couldn't say anything anymore. (I called him Polly, and he was with us until he died in my mother's arms on a Friday night, just before I got married.)

After I had spent about a month, or perhaps six weeks in Winterswijk — it is only with great difficulty that I can recall the dates of this illness, perhaps because of the condition I was in — my parents came to bring me home. My mother right away noticed that I had had a reoccurrence: I was not walking so well. So I went home with my parents and the little dog and I was back

*Or Dachshund, in English.



Sara, Lena and Polly, c. 1923

in bed again for a few weeks. At that period I enjoyed my little dog very much.

Towards the end of this illness I remember a particular conversation with my mother. Twice a week she would give me a sponge bath and the linen was changed. This was always a good feeling, and at a certain time she said "*wat zeg je nou, moeder wordt...*" And the answer was supposed to be "*vriendelijk bedankt.*" (This is the Dutch way of saying "what do you say now... Thank you." Literally it can be translated as "Your Mother is... gratefully thanked.") But instead of saying "*vriendelijk bedankt*" I said "*moeder wordt twee en veertig*" — mother will be forty-two. She hadn't expected that answer, but she was pleased to see I was getting better and making jokes.

All in all I was out of school for nine months — from the beginning of February until the beginning of November — and when I returned to school, I had, of course, to go back to the fifth grade. But at first only for half a day. And I quit playing pi-

ano, so there were no more lessons to run to.

The recovery took a long time, but here I am today, which means I must have recovered very well indeed!

Since that time I have always been very interested in this illness, especially if they have some other kind of treatment — if there is more that can be done to help it, if it is connected to other things... Much later I read about children's illnesses and found out that what I had had at that time is called "Chorea". Then, in 1994, after I had come to Israel, I met a retired professor of pediatrics at the ulpan, and during the break I asked him about the illness and its treatment. He knew right away what I meant, and said that, first of all, it doesn't happen that often nowadays. But if it does, the child needs to be put in a semi-dark room.

My mother, too, was interested in finding out what had happened, and several years after I got better she continued to look into the matter. She was worried about my future, and when I must have been twelve — or maybe thirteen or fourteen, I'm not sure — my mother wanted to know all about it, and if I was treated well and things like that. So she got the name of a doctor, a specialist in nerves — I remember him very well, he was a professor and very "high up." But he said the same as everyone else had said: no one came up with anything different.



July 1917: Lena (almost 4), Anna (35), Sara (5). Picture made as a 33rd birthday present for Zadok Frank.



1918: Lena (5), Zadok (34), Sara (6), Anna (36).



3 July 1921: Anna (33), Lena (8), Zadok (36), Sara (9).



October, 1923: Sara (11.5), Lena (10). Made for Anna Frank's birthday in November.



Summer 1924: Vacation on the isle of Norderney, Germany.



5 December 1929: Zadok (45), Sara (17.5), Anna (47), Lena (16), Polly (5).



June 1931: Sara (19), Anna (49), Polly (7), Lena (18).



1936: Helena (23), three years engaged, and Sara (25).

The Frank Family Between the Two Wars

Young Adulthood

As I said, in November 1924 I went back to school, after nine months. I had to begin again the 5th grade. I never missed the classmates. There wasn't much friendship between the girls and me. I think automatically they were never pro-Jewish. I don't know. I was never invited to birthday parties and I didn't miss it because I had my Jewish friends and family. There was a Jewish girl I was friendly with and the Hebrew school; there are still a few now who are living. They didn't go to my school because they lived on the other side of town. In any case, my "Going Back to School" was not a great success, and I was often very frustrated, but I went on, though how I did it I don't know. Perhaps my mother helped me off and on.

At the end of sixth grade you had to make a choice on how to continue your education. In high school you had to work very much on your own. I continued instead with MULO, which stands for *Meer Uitgebreid Lager Onderwijs* (or Extended Primary Education.) At the end of six years of elementary school the best students, who would finally end up going to the university, continued on to highschool. MULO was an extension of the regular elementary school — a bit more mathematics maybe, but not as high as high school. It lasted for three years.

Around this time, my mother wanted to have both of us, Saar and me, train to become regular teachers. But before I finished the 9th grade I knew I wanted to teach kindergarten, and not regular school. I felt very much alone. It was an only girls' school



Noach, undated.



Noach (left) at the beach of Zandvoort, 1932.



Noach (left) as goal keeper of the chemistry lab soccer team, 1934.

A young Noach Benninga

and I was apart. I still have things we made there — mostly needle work.

My mother wanted us to go to the same school she had gone to, a teacher's seminary called the *Kweekschool*, because she felt it was a marvelous education. Saar did, and automatically I didn't want to do it — a very normal reaction, I think. Instead, I chose to become a kindergarten teacher. Why? Perhaps if you have read the first few stories you can find out for yourself. . . Both psychologically and educationally this appealed to me more. Through another Jewish girl I got to know what you had to do to become a kindergarten teacher and I told my parents I wasn't going to be a regular teacher but a kindergarten teacher.

So at the age of almost 16 years I went to a course for Kindergarten teachers. It was a strange arrangement, because the daily schedule was half a day "student training" at a kindergarten, and half a day no school but studying for the lessons, which started at 4:30 in the afternoon and went on until around 7:30 or sometimes 8:30 in the evening.

Because the family ate at around 6:00 p.m. my mother took care that I got my meal at around 3:45 p.m., so I could leave the house at 4:15 p.m. and reach the course on time. Naturally, I had to attend the course also on Friday evenings, and I felt particularly miserable not to be with the family that night.

Training was in two stages: three years for the first exam, degree A it was called, and two more years for the next one, degree B. The first time I tried to get the degree A I failed, and had to do the year over again.

But the second time I had very nice grades. By the time I got the second degree I was twenty-one, and it was 1934. I was already engaged to Noach Benninga, since November of '33. He had his M.A in Chemistry and was working for his PhD, which he finished in 1935. But jobs were very, very difficult to get at that time — both because of the depression and due to antisemitism. At one point he even applied for a job in Indonesia; for one job there were more than 700 applicants. He was even asked for an interview, which was rare, but he didn't get it. All in all, we were engaged for four and a half years before Noach found a job and we felt we could finally get married. This was important, of course, because according to the Dutch laws at the time, a woman could not continue to work once she had gotten married.

At that time I got a small job in *Mus-selkanaal*, through the principal of the school where I had done my student training. She had been asked to teach a group of girls between the ages of fourteen and thirty-two, who either had a job at a kindergarten or wanted to get a job like that. But she couldn't do it, and so she offered the job to me. It was an undeveloped part of the province, and this group was supported by a church. Some of these girls had been giving bible lessons for little children, but they wanted more education from the teachers. I taught these girls how from inexpensive materials to make things for the children, something productive. I taught there on Wednesday afternoons from around 5 p.m. until 8 p.m. Going to work involved taking a train and bus, and very often it was a long



Fall 1928: Lena (16) on the far left, working as a student-teacher in a Groningen kindergarten. The principal of the school is the woman in black at the center.



Lena playing with children in the sand-box during student training.



Lena (second from left) standing next to the principal of s local school with the faculty. This principal lived with another woman, and together they gave private lessons in which Lena also took part.



September 1934: Graduation from kindergarten-teachers training. Lena, second from left, and classmates.



1937: Lena (second from right) at her last job before marriage, as a substitute principal of a kindergarten in Groningen, together with the staff.



Lena (extreme left) and Noach (next to her) at the beach with friends.



On pre-honeymoon trip to Belgium, July 1936.



Lena, in Viandes, Luxemburg 1936.



In the back yard in Eenrum, 1935.



In Dr. Keesing's car, 9 May 1936



June 1933, (half a year before the engagement).



Reading together, August 1933.



In front of the Benninga house, August 1935.

Noach and Lena Engaged (November 1933 — October 1937)

trip: I had to leave the house on around 2 or 3 p.m., and would come home around 10:30 p.m. When I came off the train, my father was at the railroad station waiting for me; I was a little afraid to walk home by myself at that time of the evening.

The course was nice and I enjoyed it very much. At one point in time I had to set up an exhibition of what children could do with inexpensive materials. The Minister of Education and a number of other officials were coming to visit the school, and wanted to see what I was doing. All in all, they were very much impressed. One of the deputies was a Jew, and after the day was over he said to me: "Miss Frank, we are planning to start a new school like this one, and we would like you to be the principal." But by this time Noach had secured a job in Leeuwarden, and we were planning to get married. At this time there was a law that married women could not work for the government, and so I did not accept the position. (The school never came to anything, because the war broke out.) In the mean time, I also got a few private students, for speech therapy, through the help of my speech teacher, and in this way I earned some money. A year before we married I got a job as a substitute teacher at a regular Kindergarten, and that lasted for almost a year.

Marriage

In January 1937 Noach got a job at the *Fries-Groningense Margarine Fabriek*, which had been started by one of the Benninga family, (Opa Simon's uncle, whom we called "Oom Benjamin"), and that made it possible for us to get married. We began making all kinds of plans, and of course the first thing to do was to look for a house. The salary wasn't too big, and we had to look according to our income. We had almost decided, and then of course my parents came to see if it was OK. But my mother didn't like the neighborhood because she saw too many geraniums in the windows; she called the neighborhood "The Geranium Neighborhood." (In a play that they made at our wedding they even mentioned this: "*Byna was het huis gehuurd, toen Ma kwam-afgekeurd geranium buurt.*")* So we looked somewhere else, and found another house. In the meantime, we set our wedding date for the 3rd of October. We got a month free from the landlord to get it furnished, and that was how I spent September. By this time Noach was working in Leeuwarden. We went back and forth, and usually someone came with me. I still have the bill from the man who did the floors and the drapes, (see page 27.)

My parents and Noach's aunts ordered all the furniture that was needed. Everything was paid for by my parents, and the furniture for the guest bedroom was ordered in Eenrum from someone the Benningas

*A verse translation would be: "The house was almost rented, but then Mother came a-frowning to the geranium neighborhood."



Noach Benninga and Helena Frank, 3 October 1937

wanted to give the business to. Thinking back now, it was quite some furniture, but prices then were low, because there was a big depression, and the company was happy with the order.

(This furniture, by the way, survived the war through luck. After we had left Holland my father and Saar brought the furniture from Haarlem to Groningen, and then in November 1940, it must have been, they moved it to a furniture warehouse on one of the canals in Groningen where it stayed un-

til after the war. All the other warehouses along that canal were bombed, except that one.)

At the time I had a temporary job which was set to end on the first of September. I wanted to have the holidays once more with my family, so I set the date for the wedding for after the *hagim*. And this also affected the job I had, because married women were not allowed to work in government jobs. Our *huppah* was planned for October 3rd, but before that we needed a certificate of marriage from the city. In Holland, in order to get married at the city hall you had to register at least three weeks in advance; we registered at the beginning of September so that our civil marriage would be on the 30th of September. On the same day I also received my new passport, which bore the name “Mrs. Helena Benninga-Frank.” So after the civil marriage I was Mrs. Benninga, but by Jewish custom we were not married yet. Noach went back to Leeuwarden, where we were going to live, because he had to work until he would be back in Groningen for the *huppah*.

On the 3rd of October, 1937, we had a very nice *huppah*, reception and dinner, and our Honeymoon was a trip to Paris which was hosting the World’s Fair. We were there for almost a week. I was very tired there because I had worked quite hard before to get the house in order. We went to some Jewish quarters in Paris to eat, and one of the things I remember is that there was a man in one of the Jewish restaurants who asked us if we spoke Yiddish. When we said “No,” he was surprised, “Because with Yiddish you can go to three-quarters of the world.”

We visited the Fair, and already at that time there was a Nazi stand from Germany. Noach only had one week off from his work, and so we arrived at our “new house” a week after we were married. It was our first living quarters together as a couple.

That week wasn’t very easy because the next Sabbath my parents, my sister, Noach’s Father and his father’s two sisters all came to visit. As a Jewish bride you weren’t supposed to go out — not even just to cross the street — before you had gone to the synagogue. This was a tradition that my mother felt very strongly about. So on Sabbath we went to shul the whole family together, and after that we had invited some people for a “housewarming” party, my first undertaking as a hostess. My mother sent her maid a few days ahead of time to help me, but I wasn’t a perfect housewife at that time, and I still don’t know what I did exactly and if it was good or bad. One of Noach’s aunts also came to help.

The weekend went by and everyone left on Sunday afternoon. It was then that my life as a housewife started, and I hated it — to clean and dust! When Noach came home that day I said: “All these chairs are staying where you put them.” Noach said: “What do you expect them to do? To move around?” But I was used to a class of 40 children, between the ages of five and six, who were never sitting still — healthy children. And here I was, after I had worked for a month to get a house in order, and suddenly I was alone without anyone. And I had to clean the chairs because there was a mess. I couldn’t stand it, and still today I hate house cleaning. The chairs had loose



September 30, 1937: Noach Benninga and Helena Frank married at the City Hall. The audience is composed of family members.



Lena and Noach at City Hall.



At the train station after the civil marriage. Left to right: Tante Leentje (Izak's mother), Simon Benninga, Zadok Frank.



3 October 1937: The parents of the bride and groom, as they prepare to go to Shul for the wedding. Taken at the Frank house on Herenstraat.



The dressmaker sets Lena's veil before the Jewish wedding.

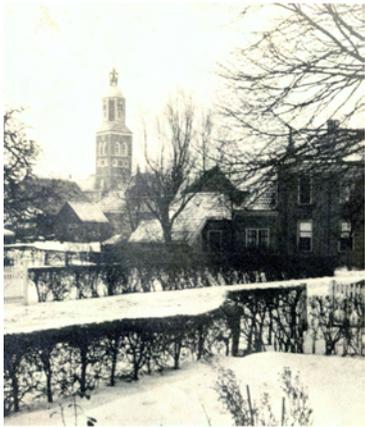


Under the Chuppa.

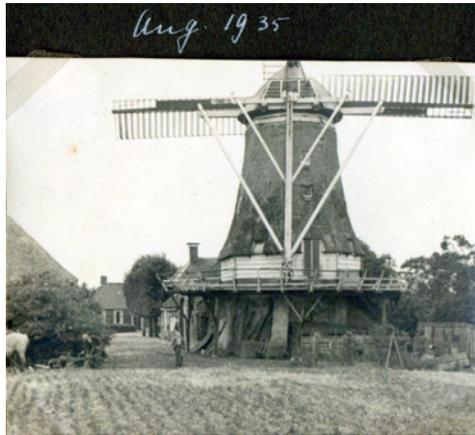


Bride, groom and company: (right to left) Pien Mok, Helena Benninga-Frank, Noach Benninga, Sara Frank.

Marriage



Eenrum in the snow, 1935.
Taken from the Molenstraat.



The Eenrum windmill, across from the
Benninga house.



A gracht in Amsterdam, August 1935.



Elie, 1935.



Gymnastic Festival
in Eenrum, 1928.



A circus in Eenrum, 1935.



Uilenburg, 1935.



Friends of Noach,
studying chemistry.



Eenrum from the church tower, August
1935.

From the Camera of Noach Benninga

seats, and to clean the chairs you had first to remove the seats, clean them, then move the chairs so you could clean the room, then clean the carpet — and so on. So, it was a whole project, and a job I wasn't used to. You put the chair somewhere — I was used to moving children! Now instead of children I had chairs. Of course, I missed my job.

Soon after that I went to the Employment Office and asked for a cleaning girl. The lady at the desk looked at me and said: "How long have you been married?" My answer was two weeks. She said: "You should take a girl of fourteen and clean a chair together, and most likely you will learn as much as she does and perhaps you will learn a little faster than she does." So that's what happened: I hired a girl of fourteen, and she was with me for two years.

J. J. DE JONGE JR.

TAPIJTEN - GORDIJNEN - LINOLEUMS
BEHANGSELPAPIEREN
WOLLEN DEKENS

TELEFOON 1345
POSTREKENING 51761

GRONINGEN, DEN 6 September 1937

De Heer Z. Frank

Heerestraat

GRONINGEN.

			Transport	Fl.	359.37
3 paar steunders	à	0.25	"	"	0.75
32 ringen	"	0.02½	"	"	0.80
1 lat	"		"	"	0.10
2 duimen	"	0.03	"	"	0.06
Suitedeur					
2.50 Meter stof	"	1.10	"	"	2.75
3.20 " platband	"	0.40	"	"	1.28
4 paar steunders	"	0.15	"	"	0.60
Achtersuite					
19.40 Meter 6/4 tapijt	"	3.25	"	"	63.05
19.40 " viltpapier	"	0.22½	"	"	4.37
11.30 " vitrage	"	1.40	"	"	15.82
4.00 " lint	"	0.06	"	"	0.24
2.45 " roede	"	0.35	"	"	0.86
1 paar steunders	"		"	"	0.25
28 ringen	"	0.02½	"	"	0.70
2 latten	"	0.10	"	"	0.20
4 duimen	"	0.03	"	"	0.12
11.20 Meter velours	"	3.65	7½ %	"	40.88
5.00 " lint	"	0.10	"	"	0.50
3.20 " rail	"	1.35	"	"	4.32
24 haken	"	0.02½	"	"	0.60
2 trekkoorden	"	0.35	"	"	0.70
arbeidsloon inclusief later bijwerken			"	"	89.00

Fl. 587.32

af 15 % van 343.62 51.54
" 10 % " 74.40 7.44
" 7½ % " 80.30 6.02

Fl. 65.30

Totaal Fl. 522.02

Uwe gewaardeerde orders steeds gaarne tegemoetziende, terwijl U van prima werk overtuigd kunt zijn, teekent onder beleefde aanbeveling

H. J. O. G. A. C. H. T. E. N. D.

Last page of the bill for the re-draping of the house in Leeuwarden

My Life as a Young Wife

As a newly wed housewife I knew a little bit about cooking, but in order to do it right I would plan every evening what I wanted to cook the next day, and then, looking in my cookbook, I would figure out what and how much I had to buy. The portions in the cookbook were usually set for four, so I would take half the amount. I also took a course during this time on how to cook with different kinds of stoves; this would come in handy later in Indonesia, where I would have to cook in all kinds of conditions.

The laundry was a big problem, because Noach had psoriasis and had to use a kind of tar ointment, which left big black spots on the underwear. I asked the aunts how I should handle this, and they wrote a long letter explaining exactly the proper way. On Sunday evenings all the white things were put to soak in the “big high pan,” or an *aker* as we called it, with a certain amount of backing soda. Early the next morning that pan was put on a gas burner, while my help and I were cleaning up in the house. After the laundry was hot enough it was put in a big tub, where we washed it by hand; it was then put in soap water and again on the gas burner. After letting it heat a while we washed it again by hand and then in bleach water for a certain time. Only after that was the laundry rinsed in clean water and hung out on a line to dry. In the winter it would sometimes freeze on the line, becoming completely hard. The next day, Tuesday, was the day to iron whatever had to be ironed.

After we were married for about six weeks, I noticed that I might be pregnant. I was happy, and on the last week of that year we went to my parents to celebrate the New Year. The weather was cold and icy and suddenly I knew that something wasn't right. The next day a Gynecologist came to my parents' house, and I was put on a long table where I had a miscarriage. I stayed in Groningen for a week and then returned to our own house in Leeuwarden. The procedure hurt like the devil: it was done without drugs, and so I was completely awake as they scraped me out from the inside.

After this I was very weak, and my only extra help was the young girl who cleaned for me. But this didn't only help, it also created more work, because I had to cook for the three of us. The arrangement with the cleaning girl was that she would eat with us and, truth be told, she probably ate more than either one of us, which surprised me. Usually I ended up not cooking enough for the three of us. As I was serving, I took the smallest portion for myself. I never managed to cook enough, and I became weaker and weaker. Finally I think my mother came to help for a few days — we lived only an hour away at that time, and corresponded often by mail. Sometimes, very seldom, some people had a car so she would have a door to door ride.

Later on I talked to a doctor who told me that having a miscarriage makes you weaker, both physically and mentally, than having a regular birth. Because in a miscarriage you have to deal also with the suffering and frustration of having no “result.”



Noach's immediate family, c. 1930. L to R: Jet, Simon, Noach, Juttje (Simon's mother), Frouwkje.



Simon Benninga was a postman, and elected to the village council of Eenrum. 1936.



Jet Benninga, 1935



Frouwkje Benninga, at the house in Eenrum, 1936.



Jet and Frouwkje clean the store front, 1935.



August 1930: Noach (21) behind the house in Eenrum.



Simon Benninga (5th from right) with the village council at the Jubileum Festival in Eenrum. 6 September 1938.

A Portrait of the Benninga Family

What was life like at this time? I didn't know many people in Leeuwarden at this time, but I had a cousin who had gotten married half a year before me and was a family doctor. He had just opened a new practice in Leeuwarden, and we took him as our family doctor. His name was Ies, (for Israel), Goslinski, and he was about four or five years older than me.* On his way home from the hospital he would visit us and have a cup of coffee, a few times a week. We spoke most likely of family affairs, and I enjoyed his company.

A few months later I became pregnant again and even though I needed extra rest, it went well. Our first child, a daughter, was born on February 18th 1939 — it was a Saturday night — at 10:30 p.m. We named her after both Noach's mother and my own, Aleida Chana. (Chana was of course Hebrew for Anna. The reason we chose a Hebrew name was because we had already applied by this time for emigration permits for Palestine.) The question of the names created some tension with Noach's family: Noach had been raised by his two aunts, and there was not a close connection with the van der Hal family (his mother's side, after whom we had named Aleid.) They were worried that if the first child, a girl, was named officially after Noach's side, then the second child — perhaps a boy — would be named after *my* side. This would have interfered with the Benninga tradition of naming the first son after the grandfather, and so they were unquiet.

*Ies Goslinski published his memoirs under the title of "My Life as I Remember."

Aleid was a sweet baby, but breast-feeding was a problem: she wasn't active in taking her milk. This is a common thing, that the first week, you have to be very careful because the milk is heavier, and if the child is not sucking hard enough it makes it clot — and that is what happened to me. Two weeks after she was born, the gynecologist had left me officially alone, and Noach went to a certain meeting where he met our doctor, who was also a member; he asked how I was doing. Noach said I had a headache and the doctor came to see me in no time, to ask what was going on. Afterwards he came several times, and I don't think he ever gave us a bill.

Then there was a nurse who did house visiting from an organization — she came twice a day to see how my breast was getting empty and found that it was not. Eventually I developed a breast infection and was taken to the hospital. When Aleid was about five weeks old, with help of the nurse and the doctor, I went to an emergency clinic where the doctor had to cut into the breast to drain away the puss. Aleid was soon put on half breast-feeding, half bottle.

But Aleid gained weight steadily and, with the help of the doctor from Eenrum, we had a little house to put the baby outside as much as possible. That thing is hard to describe, but it was wonderful. It was large, and looked like a house, but instead of a front wall there was a screen with hooks that opened, and you could see through it. Inside, there was a bed with a mattress, blanket, pillow and the baby could lie inside, or move around. And there was a window. There was an asbestos roof which you



Entrance to the house in Leeuwarden, 1938.



Aleid-Chana in the room where she was born, 18 February 1939.



Lena on the balcony of the house in Leeuwarden (opens onto the bedroom).



In the back yard, Leeuwarden, 1935.



May, 1939.



Lena and Aleid, May 1939.



Zadok Frank and Aleid, April 1940.



Anna Frank and Aleid, Leeuwarden, June 1940.



Eenrum, July 1930. L to R: Frouwkje, Aleid, Lena, Simon



27 August, 1939.

First Child — Aleida-Chana born 17 February 1939, Leeuwarden.

could open to let fresh air come in if the weather was nice. The baby couldn't get out (a baby of five or six weeks is not going out!), and at a certain time Chana would turn around and look out of the window. She was in this thing for about a year, even in the cold weather because fresh air was good. When it was cold, I put a hot water bottle in there. (Simon spent a long time in there, too, as he was born in April. From when he was about four weeks old until October, he would spend most of the day inside the little house. He loved it, and would be restless until he was in it.) We had a small garden at the back where we would put this house.

Less than seven months passed, and on September the 3rd 1939 we heard that Germany had entered Poland and that the war had started. From then on our lives were changed and soon after that we became refugees.

February 1940: The Escape from Holland

Although the news in October wasn't good, in Holland everyone thought that — as in the First World War — Holland could stay neutral. One person who didn't believe this was Noach. He was afraid, and for him living in Leeuwarden was living too close to the German border. November came and suddenly all the men who served in the army were called to their bases — Jews were also in the army, but in our family most of them were not. We packed a suitcase and fled to Amsterdam. We stayed at my uncle and aunt's for about three or four days, but with a baby (and no pampers!) it wasn't easy, and eventually we returned home to Leeuwarden. We were glad to go home after these days.

February 1940 came and our little girl was one year old. We celebrated it with the family and were happy to be together. Around that time we heard of a family, the van Voolens, who were moving to America. They still had a lease on their house, so we asked them if we could move into their house while they were away and pay the rent in their place. It was in Haarlem, and even though it now seems very innocent, we felt a little bit better to be “behind the waterline” — the plan was that in case of a German invasion the Dutch government would flood the center of the country, leaving one part safe. Aleid and I moved in March of 1940, but Noach stayed in Leeuwarden, because he had to work. By that time he had another job in a laboratory in Gronin-



At the Safe House in Haarlem, April 1940

gen, a job he liked much better. But he didn't want to move to Groningen, which was even closer to the border with Germany. And so he would stay three or four days in Groningen, and on Friday he would return to Leeuwarden and then come to Haarlem. (On the Thursday night before the war started Noach returned to Leeuwarden early, instead of waiting for Friday. He was really the one who was prepared for the war to come.)

In April again all the military men were called up to their bases, and again in the beginning of May. We were, of course, very much alarmed, and the entire family came to Haarlem: Noach's father and aunts, my father and of course Noach himself. This happened on a Tuesday, the 7th of May, and on Thursday, the 9th, my Father, Noach and the family from Eenrum all left again to go back home. My father had to go back for the business: he wanted to look at the orders, make sure that they were sent out, and see what was going on in the office. My



Mobilization notice for Dutch forces, 29 August 1939



27 August, 1939: Four days to the invasion of Poland.



Leeuwarden, 20 September 1939.

On the Brink of War

Mother stayed with me, because my father was planning to come back on Thursday night or Friday; Sunday and Monday were non-Jewish holidays — Pinksteren, (or Pentecost in English) — and my parents were planning to stay with us for a long weekend. But Father couldn't make it back on Thursday, as he was too busy with the business. On Friday, May 10th 1940, Germany invaded Holland; war had not been declared, and it all happened very fast. By Friday there were no trains, and no way of leaving. People couldn't go further than a certain point, due to checkpoints.

My father had told us that if he couldn't make it on Thursday evening he would send a telegram, because we didn't have a telephone. We didn't hear from him until about eleven o'clock that night, although it later turned out that the telegram had arrived already three hours earlier. Normally, you

could always see when a telegram arrived at the post office, so when my mother and I looked in at eleven and saw that the telegram had already arrived unannounced it was very unusual. But “so what,” as they say. We went to bed, slept, and at around 3:30 a.m. we were woken up by a terrible noise and commotion in the street. There were planes in the air — German planes, and there were parachutes.

Looking out the window we saw everyone outside, and we asked our neighbor what had happened. She replied: “We are being attacked by the Germans and we are at WAR.” In the street there was nothing but panic. Of course Mother and I got dressed and woke up Chana, but then we didn't know what to do. It was Friday, and we should be cooking for Sabbath. We tried, but we could not. Our hands were in the wrong position.

During the day we tried to do something, and around 3 p.m. Noach arrived, very worried. But he was at least with us. My father never made it to Haarlem, and in the middle of the night there was a knock at the door and my cousin, Izak, arrived, though without his wife and children. Izak had been arguing very much with the Nazi group in Groningen, and was afraid of what would happen to him with the Germans. He told us that he and his wife and their two girls had come as far as Leeuwarden, and then his wife, Emmy, had said she would try to go back with the girls but that he should go on. They didn't think the German occupation would be such a bad thing for them; they were mostly worried about him, because of his reputation. So he was with us. There was no way of getting any communication through to the North.

(Izak would travel with us to Indonesia, and finally died working on the Burma railroad for the Japanese. To this day, I keep a picture of his mother, Tanta Leentje, who was my favorite aunt, and his two daughters, in my living room. The picture was taken during the war time, and I have always felt that you can see in the lines of my aunt's face that she had a sad expression. She had some idea that things were not going well.)

On Sabbath morning Noach went to the Synagogue and talked to a lot of people. Even though he had two families who were related to him living not far from us, we didn't have any chance to get to them: it was dangerous to go on the street, and we stayed home with the radios. The radio was on the whole day, and on Sunday morning

we learned that the young Princess, Juliana, and her family had left for London. Soon after that the whole Government and the Queen, Wilhelmina, left as well. That was a bad sign. Monday was sad, and Tuesday morning the radio had NO NEWS; instead of the news a minister spoke, and said that we should trust in God and be quiet. So we knew.

A few minutes after that, a cousin who together with his parents and his brother were also in Haarlem like us, came and told us that they were trying to get some taxis to get us to IJmuiden (the harbor of Amsterdam/Haarlem, from where ships could travel to England.) Mother and I had planned to do the big laundry, and mother right away turned that off. I went to our child, while Noach received a friend, one of the boys from the de Kadt family, and talked to him in our bedroom. Mother followed them, and overheard their conversation, of which she told me only years later. She saw Noach's friend give him something, which he put in the little pocket of his shirt. His friend had actually come to say "good bye" because his brothers and his parents were planning to take some of that stuff to end their lives. Noach told them what we were planning, and the man left.

I got busy putting on as many clothes as possible. My cousin, Izak, went to the attic and found a little suitcase with silverware, and by that time two taxis were at the door. But my mother wanted to stay, and she thought it would be easier for us to move without the child. At first Mother said, "Leave me here," but I didn't want to hear about it. Then she said, "Go, but let



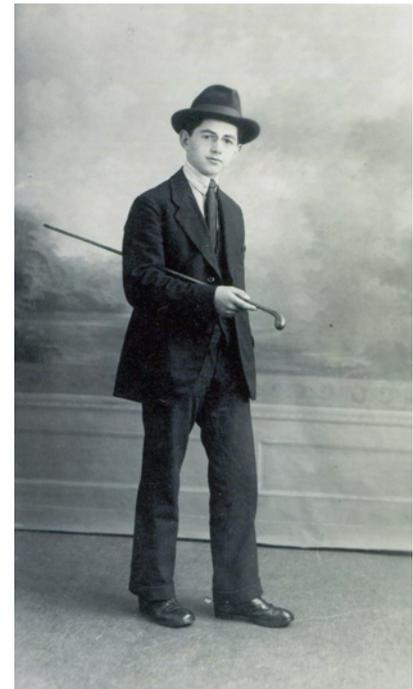
Leentje Frank-Goslinski with her son Izak, c. 1910.



Left to right: Izak Frank, Leentje Frank-Goslinski, and Simon Frank, c. 1915.



Izak's daughters (Leny and Ina) and his mother, dated 13 March 1938. (This is the picture which sits in Oma's livingroom).



When Izak was 17 he had to leave school and start working with the Brothers Frank Company as a salesman. This picture was taken to mark the event.

Izak Frank and Family

me keep the child.” I think that inside she must have thought we would never succeed in leaving Holland, but to this day I don’t know what was going through her head. In a time like this no one thinks straight. Of course, she must also have been thinking of Father. But I refused to leave Chana and insisted that Mother come with us, and finally she agreed.

Why did she agree? I don’t know. Later she told me the story of Noach’s friend’s visit, and about the powder. She had heard Noach say that he’d never let the Germans take him alive. That night there was a tremendous amount of suicides, and Mother didn’t want to take the chance that that would happen, so she agreed to come.

I took special care packing for Chana, taking a bottle with a kind of porridge. I also took a little spoon with her name on it so that she would have her own spoon, and a little fruit knife, so I could cut things for her and have it be as clean as possible for her.

(Now I will get a little ahead of myself and tell the story of this fruit knife. The knife was part of a set of twelve — and it went through the whole war with me. After we had returned to Eenrum in 1946, we went to a neighbor of Simon, Noach’s father, who had been given all of our silverware to save. The man said, “I looked and looked. I know you have twelve of everything but I only have eleven of these knives.” When he said that I took the knife out of my purse and said “And here is the twelfth.” But that was much and much later.)

The taxi chauffeur took a back road, but we were stopped a few times and had to

say the words “*Scheveningen*” or “*Schiermonikoog*” because if you had difficulties pronouncing these words it “proved” that you weren’t really Dutch, and they didn’t let you go on. People were very much afraid for German spies. After we said it all right we got their blessings and could go on.

How long the ride to Ijmuiden took I don’t know, but finally we arrived. There was a soldier there who saw us with a child and he told us where to go: we were placed in a hall where they used to pack fish; it smelt very strongly. In the meantime the men had gone out and found a fishing trawler on which we could travel. We boarded one, but after sitting in it for a few hours without getting under way we were told to leave and board another one. A fishing trawler had to be “under steam for eight hours,” so the first one we were in was no good. Dutch soldiers were behind us with their guns, and there was no possibility to go back if we had forgotten something. You went from one point to another, but never back. We knew it was dangerous. We had no food with us, except for some porridge I was carrying for Aleid. Around 8 p.m. we finally left Holland, and saw Rotterdam burning behind us. I cannot tell much about the boat trip: I was very seasick, and the captain let me use his bed, where I slept for most of the trip. The date I will never forget: it was May 14th, 1940.



Lena in the garden of the house in Eenrum, 1936. During the summer the Benningas often sent a bucket full of these flowers to their inlaws in Groningen, by means of a local man who made deliveries on Fridays.



Lena smoking, 1937.



Lena (left) and Lien v.d. Hak on Herestraat, Groningen, 1936. Taken by Noach Benninga from inside the Frank house.



Picture from inside the Jewish shul in Leens (about 5 km from Eenrum). Taken by Noach Benninga on Yom Kippur.



Lena and Zadok Frank walking on the street in Groningen, 1935. Picture taken by an "instant" photo vendor.



Noach Benninga (right) examines a store window in Roosendaal, April 1932.



Lena at home, 1937.



Lena at home, in front of the piano, 1935.



In transit: at the train station in Utrecht, 1935. Photographed by Noach Benninga.



Oom Simon (Izak Frank's father) walking on Herestraat in Groningen.



The men of the Turksma family in Drachten at work, 1936. Their family business was leather tanning.



Oom Simon and Leni (Izak's daughter) 1935



Drinking coffee, 9 May 1936. L to R: Lena, Hettie van Voolen, Leida Keising van Tijn.



Near the Dam Square in Amsterdam, 1935. Right to left: Pien Mok, Lena, Doortje, Rozette Turksma-Benninga and her daughter Betsie. Taken by Noach Benninga.

2. The War Years

Arrival in England

The trip to England took forty hours, and when we finally arrived in Folkestone, the easternmost point in England, we heard a call from another trawler: “Is Benninga there?” When we got off the boat it turned out that these were the friends who had given Noach the powder to end his life — they, too, had escaped. Since then we stayed very good friends.

(This was the family de Kadt, two parents and three boys about Noach’s age, who were later with us in Indonesia. Both the parents died in the Japanese camps, and also the oldest brother. In this family there was something which I have often noticed: the mother was very dominating, and told the boys not to marry any girl they were interested in. “That girl is not for you,” she would say, or something like that. In such cases the boy normally does not want to hurt the mother, and often will not get married until after she is gone. This is what happened with the two other de Kadt children, who were only happily married after the war. Of course, sometime when the boy has a very strong mind, he runs away from home and breaks up with the mother. But in both cases it is a sad story for everyone involved, and should be avoided!)

In Folkestone a committee welcomed us with what I think was at least half a liter



Saar and Father after the German occupation, 1941

of coffee with milk. I took one sip and went to my mother, who never drank coffee and I said: “You have to taste this.” And then I gave some to our little child. I think I never tasted anything better.

I don’t remember much of what happened after that, but we were put on a train. Some people came around and asked questions, and later we heard that a few people who were from German origin had been taken away and put in jail. But most of us went on and eventually we arrived in London. One more thing happened along the way, which I sometimes think about: at some point someone said something about the people in England — how things there were not as they were supposed to be, not like they were



L to R: Simon Benninga (hidden), Frouwkje Benninga (transported), Sara Frank (hidden), Jet Benninga (transported), Zadok Frank (transported).

From the Other Shore, Eenrum 1941

“*bij ons*”, that is, in Holland. But here we were, leaving Holland, and who knew if we would ever return. How could you say “*bij ons*” and think of Holland?

In London we were put up in a kind of Salvation Army building with mattresses on the floor and we could get some sleep. Men and women slept next to each other, wearing the clothes we had on. Only our child got a little crib, but she cried very much and everyone was angry. But finally, I think we all got some sleep.

The next day we were checked and questioned and because we had some money in the English bank we were allowed to go stay in a hotel. It was a Jewish owned hotel and the owner and his wife were very nice. We stayed in one room, whose windows had been blacked out. There was a double bed, a bed for my mother and a crib. Chana started crying, and Noach got mad. You know how hard it is to control your tension in a time of panic.

We arrived at the hotel on Friday, and so didn't intend to go out. However, because we did not have even a single change of clothes Mother and I went out on Friday afternoon, crossed the street, and bought some underwear for all of us. The next morning there was a call for us, and because Noach was the one who spoke the best English, he had to answer it. It was the police, who wanted to know how many people we were, and of what ages. My mother, aunt and uncle were all at the end of their fifties — probably not a dangerous crowd of people, and so the police would come on Sunday to the Hotel, but they told us we were not allowed to go out. They knew already that we had been across the street. On Sunday morning they arrived, questioned us, and told us that we had to come the following morning to the police station to get our gas masks, and that before we got them we were not allowed to go anywhere.

From London to Batavia

It was in London that we got our first gas masks: Chana got a yellow one, and we got the regular gray ones, and we were not allowed to go anywhere without them.

Even though we had some money at the bank, and the hotel might have been charging us less than the regular rates, we all felt we should conserve our resources. We were eight adults and one baby: my uncle and aunt (Izak and Jette Nieuweg) and their two sons (Louis and Bram); our cousin Izak Frank; my mother (Anna Frank-Goslinski); my husband, (Noach Benninga); my self and our daughter Aleida Chana. Through a committee for refugees my mother and aunt got a few addresses where they could look for a kind of apartment, a place where we would be able to live as long as we needed. That was for my mother and aunt, especially for my mother who was alone, a completely new experience. In Groningen my parents belonged to the high middle class, not the elite, but really middle class. They were respected very much. But now things had changed, and even the way they looked was different: their hair was not well kept, and their clothes were, of course, neither ironed nor well fitting. Both ladies must have lost some weight, which is common in a state of extreme shock.

My mother was nervous, and every day her hair lost more and more of its normal shape. Normally she had curly hair with a little bit of a wave, but now her hair became straight and simply hung from her head; I'm sure it was an expression of the way she was feeling at the time. Now she looked like a

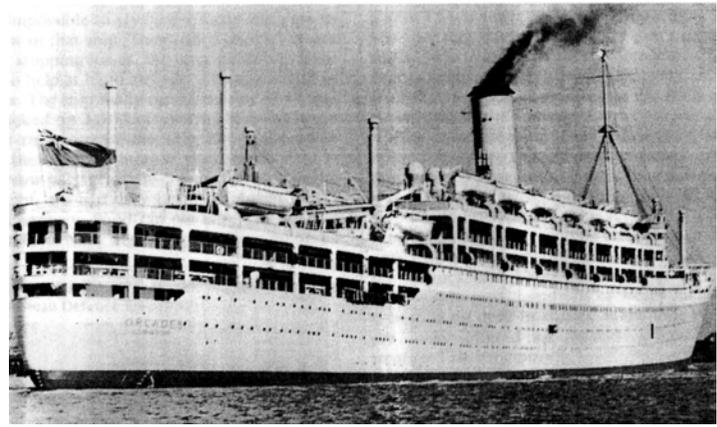
refugee, and people slammed the door in her face. She felt she had been a Somebody, and here people rejected her. After a few hours of looking for a place to stay the two women came back to the hotel, and each of them was talking about her experiences. Suddenly my mother started laughing hysterically and couldn't stop for about an hour. It was very frightening, and I was worried about her. I didn't know what to do. I was myself just 26, and had never had this kind of an experience. Afterwards she was not bitter, but she was not Mevrouw (Mrs.) Frank anymore, just a plain woman. In Holland, even when you went to another town you would say your name and where you lived, and everyone knew all about you. My mother had had some pride: they had been on the ladder, but now someone had come and thrown them off.

Finally we found a nice place in South Kensington, London. Downstairs from us lived a very nice lady, who right away came upstairs to ask us if we needed anything. She gave us two candelabras complete with candlesticks. Putting candles on the table, I think, was a sign for happiness, of something festive. She was very nice, this lady, and she wasn't Jewish. Later on she invited us to her apartment and told us about her son. While we were living there she was very pleasant. However, we only lived there for about six weeks, by which time we had been advised, through the Dutch Government in Exile, to travel to the Dutch East Indies.

How did we end up in Indonesia? For one thing, it was impossible to stay in London. We had found temporary housing, but it was impossible to make a living there. We

would have been happy to go to America, but you had to wait for permits for a long time to do that, and it was impossible to go if you hadn't gotten permits in advance: Roosevelt was against taking refugees, and he sent boats back, so you couldn't just go to America. When we were still in Holland, Noach and I had applied for permits to travel to Palestine, which was a British mandate to which only a limited amount of permits were given. We had applied for a permit before Chana was born, and on March 14, 1940 — exactly two months before we left, but we had no idea at the time — we were invited by someone from the Jewish agency to Amsterdam for an interview. It cost 1000 pounds for the permit, and my father sent the money to London. And then you also had to pay for the trip itself. After applying you had to wait half a year, so in September we were supposed to get the permits. But by then the war had broken out, and by the time we arrived in London it was impossible to go to Palestine.

Now, the Dutch Government in Exile, which had also settled in London, kept in touch with the colonies, and they were accepting new people there. Noach was a chemist, and in the East Indies they had imprisoned 6,000 Dutch Nazis on the day the Germans occupied Holland. Most of them were academics, and that meant that there would be work places for many of the refugees. Also there would be enough places to live. In the West Indies, on the other hand, there would be work but no housing. So we were happy enough to go to the Dutch East Indies.



The Orcades, built 1937, carrying capacity 1000 people

And so, on July 2nd, our group of nine left London for Southampton, where we were to travel on board a big boat named the Orcades, which was part of the Orient Line. Luckily, some three or four months before the war started, my parents had put some money in a bank in England on advice of my uncle and aunt. There were thoughts of the war, and people had thought of visas and permits for other countries, like my uncle and aunts' family.

The Orcades was an enormous ship, and my mother was put in a cabin with a blind lady who was afraid of staying with a stranger; poor Mother came back to us and was very upset. So we went to the purser, and she was assigned to another cabin. We traveled tourist class, which held about 750 people, among them some 250 children under the age of 12. Feeding so many people at once was impossible, so an order was given that the children under 12 should get their meal before the adults, and one of the par-

ents should be with them. So three meals a day, one of us went with our girl, who was at that time one and a half years old, to the dining room, where the tables were set.

During these meals, although some of the children were as young as only a year old, the tables were set like they were for the adults' meals: a plate, two forks, a spoon and knives. Personnel was very limited, and the requirement was that we be seated at the table at a certain time, let us say, for example, at noon. Menus were waiting on the tables, and it took about fifteen minutes before a waiter came to ask what you wanted for your child. Then it took about another ten to fifteen minutes before something came, that is, almost half an hour after we had first sat down. What did some of the older children do? They took a fork and a spoon, turned over their plate, and started to hammer on it. You can imagine what then happened: in no time at all, all the children had joined in, and were doing the same — the noise was terrible. This went on for five weeks, that is, the whole time we were on the boat.

After the children were finished eating, Aleid would go to our cabin and usually took a nap, while the three of us — Noach, Mother, and I — took our meal.

Although we had been told that we were going to be traveling “under convoy,” after we had set out we noticed that there was no convoy at all. In order to avoid German submarines unescorted ship traveled towards South America, and then cut back to Gibraltar, where it stopped for less than a day; we were told that Gibraltar had just been attacked.

After that day was over we went on again, and traveling down the coast of Africa we ran into very rough weather. After perhaps two weeks we arrived in Cape Town. But although this was an opportunity to disembark, the group of Dutch passengers wasn't allowed to get off the boat: we came from a country that was suddenly the enemy.

From the tip of Africa we continued in the direction of Australia. As we came closer to Perth, the weather became rougher. The gulf waves came in very strong from side to side, so when the food was served on one side of the table, it slid to the other side. In the beginning they were serving soup, which spilled in the laps of the people who were trying to eat it. They soon stopped serving soup. In the last few days they put ropes everywhere, so that people wouldn't fall from stairways and would have something to hold on to. Still, by the end of that trip some one had broken her leg.

On August 5th 1940 we arrived in Fremantle, at the harbor of Perth. A long table with several men seated behind it had been set up for our passport control. Because the group of Dutch people was all Jewish, someone asked if there was a shul. One of the men behind the table answered: “Of course, *kol jisrael chaverim*.” When I heard that, it was as if the sky had opened up.

One incident I have to tell here. My uncle and aunt, and both their sons, all of whom were traveling with us, had visas for Australia which expired on August 5th, the same day on which we arrived. My uncle and aunt had their visas with them, but my two cousins had gone to the Australian Consulate in London, and been badly received:



The Journey to the Dutch East Indies

their visas had been destroyed by the Consul. He had told them that Australia was sending young men to Europe, and that he saw no reason why they should be allowed to go to Australia. And here they were, coming to the table to have their passport inspected. They said: “Look, on our terrible trip we lost our Visa papers, but our parents still have theirs. What do we have to do?” The man behind the table looked in his book, found the names of all four of them, and said that everything was OK.

Our cousins were allowed to stay in Australia, but we had to go on to Indonesia. We stayed in Perth for about 14 days, waiting for the next boat for Singapore, which would bring us to Surabaya and Batavia. My uncle, aunt, and two cousins stayed in Perth; later they moved to Melbourne and from there to America.

Our stay in Perth was good; the weather was like the nice days in Holland during

May, and the food was fine. We stayed there for about twelve days, and then we went with a small boat to Indonesia. Along the west coast of Australia we stopped at many little places, which was very pleasant. The boat would travel during the night and lay anchor in the mornings, during some of which we were allowed to go off the boat. Twice the boat took in a group of sheep, once a group of 700 and in another place 1400. The smell was bad, but we learned that we had to take it.

Settling down in Batavia

On the 26th of August, 1940, we arrived in Surabaya, where we had to turn over all our Dutch money because it was not valuable anymore. They promised us we would get the value back in Batavia in local currency. It was an unpleasant feeling, to arrive without a penny. They also made a note of the professions of the refugees — there was one dentist, a violinist, a hairdresser and so on.

It took three more days before we arrived in Batavia; We were met by another committee which had already received all of the information about us. The committee was meant to help us register so that we could get some housing, either with a local European family, or somewhere else. Noach and my mother went to the counter and I stayed with our little baby.

Suddenly a lady came up to me, and asked where we came from. I told her that we all came from Groningen. She said: “What are your names?” So I told her our name, my family name, and my mother’s family name. She also came from Groningen, knew some of my relatives and was suddenly excited. She said: “I had promised my husband not to take any one, but you just wait here and I’ll go to the counter and you three are going home with me.” My mother knew some friends in Batavia, and she went to stay with them.

Needless to say, we had a very nice home with the people we stayed with, the family Kraak. Her husband also came from Groningen, and was a lawyer. They had been there for fifteen years, during which they had returned twice to Holland for half

a year. To this day I still remember some of the instructions she gave me: “Take care of your child and don’t let her be taken care of by the *babu* — you are the mother, and you take care of the child. The *baboe* and personnel can do other things. And do something in the household so you don’t get bored.” These are good instructions for anyone who goes to another country. I picked up sewing, something I had been interested in before, but we had never had a sewing machine. In Indonesia it was, of course, cheaper than in Holland, and the material was cheaper too — but for this you can better read the story on My Sewing Machine (on page 111).

The committee had noted all the professions of the people in our group, and the day after we arrived Noach already had an interview for a position with a research laboratory that was still being built in a luxurious place near Batavia. Thankfully this job didn’t go through, because after the war the Indonesians kidnapped all the people from there and most likely killed them. Noach got another job, working as a chemist in gold and silver — something to do with powdered gold and silver. It was difficult and unpleasant, an odd business altogether, but he did what he had to in order to support the family. Though I never understood what he did there, I knew it wasn’t for him, that job.

We had arrived on the 29th of August, and by the 15th of September Noach already had a job. Together with our hostess we went out looking for a house, and found one in a mixed neighborhood, which was not so expensive, and the house didn’t need too much



The house on the Batang Hariweg, Batavia. Anna Frank stands behind two of the personnel.

furniture. What was necessary we bought as cheaply as possible. (This furniture also has a story, not because of how we got it, but because of who we sold it to. Of course I had no idea of it at the time, but the furniture would play a part in another story where I would have to pass through the eye of a needle. But that was only after the Japanese had taken over Indonesia — something that we never thought about before it happened.)

In any case, by the first of October we had moved in and I don't have to tell you that everything was strange, but we were happy to be back together again and in our own house. My mother was now with us again, and we were joined by my cousin, Izak Frank.

Suddenly I found myself in charge of a small house in which I had to deal with

three servants: a *djongos* (similar to a butler), a *babu* (a washing woman), and a *kokkie* (or cook.) The *djongos*, a man, was in charge of keeping up the house, and he came at six in the morning. He would set the table, make coffee and tea, and prepare the bicycle for Noach. He then served at the table, cleaned, took care of the refrigerator, helped the *babu*, prepared the bath for Aleid, and took care of the garden — in short, he did the most of the “rough” work. The *babu* came an hour later, at about seven, stripped the beds, did the laundry and cleaned the bedrooms. Then the *djongos* would clean the living quarters, wash the dishes and do whatever else was necessary. The *kokkie* went to the passer (the market), bought what I ordered, and did the cooking.

Now, thinking back on it, it is nice to have had that part of my life, but it seems

crazy that a young woman should have so little to do. It was a good arrangement for me, and very different from what I knew both before and after. Take the laundry, for example: every morning at 8 a.m. everything that needed cleaning was washed and dried in the sun. By 3 p.m. it was dry, and then it was put back in the bedroom. Still today many of the people from the Philippines are very pleasant and nice to be around, and it was a similar thing in Indonesia. Of course, you also had to be careful with your staff because some would take some small things. Mrs. Kraak advised not to put out more than two dish towels at a time, because when you put out more it was likely that some would not come back. Also, you would never get back the left over soap, which was at that time rationed. But altogether these were small things, and it never amounted to a tremendous amount of money.

Despite the help, our time was not entirely pleasant. For one thing, it was hot in Batavia, with no differences according to the season. (This is one reason I have difficulty remembering exactly when things happened.) For another, no one knew what was going on in Holland. And you couldn't complain about anything, because you had no place to go. The sun was shining, but when I think about it now, it was a very dark episode.

Before the War with Japan

By now we had gotten settled in Batavia, and we were living on the Batang Hariweg — I'm sure you can all imagine how strange everything was, just look at the name of our street: half in Dutch, but half very much foreign. Our house was located in a lower middle class neighborhood, which meant that people were half Dutch, half Indonesian; Mevrouw Kraak lived in the European neighborhood, about 30 minutes away, and I'd often go by bicycle to visit her. But we managed, and my cousin, Izak Frank, right away looked for a job and found one at a big wholesale place, so both the men in the house had jobs, and mother and I stayed home.

(Later, when the Japanese took over, this neighborhood became part of the Tjideng camp, which was one of the worst places to be in. Thank God I wasn't there. The commander of that camp was famous for being a "lunatic": he was a drunk, and would go crazy whenever there was a full moon. But I am getting ahead of myself.)

With so many personnel, and a strange surrounding, there wasn't enough to do for the two of us, and of course mother was nervous, and as much as I tried not to be, I was nervous too. Finally, I went to a lady who worked for the refugee committee, to ask her if there was something my mother could do. Soon there was a job also for her at a bank where they had started to collect money for "Spitfire" planes. The money was collected from across all the Dutch East Indies, and soon Mother knew more about the geography of the country

than any of us. A lot of money came in and was transferred to England. Mother was at that time in her late fifties, and her boss was a nice man; she became friendly with him, his wife and a co-worker. It was the best way to make our lives easier. Isaac was also busy, and so I found myself left at home with the child and the three servants.

Half a year passed, and then Noach was told to move to a small place in the middle of Java. He didn't feel good about it, and tried to get another job; he wrote ten applications and received eight positive answers. But... The situation in Indonesia started to get tenser, and now they wanted Noach to go to Surabaya as an officer in the Navy. He complained that he had never served in any kind of military service, and for this reason was not qualified for the job. But this did not get him out of the job: before assigning him to Surabaya the Navy sent him to Bandung for three months of regular military training and Aleid and I came with him.

Bandung was about 250 kilometers from Batavia, much closer than Surabaya would be, and I could more easily visit Mother, but I only went one time. I would have liked to visit her more often, but she didn't want me to come. Why, I'm not sure, but I think she was embarrassed for her circumstances: She had a small room in a boarding house, which she shared with another lady, and a job with the bank, but the whole thing must have been some steps down for her, socially. I think she felt terrible because I knew the house she was used to in Groningen, but she preferred this to coming with us because she

was independent. She never talked much about what she was doing there: only that she had a nice job and a nice boss, and that she liked the lady she lived with and her work. She didn't want to leave these things. At the time she was 60 — young.

In Bandung, we got one room in a house for the three of us, and after a month this room was supposed to go to someone else. I think we moved three times, once a month. Noach became friends with a man who was the head of the army training, but three months later we still had to go to Surabaya anyway. Mother and Izak stayed in Batavia. Luckily, moving was not difficult since each of us only had one suitcase, and by this time we were used to moving frequently.

Upon arriving in Surabaya we found a nice house which already had three servants who were staying there while the owner was away. I don't know exactly how long we were there, but at a certain point we got a message that a cousin from Haifa was coming to Indonesia, and she came straight to us. This was Sarah van Gelder, and she still lives in Haifa today, at Beit Joles. She arrived with her three children and together we tried to make life as easy as possible.

After we were about half a year in Surabaya, the Navy found another chemist, and Noach was free to go if he wanted to. But what to do for work? When we had first arrived in Indonesia he had applied to get a job at a research laboratory called the Buitenzorg. At that time the facilities were not yet ready, and now, after he had been told he could leave Surabaya, all their positions had already been filled: they no longer needed him. (I have already men-



Sara van Gelder van Tijn with Ruth Batjah, Chammie and David, 1941

tioned that, here too, we passed through the eye of the needle: Noach would have loved to have a job there, but after the war all the Europeans working there were kidnapped in the anti-white riots. But this was still in the future.)

It was the Navy that found a solution: they “lent-out” Noach to the Ministry of Education, which offered him a job at the Technical High School in Bandung. So we moved back to Bandung, where Noach became a teacher, teaching Europeans and “half-casts,” and he enjoyed the work very much. Bandung had a wonderful climate, and was closer to Batavia, where Mother and Izak were.

My cousin and her children were still with us and at a certain day we moved together to Bandung. Noach had gone ahead of us to look for a place to live, so he was already there when we arrived. Still, it took time to find a place, and for one month we stayed



Chammie van Gelder and Aleid in Surabaya, July 1941

in a hotel while we were looking. Sara, my cousin, also wanted to have her own place.

Before leaving Surabaya, Sara and I made plans to enjoy the train ride: we would ask Sara's eldest daughter, at that time seven years old, to take care of the other two children, and the two of us would go to the dining car. But by the time the train was under way the oldest girl had fallen sick and suddenly had a high fever. We ended up staying with the children the entire journey, and we were happy when we finally arrived in Bandung.

By the time we were in the hotel, the girl's condition had worsened: she was very sick and had to go to the hospital. It was a very difficult situation, because Sarah, her mother, was very much afraid — so much that she couldn't bring herself to call the hospital. And so, in the mornings, I would go to the public telephone and call the hospital for her, telling them that I was Saar van Gelder, the mother of such-and-such, and in this way we would get the information about how she was doing. In the afternoons my cousin went of course to see her child, and I took care of her other two chil-

dren, and of our own little girl. I still had a children's carriage from the lady from London, and I used it to take all three of the children, though one would always have to walk. I think this must have been the beginning of 1941.

Finally, after a month of this, we found a small house and my cousin also found a place not too far from us. My mother and Izak were happy to have us a little closer, and several times they came over on the weekends. I bought some furniture at an auction and we hired three servants. Noach would go to work around 7 a.m., our daughter went to a play school, and I did as much as I wanted in the house.

In December 1941 we turned on the radio and there it was: Pearl Harbor!! The war between America and Japan had started, and of course Indonesia was involved. At first Noach continued going to work, but in March, 1942, the Japanese took over Java. Another chapter had started.



Aleid in Surabaya, 1941



Lena, Aleid and Noach, Surabaya 1941



Anna Frank (3rd from right) with friends in Indonesia



Aleid in Indonesia, after a bath



Helen and Aleid, learning to read in Indonesia



Aleid in Indonesia, undated



Lena, Aleid and Izak, Indonesia



Lena, Aleid and Noach, Indonesia 1941

Life in Indonesia before Pearl Harbor

From the Japanese Occupation to Noach's disappearance

For Indonesia, the war started in December 1941. At this time my cousin, Izak Frank, was called up to serve in the Dutch army. Mother was left alone in Batavia, and at the beginning of February she joined us in Bandung. By March 8th the country had been fully occupied by the Japanese. One day we saw the Japanese army coming down from the mountains, on foot and by bicycle. Of the Dutch army there was no sign, they were terrible.

We stayed in our apartment for a while, but in some of the neighborhoods I went through later, people were taken out of their houses by the Kempei, (which was the Japanese version of the Gestapo.) They took over a whole street, which I would later, after Noach was taken, have to travel through on the bicycle, and the Japanese officers took the houses to live in. Electricity and water were now rationed, and you had to wear a band with a Japanese flag around your arm, but at first we didn't do it. At least the Japanese attitude towards Jews was completely different from that of the Germans — they had no idea what “being Jewish” meant. Of course there were horrible things going on between the Japanese and the local and European women, but thankfully this didn't happen to us.

Once the occupation had started it was “wait and see.” Noach went to the Technical High School, but the students didn't come. Soon after, he was made to work for

the Japanese: they ordered him to make Aspirin, and later he was ordered to make Salvarsan, (today called Arsphenamine), which was a chemical component used in the treatment of syphilis. Apparently they had need of that. In the meantime, we began wearing the band around our arm with the picture of the Japanese flag on it; we also were ordered to turn in any Dutch flags we had with us. I didn't do this, and instead took the flag we had apart: it formed three pieces of colored material, and my mother made a little triangular top from the red color for our little girl. *

All together we went on with fear in our hearts, for about a year and a half. Here is one example. I have told a little bit already about a certain family de Kadt, who left Holland with us. They were an elderly couple, with three grown sons: the middle brother had been a friend of Noach's from the margarine factory, and the youngest was Noach's age, a journalist and a writer, and I liked him the best. They had been with us in Holland on the morning of the 14th of May, and had given Noach the powder, and none of them were married. Now the youngest brother had been a communist in the early twenties, and when they arrived in Indonesia he was on the List for that — he was put in jail and his passport was taken. When the war with Japan started he was released, and taken to censor phone calls. Off and on, when I was talking with other people on the phone, he'd cut in and say “Benninga, hang up.” It was not allowed to talk about political things. Sometimes, to

*This article of clothing is now in Yad Vashem.

this day, there are still things I don't want to talk about over the phone, perhaps because of this experience.

We moved from our little house to a smaller place in a "Work Camp" from where Noach was still able to go to work. We were also able here to order some food: we would order it one day and receive it the next. This was very important, because Aleid was anemic and needed extra liver or beef. Every day I would make *nasi tim*, a rice dish with spinach and either liver or beef mixed together. Of course we never knew if we would still be there the next day to collect what we had ordered.

One morning Noach had just left when there was a knock on the door and three or four Japanese soldiers came in, and without saying a word started searching the rooms, opening the linen closet, and throwing everything out.[†] When they came to a little drawer I took it and put it behind me on the bed; I knew there were golden coins in there, which we were not allowed to keep. They didn't react to the move I had made.

Then they saw a foot locker, which belonged to Izak. He was now in the Dutch Army, and we were watching his things for him. They opened it, and inside were all kind of souvenirs which he had hoped to take home to his children after the war. The soldiers smashed these under their boots, and Mother said something to them, and was slapped full in her face. Right away I said: "That is my mother!", and received the same treatment, a slap in my face. It

was a full-armed slap, and they had strong hands.

After a while they left, and I burst out crying. I felt right away that they were looking for my husband, and I felt I never would see him again. That night Noach didn't return, and it took over two years until I saw him again. This must have been about September, 1943.

After the soldiers left we had to clean up the mess they had made, and I don't know how we handled ourselves. After perhaps two days I began searching for ways through which I could find out where he might be. (Later on I would hear from Noach how he was taken, along with the other Jews who worked with him, in a truck where they had to stand for hours. It seems that a German high-ranking General had come to Japan. The Japanese did not understand about the Jews, but after these visits there would many times be some action taken against them, probably on the orders of the Germans. But Noach himself has written about this, in his memoirs.)

[†]A parallel version of this story can be found on page 88.

Alone in Bandung

We had left Holland in May, 1940, and we arrived in Indonesia just before the beginning of September. For a year and three months we lived a so-called “normal life” in Indonesia, as Dutch colonial citizens. (Of course nothing was “normal” about this time, but we were living independently.) Then, in December 1941, the war in the Pacific started, and by March, 1942, the Japanese had occupied Indonesia. Our “normal” life was, again, over.

How did this affect us? First of all, Noach had to change jobs — he stopped teaching, and started making drugs for the Japanese. Less than a year after the occupation began, at the beginning of 1943, we had to move to a work camp; the Japanese were taking the Europeans out. In the camp we did not stay still, and had to move again and again according to the orders we were given by the Japanese. First we had a different kind of apartment, and afterwards a smaller house. This camp was in some ways similar to a ghetto: it was a section of Bandung, I think originally half European. There were a lot of half castes. The real Europeans built houses in the European style, and after six years they went for half a year to Holland. The half castes always stayed in Indonesia, and had a different kind of house — very simple, with one long room. We lived together in the camp for about half a year, and then, in September 1943, Noach was taken.

Living in that place gave you the feeling of being locked up. You had only a tiny little place to live — a house, or part of a house,

and you couldn't really go out. There was a gate, and you had to have special permission to go through it. We were very much cut off from the outside world, and finding out what had happened to Noach seemed impossible. What could I do?

After we had already moved to the work camp, we were no longer paying rent but we were still busy all the time: Noach was working, and with no servants, Mother and I were busy with the cleaning, the washing and taking care of Chana. But for one thing we were supposed to go out of the camp — to take care of our gas and electricity. At some point during the time we were there I went to the place where they connected you — it was a kind of open market — and there I met, by chance, the man we had sold our furniture to.

I mentioned before that when we moved to Batavia we bought very simple furniture at an auction because we didn't have much money. At some point we had to move again, and we sold this furniture. How we did it I don't remember, but on a certain day a European man came to look at it and bought it. We asked him if his wife shouldn't see it, and he said that she was in the car, but because we lived in a low class neighborhood she was afraid to go out since she was Japanese. This was in the beginning of 1941, the war hadn't started yet, and we didn't understand exactly what he meant. He explained to us that the Japanese were not very much liked, took whatever he had paid for, and that was it.

In any case, I met this man again while I was outside the camp, taking care of the electricity and gas. Of course the situa-

tion was now much different from the last time we had seen each other: if he hadn't been married to a Japanese woman this man would most likely also be in a work camp, but he enjoyed a special privilege because of his wife. He greeted me nicely, and asked if my husband would be willing to give his son some chemistry lessons, because the boy was interested and was not going to school because of the situation. I told him that even if Noach would be willing to do it, it would be impossible because the boy couldn't come to the camp, and Noach — as a white man — could not come to their house. I talked a little bit with him, and he told me where he lived and also that his brother-in-law was an interpreter for the Kempei, the Japanese secret police which was similar to the Gestapo. He gave me a card with his address and telephone number, in case Noach would like to get in touch.

I kept this address, and when I began to search for Noach I called him up. He told me he would make arrangements with his brother-in-law, and that I should call back the next day. The following day he said his brother-in-law could talk to me on a certain day. They lived next door to each other, in the area where the Japanese had set up their headquarters, and I was to go there myself to meet this man.

On the appointed day I took my bicycle, took off my band with the Japanese flag, and went, riding through streets full of Japanese people. Of course I was scared, but it helped some that I was relatively dark for a European: I had pitch-black hair at that time, and somewhat oriental looking eyes, and people often thought I was a half-

caste. Towards the end of the street stood a Japanese woman, the wife of the man with whom I had spoken. She made some kind of small motion towards me, signaling me to come to the back entrance to their house, because they felt it was safer than to enter right in front of the Kempei building. I went straight forwards, not looking left or right. She told me her brother-in-law would come meet me in their house; he was also Dutch, and married to her sister. Their houses were connected through their back yards. She called him, and he came and was very nice. He said: "If, in two days, you go to the Kempei you can ask for information. I hope to be there too, and will be your interpreter."

Of course I went at the time he told me. Hoping I would be able to get something through to Noach, I had brought some underwear and some medicines he used regularly. I had the whole thing tied up in a small package which I left in the basket behind the seat of my bicycle. I went into the Kempei building carrying only my purse.

Inside, when I looked around, I didn't see the man I had expected. One of the Japanese came and asked me what I wanted. I told him that I would like to know where my husband was. Instead of answering me, they took my purse, emptied it, and asked me all kinds of questions. I had some money with me, and they wanted to know from where I had gotten it. I told them that my husband had been working, and that we had saved some money. Again and again they asked the same questions and I was standing there, at attention, with my hands behind my back, praying: "Please God, let

me go home.” I knew, of course, that the Japanese could not be trusted with women.

Finally, they told me that I could go. I think I never rode faster to get home, and when I was with Mother and Aleid again I told them to pack a suitcase for each of us and bring the three suitcases to our neighbors. I was sure they would come right away to pick us up. But they didn’t come.

Several weeks after this we got a regular message that we were going to another camp in Bandung where we would have only one room for the three of us. We were allowed to take even less with us, but again I took my sewing machine, and of course whatever else we were allowed to take.

The new camp was also a section of Bandung which they had fenced in, but instead of the one-family houses built by the half-castes, this time the camp was made up of European houses. But this didn’t give more space, because the Japanese made it so that every room would be occupied by a family. In the old camp there was also a fence, but there had been a gate and I could go out sometimes. Most of the occupants of the new camp were women with children. You could walk a little bit in your section, but in the evening you had to be at home with the lights off — in the old camp you could sometimes have friends over at night and cook together.

Living in the kitchen was a European doctor with a Surinamese wife. He was very nice. The houses in Indonesia are very open, to help with the heat, and now that all the rooms were entirely full, and everyone

was cooking outside, the house was always full of smoke from the cooking fires. The bathroom was always taken, and there were many arguments breaking out between the people. All in all we stayed there for about half a year. Compared to what came afterwards it was better — there were no guards in the house, and you had your own bed. At this time Chana was about five years old.

In the new camp we had been assigned to live in a garage, which was, relatively speaking, a blessing: we had a little bit more room than other people, and it had a door, which we could open during the day to get some light and air in the room. My cousin Sara van Gelder and her three children — Ruth Batja, Chami and David — were also in that camp. Across the street, in another garage, lived a lady with some of her children and we became friendly together. In June 1944 she came and told us secretly that she heard on her little radio, that the Americans had invaded Normandy. That was good news, but at that time we didn’t know that the worst was still ahead of us.

Although you couldn’t leave the camp there was still some contact with the outside world, because regular people were allowed inside. Some people were even able to get some meals from outside. I don’t know where we got some food from, but we were able to do some cooking, at first on a charcoal fire. Later we were reduced to looking for branches and stray pieces of wood to burn. The pots became pitch black, but we did what we could to get some food. A course I had taken in Groningen — how to cook with different kinds of stoves — came

in handy, but I had never imagined I would use this information in the way that I now had to.

The Camps

It was past June, 1944, when we got the message that we were to be moved to another place. The news came through a lady who herself was in the camp, but had to follow instructions from the Japanese: the Japanese interpreters would talk to her, and then she would talk to the rest of the camp. She asked us what religion we were, and at that moment we could choose if we would like to say belonged to another religion. We of course said that we were Jewish. Another thing this lady said was that the camp we were going to was completely empty, and that if we had, for example, a big pot or even a sewing machine, we could take it with us, but that we wouldn't be allowed to keep these possessions in the place where we would be sleeping.

Well, we had a very big pan and I also had my sewing machine. We could take two mattresses, but each mattress could only be 55 centimeters wide, and we were only allowed to take one for me and one for my mother — there would be no place for a mattress for Aleid. Mother made our two mattresses the size they had to be, and from some towels we had she made a rucksack. We were allowed to take twenty kilos each, and a rucksack of ten kilos. It might sound not too bad, but twenty kilos in one suitcase is almost impossible, and ten kilos in a rucksack is just as impossible.

On the appointed day our luggage consisted of two suitcases, a rucksack, two mattresses, a pot and a sewing machine. I have no idea how we came to the bus that took us to the train, but we did. The conditions on



The Prisoners' Numbers of the Three Inmates

this train were not as bad as in Europe — we had seats. Then, at a certain moment and in an unknown place, we were told to get out off, and from there we had to walk. All I know is that it was a long, long walk and Aleid was tired, but she had to walk by herself, because I had my hands full with some of the things we had to carry. She was also frightened. All I could say to her was: “Hold my skirt and nothing will happen to you.” Aleid had a little bag that my mother had made from some dishtowels, and on which I had sewn some application figures and her prison number, so she had a place for her doll. I don't remember anymore where or when we got these numbers, but we had to wear them on our shirts.

Finally we arrived at the camp — Adek — and the first order of business was to stand in lines of five so they could count us. They counted and counted us over and over, each

time arriving at a number that was one too many. Suddenly I noticed that they had counted the doll Aleid had in her little bag.* Only after she put the bag on the floor was it OK, and the roll call was over.

Bandung was like a ghetto, but Adek was a camp, and this was something else entirely. What this camp had been before the war with Japan I'm not sure, but when we arrived it was empty, and had probably been that way for a certain period of time. It was very dirty, especially the places where you had to go for doing the necessary things. The toilets were very bad, so-called "Turkish toilets," where you had to squat down. The women had to clean these toilets with hoses, and on bare feet. Once we had been in the camp for a certain amount of time we had to take a container with us to the bathrooms: it happened very often, because of the condition you were in, that you didn't make it to the bathroom, and had to stop and do your business in the hall on the way.

The camp was divided into four parts, which they called "Hans," and we were in Han 1 — the Han where only Jews were. The other Hans were for something similar to the Free Masons, for non-Jews, and maybe for artists. Of course there were Jewish women in the other Hans as well, but they hadn't registered as Jews. But even though we were separated from the other groups there wasn't any discrimination against the Jews. As far as I remember all the Hans were the same. (The Japanese, I think, never really understood about the Jews, but followed orders from

Germany anyway. But it didn't go deep into the Japanese, that I know for sure. They had less knowledge about what Judaism was and they are much more tolerant. After the war many books came out, as though the Japanese camps were worse than the German ones — this wasn't the case, and I could never bring myself to read these books. There were many differences between the Japanese and the German camps, but for one thing — because of the climate — we were never cold.)

We were assigned to a big room where on the sides were only wooden boards about 75 cm from the floor — that was what our mattresses had to be on. There was hardly any space between the mattresses. In our room there were 26 adults and 10 children, I think. All our things had been left in a big open space during roll call and now we had to carry everything to the room. I took, at a single time, a mattress over my head, a suitcase in one hand and the sewing machine in the other. After a while they took the sewing machine away. We put the mattresses on the boards and that was the place where we, the three of us, were sleeping. At night we put up a net against the mosquitoes, but before we went to sleep we had to kill at first several bedbugs.

What did you do in the camp? Wash vegetables, lie on your mattress, and try to pass the time. That was OK, but you were called outside a few times a day. Every morning we had to go the place where our belongings had been placed when we first arrived, and there we were counted. This was called "Appel," or row-call. This was also done later on in the day, under the full sun, which

*The bag is also in Yad Vashem.

was terribly hot. The Appel was dangerous: if you didn't obey the Japanese, you could be slapped, and I know of one person who died from this. When someone was sick they were taken to another camp for "recovery," but they never came back. One of the people who came with us vanished in this way. Whenever you saw a Japanese you had to stand up and say in Japanese something like "attention."

Some of the women had a job cleaning vegetables, mostly long leaves with long stems. I also took turns at this, but would also go in the mornings with another lady to get some of the small children together and play with them. How did this happen? At a certain time in one camp the commander was very nice. I found another lady, not Jewish, and together both of us had permission to play with the children. Using pieces of scrap paper I made for the children some pictures of things from "normal life" — life outside of the camp. I don't know how, but this little book that I made survived, and you can see it here, on page 63. (Much later, after we had been freed, Chana told me that when she came back to Bandung she was sitting in a chair next to a table at the house of Noach's friends, and she realized that she recognized what it was from the pictures I had shown them in the camp.)

The food was our main problem. In the morning you'd get a piece of bread which looked as though it was made from some starch, I think from tapioca. In the early afternoon we would get rice. Some of us would go to the kitchen, and bring back a tub filled with rice: at first everyone got one cup of

cooked rice, and then everyone got another tablespoon, and if there was still anything left, which was of course very little, the children in the room took turns scraping it out from the bottom of the tub. Today one, and the next day another. Most mothers fought over this, saying: "Yesterday, when my child had his turn, there wasn't as much as today."

Twice a week in the morning instead of bread some sago pap was given. Sago was a kind of fruit, like a peach, but white. It was cooked with water and had no nutritional value. On Wednesdays it was given to one half of the camp, and on Saturday to the other half. The children became very weak and after they had had the sago pap, they usually had difficulties holding in their urine. It was very sad to watch.

Sometimes, when I worked in the kitchen, as a treat I got some hot water in a small pan I had. If we had some tea, we would use our pan and make some hot tea — that was marvelous. We would drink it in the room, quietly. Before we were interned I had prepared two small jars with crushed red pepper and dried fish; the jars were long and relatively thin — a little wider than what you could get the fingers of one hand around. Aleid got most of the time one teaspoon of each over her rice, in the hope that she could have a little bit of protein and some vitamins. I used it very carefully, and I think it lasted almost till the liberation.

But Chana did not grow in size at all during the war. At the end of the war she was seven, but she was the size of a four year old, and had even lost a kilo. (We knew this because we had her measured at the

end of the war because Saar wanted to sew her some clothes.) My mother was down to 68 pounds — or 31 kilos. I weighed about 50 kilos. There's a picture in Noach's book of the four of us after the war. We went to a kind of photographer, and I remember that the price was something like 65 fl., which was very expensive. We sent one of these pictures to Opa Simon in Groningen, and he probably sent one to Saar. I was the only one who didn't look so thin because I was bloated from the hunger.

Most of the day you would be in your room — the best way to pass the time was to talk, and what we'd talk about was food. "Do you remember that you used to make kugel? — How did you make that kugel? Let me write it down." People would write recipes on whatever piece of paper they found, and at the end you couldn't even read it, because people wrote on what was already written. It's well known that people will do this when they are starving. It was time-consuming, and let you relive your good memories mentally. For a long time I had a notebook with the recipes other people had given me in the camp, but at some point I lost it. I suppose that from somewhere we must have had pencils.

We had some golden coins with us, and we used them two or three times to buy eggs from people who were willing to risk going out of the camp clandestinely. They would go under the fence and come back with hardboiled goose eggs. Why did these people come back? They had no other place to go, and I never heard of people escaping. It was also difficult because the Japanese were anti-white, and people would recog-

nize you easily — from the way you looked, and from the way you talked. Usually these people who brought in food would be punished — they were slapped and had their hair shaved off.

We would try to mash the eggs and eat them, but this was not so easy — goose eggs are bigger than regular chicken's eggs. But eating the eggs was something that could not wait — otherwise they would spoil, and the whole thing would have been for nothing. What mattered was that you would have something in your stomach, but we couldn't get eggs often. I don't think it helped much nutritionally, but mentally at least, it made us feel a little bit better.

Whatever clothes we had on we would wash in a sink outside of the room. The earth was red, and when the cloth lines broke all our clothes would become red too. There were about ten showers for I don't know how many hundred women, and often when the time came to take a shower the water was cut off. Most of the time Mother and I went to the shower room with a little pail, which we carried between the two of us. At first I took Chana to the shower separately, because I thought it was not good for her to shower with everyone else. But there were always naked women in the showers, even when it was not officially time to shower, and they were thin. After a while I took her also at the same time as when we went. The pail we used so that if they stopped the water you could still get some water to finish bathing. The water was always hot because of the heat outside — we wouldn't have minded a cold shower in that heat.

We were in the camps altogether for about 12 months.[†] At some point in the middle, perhaps half a year later, we were transferred to another camp, Tangerang. The conditions there were worse, and there was less air. The camp was only a few boards on top of each other, and I cannot properly remember what we did there. When you are constantly having food with low nutritional value and are only worried about surviving the details are lost. Perhaps you can't remember because you are so weak. It happened in the Japanese camps and I am sure that even more in Europe. You survive from minute to minute. There was no way to get more food or better food. Once in a while we would get yeast, and someone told us to put it in the sun, where it would multiply, and that then you could put it on bread. There was never much of it anyway. We'd take a glass of water before we went to sleep so we'd have something in our stomachs.

Most likely I had some kind of work there, but in Tangerang we couldn't play with the children anymore — there was no room, and also not everyone had been moved there; some people had been sent to other places. Sara van Gelder was also there in another room, so at least we were in the same camps. I think we must have spent about six months in Tangerang.

Then, in March 1945, we were transferred back to Adek. As soon as we entered Adek

the second time, I saw my sewing machine still in the sewing room where it had been put when we first arrived. But of course I couldn't say anything. Then in May we heard that the war in Europe had ended; how we heard this I have no idea, but I remember I was walking with Mother to the bathroom, and we were carrying the pail between us. We thought of my sister Saar, who had her birthday on the 15th of May, and mother and I felt good to know that she would celebrate it in PEACE. At this time we still had no idea of what had happened in Europe.

[†]I remember that we came there after having heard about the invasion of Normandy — so it must have been about September of 1944 when we arrived. It is very difficult for me to remember exactly how long we were there, the weather was always the same, and we were not in a good condition.

The End of the War: Liberation and the Return to Holland

May, 1945: Peace had come to Europe, but not yet to Indonesia. We went on, and our lives didn't change.

June passed, and so did July, and then in the beginning of August some women went out clandestinely to get food. When they came back, carrying hard-boiled eggs, they had to pass the quarters where the Japanese guards stayed. Instead of being punished as they had been before, they were not given any trouble. These women told us that they had seen the Japanese guards lying on their cots, crying; they seemed almost ready to kill themselves. And so we all knew that something had happened, but we didn't know what. Although we still had no idea what had just happened we still felt some changes.

The atom bomb fell on the 6th and 9th of August, but it took two weeks before they told us that the war was over, and that at night we could keep the lights on. I remember that one day we were told to gather together and the woman manager, who was also one of the interns, stood up on a podium and said that the war was over, but that she had to go and there was no time to talk about it. Her name was van Neuren-de Roy, and she was all in all a very unpleasant person.

(Only afterwards did we hear that the atom bomb had probably saved our lives: the Japanese had made plans to have all the children from the age of six and up “trans-

ferred” to Sumatra, but they were planning to sink the ship once it was under way. Once again, we had passed through the eye of the needle without even knowing it.)

A few days later we were told that there was frozen meat in the camp, that it had come from Australia, and that it would be prepared under strong supervision so that all the meat cooked would reach the people in the camp. I went to have a look, and it was true: there were big containers with frozen meat under a screen. I went to where my mother was lying: she was very weak, and down to 68 pounds. I told her: “You have to come with me, there's real meat in the camp.” If they would have offered me a piece of it, I would have eaten it frozen. It was prepared by the people in the camp, and everyone was promised to get some of it. It tasted like something holy — we hadn't had meat in two years, and I think I have never had a better meal!!!

Soon after that we got forms from the Red Cross to write to one of our loved ones. Mother and I each got one card: Mother wrote to Hilversum, and I wrote to Noach.

How could we do it? The address of the recipient was his prison number, and as the sender we put down the address of our own camp. I knew Noach's prison number because I had gotten some postcards from him in the camp during the war.*

*These postcards were sent and received about two or three times a year. You could put 25 words of your own in Malay and sign your name. Of course we didn't know enough Malay, and they put up a board with a few sentences — you could copy three of these sentences to the card. They said things like: “we are all doing great,” “the food is marvelous,” “the entertainment is marvelous” — crazy silly sentences! In Malay! And if you made a mistake the card



Left to right: Helen, Aleid, Noach, Anna Frank-Goslinski (weighed 35 kilos, or 77 pounds, at this time).

The Benninga-Frank family in Bandoeng, December 1945

These notes must have been fast in coming, because in the beginning of September I got a little note from Noach, and a few days later I was told that on a certain day he would call me, so I should be around where the telephone was. When his call finally came through it wasn't clear, but we were able to hear each other's voices. **We had survived the war.**

My sewing machine was still in the sewing room, and I went to an office to ask if I could get it back. Yes, they said, I should go and get it. For a while the American

wouldn't go through! To be as safe as possible, I took the shortest sentences. I knew more or less what they said. You could also write 25 words of your own, but I wasn't sure what to write. I remembered when Chana's first baby tooth fell out and she got a new regular tooth, so I wrote something about this to Noach so he would have an idea of her age. But there was something wrong with this, and they censored it. Afterwards someone said they had understood the meaning and changed it, I don't know why.

army came and took over the camp, but that didn't last long. They left, and the Japanese came back but they weren't enemies anymore but guards against the people who were outside the camp. Indonesia was going to be independent, and anti-white riots had started. We were warned not to go out, and to stay in the camp where we were safe and had food.

Then something unexpected happened: Mother chose to leave. I wish I could ask her once why she did that. So many times I have tried to figure it out, but I still have no idea. One morning towards the end of September she said, "I would like to go to Bandung and see how things are over there." At that time we knew that Noach was alive and in Bandung, staying with his friends, Maurice and Lucy Cohen, in their house. She left, but Aleid and I stayed in the camp.

A few days later, it must have been around the beginning of October, I received a message that Maurice would come and take me to Bandung. Another lady was also scheduled to go with us. I met Maurice, and he told me that the next day I should meet him at the railroad station. That morning the Red Cross came with a truck, but before we got on it they told us that the evening before fifty people had been kidnapped from the train; we should realize that as soon as we were on the truck, we couldn't go back to the camp.

What to do? Maurice was waiting, so I went. When I arrived at the railroad station Maurice had already arrived, and of course neither of us said anything. We were both tense, because of the danger. We got on the train, and Maurice sat in one compartment

and Aleid and I in another — this way we could see each other, but we might be safer if something happened to one of the compartments. The train went through seven tunnels, and the kidnapping of the night before had taken place in one of them. When we had passed through all the tunnels Maurice came over to me and said: “Would you like to drink something?”

One more thing happened on this train. In 1943, Mother had bought diamonds for about 10,000 guilders; there were a lot of Jewish jewelers in Indonesia at the time, and she must have done it through them. These diamonds she put in the buttons of a sweater — these buttons were made of two parts which would be clicked together, and we put the diamonds in one of the parts, wrapped in cotton, so that they wouldn't rattle. This sweater went through all the war with us, and all the camps. Then, on the train to Bandung I was so concentrated on my child that I don't know what happened, and when we arrived in Bandung it was gone. I think it fell somewhere, and I can't say whose fault it was. I wanted to ask my mother why she hadn't taken the sweater with her when she left early, and Mother blamed Maurice Cohen. Why not? Blaming people is very easy. I didn't say anything. I felt both bad and not bad at the same time, because when I got off the train I had to tell mother that Isaac had died working on the Burma railroad. I had received the message at the camp, after she had left. So here was the money, on the one hand, and here was a life, on the other; which was more important?

Well, we arrived in Bandung and how I don't know, but we came to the house of the Cohen's. Besides Noach, my mother and many other friends of the Cohen family were also there.

At first Chana didn't know her father, and that was difficult. When Chana and I arrived in the Cohen's house they had prepared for us a light meal of bread and tomatoes; that was the first time Chana had to sit on a chair next to a table, and she remembers this herself. My mother asked her what she wanted on the bread. She said there was already butter on it, and if she tasted a tomato or something else which people put on butter — she was not used to these things. She was six and a half.

Altogether we were a group of about 14 people, refugees. Lucy had a *babu*, and she was able to do some shopping for all of us, and together with her some of us helped with whatever had to be prepared. Food was very precious, and all around us were riots against the white people. Houses were burned, some not far from us, and suddenly the Japanese soldiers who were still there were our protectors.

At a certain point in time Maurice found out that there was an office from the RAPWI (Recovered Allied Prisoners of War and Internees) which was similar to the Red Cross. They had been having difficulties getting food, so Maurice arranged to make sandwiches for them. We got some bread and some roast beef and suddenly we were in business, trying to get as many slices out of one loaf of bread as we could. We had a competition to see how thin you could slice the bread — it would always come out be-



23 December 1931: Izak Frank marries Emmy Roeper



Picture of Emmy and the girls, sent to Indonesia during the war for Mother's birthday. On the back of the card Emmy wrote that she hoped to be able to pay her respects in person, and sent a kiss to Izak.



December 1941: Izak Frank is called up to the Dutch Army in Indonesia.



Izak's marker, Kuie, Burma. This picture was received through the International Red Cross.

In Memory of Izak Frank and Family

tween 20 and 21 slices per loaf. After the sandwiches were ready Maurice and Noach went to the Red Cross and got paid for however many sandwiches they had delivered. We always were glad to see them back, because the trip was not without danger. The money we earned went to the house and to the family — to buy food. It was like a kibbutz.

I arrived at the Cohen's in October, shortly before my birthday, and by January we were able to leave for Holland. We knew that it would be very difficult, because while we were with the Cohen family we had received some letters from Holland.

My sister wrote that Father had not come back from the camps; many others of our relations also had not returned, and the hopes of seeing them back were very slim. Noach's father, Simon, also wrote about his time during the war: he had found a place to hide, with the family Bergacker, and he did this in the hope that he'd see his child and family again. Thank God, he did. He wrote that one of his sisters had come back and was staying with him, and that all the belongings from his house had been stolen, but he had gotten some things back from the Nazis — the Dutch ones. I still have wine glasses from them. Saar knew where our furniture was, and I think she was in contact with these people and knew that the warehouse was safe.

It was not easy for us to realize what had happened in Europe. One evening, Radio Orange had a famous journalist, by the name of Lou de Jong, talking about what had happened, and we all were as quiet as we could be. It was there that we heard for

the first time what had happened: camps, transports, trains, the terrible conditions, the selection in the camps — no one knew what it meant. We all listened together; almost all of us were Jews. The reaction was terrible: silence, no one said anything. After the broadcast was over, Noach left the room and when my mother went looking for him she found him next to our daughter's bed, crying.

People didn't say anything. We couldn't comprehend, how could we? We had just come out of a camp, but a very different camp. How could we imagine what had happened? I still can't, even though I know more about this today than I did then. Can you imagine a wagon in which they'd transport cows — that they put ten times more people for four days, with no room etc., how can you imagine this? The smell and people dying in the wagons! To this day I have trouble thinking about what went on in Germany, and whenever there is a movie or a program about the subject, I always think of Father.

On January 13th, 1946, we left Indonesia, traveling by boat. The name of the boat was The Johan van Oldebarneveld. The accommodations were poor: we all slept in hammocks, which were laid out at night over the tables where we ate. Men and women were separated, and the trip took five weeks.

Upon boarding the boat they asked us if Aleid had already had the measles. At first Noach answered, "No," to which they replied that she couldn't go on the boat. So Noach made some excuse and was asked



Helen and Noach Benninga at the Suez Canal, on the return trip from Indonesia. February 1946

again, and this time said, "Yes". The reason they were asking, it turned out later, was that on one of the previous boats there had been a lot of children who were sick with the measles, and some of them had died. But we were not the only ones who lied, and while we were on the sea they announced that all children who hadn't already had measles were to get some injections. Three weeks into the voyage, and after having already received two injections, Aleid got the measles. Two weeks after that we arrived in Ijmuiden, **Holland**.

(Here, again, we had passed through the eye of the needle: while we were on the ship a small fire had broken out, probably something to do with the engine — I myself was not even aware of it. But the Johan van Oldebarneveld was an old ship, and on one of the following journeys it broke down

and sank, and the people who were on it drowned.)

When we arrived in Holland all the children who had had the measles less than two weeks before arrival had to go to a hospital, because many of the sick children who had been on the boat before us had suffered from complications of the disease. Luckily Chana didn't have to go. In the meantime Mother was very sick, and had had to travel in the hospital room of the boat. When we arrived in Amsterdam she was suffering from Pneumonia.

When we arrived we got a message that Noach's cousin, Pien Mok, was waiting to bring some of us to where we had to go, but Aleid and I couldn't go because we were not sick. Mother was taken to Hilversum by Pien, in a car which she had gotten from the organization for which she was working (an organization dedicated to reuniting parents and children, which was very difficult since they couldn't recognize each other.) That Mother was picked up, that Pien could meet us at the docks — that was for me a tremendous consolation.

Chana, Noach and I were taken by a bus, and when we arrived in Hilversum we had a very hearty welcome, organized by the van Dam family where my sister Saar had been hiding for the last half year before the war was over. We celebrated Aleid's seventh birthday, but Mother was very sick and wasn't aware of anything that was going on around her. Anyhow, a few days later we went with Noach's father by taxi to Eenum, where an aunt of Noach's was waiting for us. And so, yet again, another part of our lives began.

3. A New Life Begins



Aleid and Saar, shortly after the return to Holland

Eenrum

A new life had started in a small village. All the family members who used to live there before had died in Poland; the only survivors were my father-in-law and one of his sisters, who had lost her husband and two of her children. This sister was living with my father-in-law when we came back, helping him keep house. When we came back she said she was surprised that both Noach and I had returned, because usually couples didn't come back together. She had always wanted Noach to marry her daughter, and thought that maybe the war had solved her problem.

In the eyes of the government we weren't treated as Jews, but as Dutch people coming back from Indonesia. And there was a big difference: when Jews came back from the German camps they were neglected, didn't get extra rations, help, nothing. But we, for half a year, got double rations: two pounds of sugar instead of one and so on. We also got some money every month to help out. Not much, but in addition there was also free medical and dental care. In Eenrum we were the only ones who had come back. We also received 40 eggs every week from some woman, and Opa Simon sent 20 of them by mail to Hilversum to Mother and Saar. He was a very good man, not very hard working or enthusiastic, but a good man. We lived in Eenrum until January, 1948.

Opa Simon also got some special help. He had come back to the village, and the people there were happy to see him — they gave him a hot plate, which helped all of us warm our food. And the woman who had hidden him brought some things she had taken from the Nazis, so he'd have something in the house. He was one of the very few who had survived in the north of Holland, and the people there felt they should take care of him... I never thought I would live in Eenrum but that was the best thing that happened: we had milk straight from the

cow, which at that time was a blessing — you had better have fresh food! I remember I got once a pitcher full with strawberries. People came with gifts just like that, maybe we paid for some things, but they came with gifts. This is also how we came to get the weekly supply of eggs, which were at that time very rare in the cities.

The three of us were OK, but Aleid hadn't grown in over two years and had even lost one kilo during the camp time. Noach was thin, and I was very much swollen from Hunger Edema, because of malnutrition.*

My father-in-law found a young girl of fourteen to help me in the house, because Noach's aunt left very soon to be with her daughter. The girl was nice and very willing to earn some money and learn something. We did the cleaning together, and it was a very good experience for both of us. She came from a very bad family; both her parents had a venereal disease. I soon became pregnant and people warned me that it was unsafe to have this girl in the house, due to her parents' condition. Everyone in the village knew everything about everybody, and didn't hesitate to spread the word around further. I went to our doctor and asked if it was really dangerous to have this girl in the house, knowing what I did about her parents. His answer was something of a joke:

*Hunger edema, or oedema, is produced in the last stages of starvation, and refers to the swelling of limbs and later the body, through lack of protein. As the body loses weight, all available stores of energy are used, including, eventually, protein. In a prolonged starvation there is a progressive loss of muscle mass, and neither the heart nor the kidneys can function correctly. The visible result of this process is the presence of abnormally large amounts of fluid in the intercellular tissue spaces of the body.

“As long as you don't crawl into bed with the father, there is nothing to worry about!”

There were only a few Jews left in Groningen now, and on Yom Kippur Chana and I stayed there. There was hardly any service, and I didn't go anyway. It was sad, but people were either: “Thank God we survived,” or “I survived, but why me?” or “Why were the children murdered. . .” It seemed to depend completely on the character of the person. I felt from the beginning that I missed my father and the family, but decided early to hold up my head from respect to the people who had been killed. Until now there are survivors who are always sad.

The winter of 1946 was very cold, and by that time Noach had found a job at the Rayon plant in Arnhem where they wanted to start research for the production of Nylon.

Nylon was quite new at that time and in an interview with two vice presidents of AKU, Noach was asked if he had ever heard of it. He thought about it, and replied: “All I know is that after we left the camps and were already on our way to go back to Holland, we received a package with some toothbrushes in it from America, and on them was the word 'Nylon.’” One of the vice presidents said: “You are our man, because that is also as much as we know about it.”

Of course, Noach studied and worked very hard, and our weeks after he started working were not easy for me: he would leave on Monday mornings at about 6 a.m. by taxi, and travel to Winsum, where he would catch the train to Groningen and from there another train to Arnhem. At that time the whole trip took about six hours, and we had

no telephone and the mail went slowly, but we managed. My Father-in-law, as a survivor, had his electric hot plate which came with two big pots, and also a pan specially designed to cook the milk — which was important because we got the milk straight from the cow. He also got two other pans, and I did most of the cooking on kerosene burners, of which I had two — one had three burners, and the other had only one. It was a good way of cooking, but you had to watch that the flames didn't get too high, because then the pot would turn pitch-black. I was used to keeping a Kosher household, but there was no Kosher meat available and, in any case, my kitchen was not equipped for this task. So I did what was possible: it was more important to have good food on the table than to worry about things you couldn't change anyhow.

Noach usually came home on Friday night around midnight, and I would save some soup for him on a little stove, which we kept in a very small room, so that we didn't have to use much anthracite in heating it.[†] The kitchen wasn't heated at all, only when we had to use the big stove, which was mostly on Mondays, for the laundry. One time everyone had a cold and as there were no paper tissues, everyone was using the regular cloth handkerchiefs. To clean them I first boiled them, and by the time I had washed all 40 handkerchiefs, they were all frozen stiff on the counter. Our bedroom

[†]Anthracite was a kind of black coal, which was found at that time in the south of Holland. It gave off a tremendous amount of heat, and would burn out very slowly. The cinders in the big furnace we had at this time would form clumps that were like rocks, which I had to take out every morning.

was under the roof, and in the morning the sheets would be frozen from breathing on them, and the blankets were most of the time also frozen. I would take them downstairs to thaw, and by the afternoon I could make our bed again.

The baby was due around March 15th, 1947, and we had asked Noach's cousin, Pien, who was a registered nurse and with whom we got along very well, to come help me during the time the baby would be born. She came on March 15th but... The baby only came on April 3rd, just two days before Pesach. My mother also came to help, and by that time we were able to get some of our furniture back and also some of our kitchen stuff. We also were able to get once a week a Kosher chicken from Groningen, and my mother started us off again to bring our household back to being kosher. Before, Opa had had a total of six dishes, forks and knives — how could you keep kosher with that? She brought back our blue pots and pans, so that we could separate the meat from the milk, and she helped put the kitchen in order.

At that time Mother was not yet 65 years old, and she had recovered very well after coming back to Hilversum. By the time she was in Eenrum to help us, she was strong again, but I now realize that she was depressed because of all the losses, particularly the big loss of my father, which, at the time of the birth of our son, we all felt very much. Mother felt alone, she missed my father, and Saar was not married and had lost her fiancée, so that was hard too. Mother never wanted to be in a picture with the new baby. For me it was a new life, and



Simon and Pien Mok, 3
April 1947



The House in Eenrum after the War



Lena and Simon, April
1947



Sara and Simon, August
1947



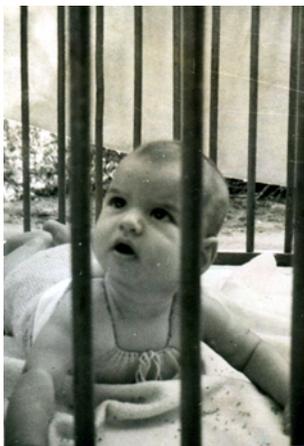
Opa Simon and Simon,
September 1947



Aleid and Simon



Aleid, Sara and Simon,
Eenrum, 1947



Simon, August 1947



The Benninga Family, August 1947. L to R: Noach, Si-
mon, Lena, Aleid



Simon, July 1948

it was good. For her, I think it must have been painful.

After Simon was about two weeks old and everyone had left, I was again completely in charge of a household, which was now bigger. Simon was a healthy baby, and Aleid felt very much grown up compared to her brother. Life was good for us at that time, because, as I said, the people wanted to do as much as they could for us, in order to make us feel that what had happened wasn't their fault and that we had all the help we could have asked for. Most of the food was rationed, but every week one lady brought us forty eggs: twenty of them we kept, and the other half we would send by mail to Mother and the family with whom she was staying in Hilversum, because they couldn't get that many eggs. This was done through the help of my father-in-law, who had been a mailman, and the delicate package was well packed. To this day when, every time I recall those packages I am surprised that the eggs arrived most of the time not broken at all.

The summer was very nice, and in January 1948 we moved to Arnhem. I was again pregnant, and we got a nice duplex house and CENTRAL HEAT. What a relief.

Breakdown in Arnhem

While we were living in Arnhem the household grew — Jacques was born on August 13, 1948, and David on November 16, 1949. Noach was promoted, and was given the position of Chief Chemist at a new Nylon Plant that was going to be built in Emmen. But because this plant was still in the process of being built, we as a family were still staying in Arnhem. Every Monday morning at around 8 a.m. Noach would leave, returning Shabbat afternoon around 2 p.m..

Even though we had a telephone by this time, calling wasn't as common as it is now; I was alone with the four children and my Father-in-law. I did have some help with running the household — five days a week a girl would come to help out with the regular work; she would arrive at 8 o'clock in the morning and leave around 4:30 in the afternoon. But it was a big household, and without most of the modern facilities that we now have, such as microwave ovens, pampers, etc. I did have an electric washing machine, which we had bought in 1950, but it was only semi-automated and was kept in the bathroom, which was on the second floor.

My Father-in-law didn't do a thing, except to follow me around, walking on my heels. Sometimes he would take Simon, who at that time was about three and a half years old, for a walk in the afternoon. But in these cases I still had to get Simon properly dressed for the outing. In the winter, my days would start at 6:15 a.m., and the first thing to do was to go down to the basement where the furnace was. This was a

coal furnace, and it made big stones during the day and night which would have to be removed before you could put new coals in. The tray for the ashes also had to be emptied. I would put the thermostat on "high," go upstairs, get dressed, go back down to lower the thermostat, and by that time it was after 7 a.m. and the boys were awake. I would wake up Aleid, and go to the boys. By that time Simon was most of the time dry, so I would direct him in getting dressed. Jack and David were most of the time wet, so I had to wash them, and dress them one by one. By that time it was close to 8 a.m., and usually my Father-in-law would be in the dining room. I taught Simon how to get down the stairs, where he would be received by "Opa." The other two boys I would carry down myself. Aleid went to school, and when Simon was three he went to a private kindergarten close by, right in the neighborhood. I was always looking forward to Shabbat afternoon when Noach was home again. But he had to divide his time — less than 48 hours — between his father, me and the children.

One Shabbat afternoon I asked my Father-in-law to watch the two boys of almost four and about two and a half, because I wanted to get dressed. Our bedroom had a window overlooking the little garden in which there was a shed where we put our bicycles and also some kerosene cans. While I was getting dressed I looked out into the garden, and saw Jack in the shed pouring the kerosene over himself. I don't know how I got downstairs, and I was furious with my Father-in-law for not watching the two boys even for such a short time. I took off Jack's



Opa Simon in front of the house in Arnhem, 1948



Aleid's friends and Simon, July 1948



Jacques and Betty de Vries, August 1948



March 1949, L to R: Noach, Simon, Aleid, Lena, Jacques



Opa Simon and Jacques



Arnhem, 1950. Simon, Aleid and Jacques



Simon and Jacques in Arnhem



Jacques and Aleid, June 1951



Lena and David, 1951



9 September 1951, Arnhem. L to R: Jacques, Lena, David, Aleid, Simon

Arnhem



Lena and David, Arnhem, c. 1950

clothes and gave him a bath, and by the time Noach came home I was in bed in a very-very bad mood.

All and all, it was a difficult time, and slowly I developed a “Nervous Breakdown.” Our family doctor, Eli Cohen, whom I had known since I was fourteen, came and finally told me that I should come to him sometimes to talk. This was easy, because he knew me and my whole family, and after a few times I felt it could help me. But... Noach didn’t like this, and got upset. Eli noticed this, and transferred me to a Psychiatrist.

In the meantime, work at the new plant had progressed, and some of the families of the employees began moving to Emmen. Houses for people on the factory’s staff, like Noach, were not ready yet, but whoever wanted to go anyway could get one of the

little houses among the labor people. People who had an entire household, like us and also the director of the Nylon plant, could get two houses next to each other. They would then take down the wall separating the two houses, creating a house that had two of everything: two stairways, two living rooms, two kitchens etc.

During this period I one time went to the psychiatrist and while I was waiting for him to be ready, someone entered the waiting room — it was the director of the Nylon plant, come to pick up his wife, who had also had a breakdown. He asked me how I was doing, to which I answered: “Well, if we meet here then it isn’t too good.”

When I was talking to the doctor, at some point I told him that Noach’s so-called colleagues were blaming me for not moving to Emmen — these were people who had already moved, and felt that their houses were too small. He advised me not to move: “Don’t do it,” he said, “because what will you do with your drapes which will not fit, with your floor coverings and with everything double?” I laughed, because I knew that he must have heard of all of these problems from the director’s wife.

Finally we moved to the house in Emmen, and I have never had a more beautiful house again. There were seven bedrooms, an enormous living room, and Noach and I had a big bed room with a marvelous bathroom. But we lived there only for a year and a half. In August 1954 we moved to America, to Asheville, N.C.

From Emmen to Asheville N.C.

As I have already said, we lived in Arnhem from February 1948 until 1953. During that time Noach became Chief Chemist of the Nylon department, and because our household was very heavy on me, I had a nervous breakdown. The plant where Noach worked was still small enough that the staff knew a lot of what happened within the families of their employers, and the situation was uncomfortable.

Then, in 1952, Noach was asked to go to Asheville, N.C., for three months, to help there at the "Daughter Company." He was considering not going, because he was concerned for me. But before everything was settled we took a vacation in Valkenburg, (the southern part of Limburg.) While we were there we met one of the Vice Presidents of the plant. The two men were talking together, discussing Noach's trip to the United States, and I suddenly said: "I would like to carry his suitcase." The man said: "Do you really mean it?" To which I replied: "Of course, I would like to see America, too." Then he turned to Noach and said: "When you are back at work, you can talk to the President."

When Noach came back after our vacation, he went to the president, who already knew the whole story. He told Noach that if I wanted to go they were willing to make the necessary arrangements. Noach had already been booked a first class passage by the company; we exchanged this ticket for two tourist class trips, and didn't have to

add too much for the difference. Instead of staying at a Hotel or a Motel in Asheville, the company contacted one of the Dutch families who had been living in Asheville already for 23 years; they would provide us with both room and board, and Noach would get some extra "day money" to pay for the expenses. My Mother was able to take care of our household, and children.

In July 1952 my sister got married, and just before we were set to leave my father-in-law, Opa Simon, also got married. As arranged, my Mother took over our household at the end of September, and we left for Rotterdam, where we boarded the Maasdam. The trip took ten days, and we arrived at Hoboken on Yom Kippur. A chauffeur from American Enka was waiting for us when we arrived to bring us to a hotel. On the way to the hotel he told us that it was unusually quiet in New York: the stock market was closed due to the Jewish holiday. We didn't say anything.

We stayed in New York for two or three days, and then we went by train to Asheville. Though the trip took 17 hours we could still get some sleep because we traveled in a sleeper car, and around 9 p.m. a man came to change our seats into two beds. At 9 a.m. in the morning the train arrived in Asheville, and when we got out of the train there was someone approaching us. He introduced himself as Mr. Spaanbroek; he and his wife would be our hosts for the time we would be in Asheville.

We gathered our suitcases, got into his car and drove to their house. Even though we had slept a little during the night, after a while we were tired, and Mrs. Spaanbroek



Before the visit to Asheville, September 1952. L to R: Simon (5.5), Aleid (13.5), Jacques (4), David (3)



Emmen, 1954. L to R: Sam Tromp, Aleid, Simon, Sara Tromp-Frank, David, Lena, Jacques

Emmen

showed us the rooms she had prepared for us to stay in while we were at their place. But before that, she asked me if we could eat everything. I told her that we didn't eat pork or shellfish. She laughed, because she had prepared a beautiful ham, but finally she told her husband she also would prepare a piece of tongue. She was a marvelous cook and a very pleasant and easy hostess. By the time we had our evening meal, and I had helped her wash the dishes, we were calling each other by our first name.

After dinner Mr. took us for a ride through Asheville. Suddenly we came upon a couple taking a walk. Mr. Spaanbroek stopped the car and called out their names. They were friends of theirs, who had their car in the garage for some repairs, so Mr. Spaanbroek asked them to get into the car and introduced them to us. It happened that Mr. Spaanbroek was a very heavy drinker, and by way of introduction he said: "These are Dr. and Mrs. Benninga, just

arrived from Holland, and they don't drink at all." His friend replied: "Really? Then why do you talk with them?" We laughed, and later on we still became good friends.

Every morning Noach went with Mr. Spaanbroek to the Plant, while I stayed with Mrs. Spaanbroek doing shopping, helping her in the kitchen and talking together. One afternoon she invited several ladies over for tea to introduce me to them, because most of their husbands were working with Noach. It was very nice, and later on we were invited to many of these families.

On Saturdays, Noach and I went either to the Conservative Shul or to the Reform Synagogue; we liked the services in the Conservative Shul the best. During one of the services I met a lady who asked me about our family and my interests. So I told her that we had four children: our daughter was thirteen, a boy of five, one of four and one of almost three. She quickly

calculated and asked: "You didn't have anything else to do after the war?" I didn't know what to answer. But she was very much involved in the Hadassah Organization, and promised to take me to the next meeting. I also went to a meeting of the synagogue's Sisterhood, and because at home I never had time to go to social meetings, I welcomed these opportunities very much. My English wasn't too good, but I could follow most of the things. All and all I had a good time, and Mrs. Spaanbroek and I became really good friends. The two men also became friends, and later on we used to sometimes go on trips with them.

Around the middle of November I left Asheville by train and spent a few days at my cousin and her husband's in Scarsdale; I also visited my Aunt and Uncle Nieweg, with whom we had escaped from Holland; at that time they were living in New York. After a few days my cousin took me to Hoboken where I boarded the New Amsterdam back HOME.

I arrived in Holland at the end of November; a chauffeur from AKU and our daughter were there waiting for me. The weather was bad and the roads were icy, but we arrived safe and sound in Arnhem, where my mother was glad to see me and to be relieved from her task. I had some presents for the children but when I wanted to give one to our youngest son, who just had turned three, he refused to take it from me. He said: "Oma has to give it." My mother was more than pleased.

The next day Mother went back to Hilversum and I was again in charge of my

household. Noach came back a few weeks later.

These few months were a major turning point in our lives. We had come back to Holland, but it was not the same Holland that we had left in May, 1940. I felt strongly then, as I still do today, that it would never be possible to raise the children in a Jewish environment in Holland. So when Noach was offered a position at the plant in Asheville, I made no secret of the fact that I wanted to move.

A few years after having moved to America, Noach was offered another promotion if he would return to Holland; he wanted to take it, but I put my foot down strongly: "If you want to you can go," I told him, "but you will be going by yourself." Often, when I think now about what I said, I laugh because of the hutzpah that I had, but for me, family, and especially education, always came first — not money. Money is an important thing in life, but not the most important; the most important thing is life itself, and life itself is very difficult and needs a lot of attention. You need to see how things are going, and then, at some moment, jump in.

Years later, in 1984, we attended a Jewish service led by one of the grandchildren, also a Noah Benninga, who was then in kindergarten. We were sitting in the back rows of the shul, and thinking of that argument Noach turned to me, with tears in his eyes, and said: "You were right. This we never would have seen, when this boy would have grown up in Holland."



Official picture made on the occasion of the move to Asheville, 1954



At Artis (the Zoo), 1954. Simon and Jacques ride the camel



The Boys and Opa Simon, 1954



Noah, center, and David, behind him to the right, taking their leave of Emmen



Noah, with his back towards the camera, helping Lena into the car to the port



Anna and Simon watch the suitcases being loaded into the car

Leaving Holland, August 1954



First picture in Asheville, taken by Mr. Spaanbroek, 1954



Jacquen and Simon behind the house on Chiles Avenue (the first rented house in Asheville)



Shortly after the arrival in Asheville. L ro R: Lena, Simon, Jacques, Noach.



Lena and David on the porch in Chiles Avenue



Jacques, David and Noach, in front of our first car. 1955, Chiles Avenue



The three boys



Asheville, 1954



Purim, 1957



The house on Ardoyne Road, No. 48. Taken in 1959

Asheville

Epilogue

A Tribute to my Mother

Today is May 8th, 2005; it is sixty years since the Second World War ended in Europe. On days like this the memories of what happened come flooding back. On this day sixty years ago, we were still interned by the Japanese, but we had already heard the news. Saar celebrated her birthday on May 15th, and while my mother and I walked in the camp, we were hoping she would celebrate her birthday in FREEDOM. But at that time we still had no idea about what had happened in Europe. As I have written before, Mother fled with us, and now, sixty years after the War has been over, I feel the urge to sit down and think of “My Mother at that Time.”

When we left Holland in 1940, Mother was not yet 58 years old. She had been married for almost 29 years, and as far as I know they had a good marriage. We didn't know what was going on with my Father, and to this day I have a very difficult time straightening myself out and thinking about how my mother must have felt about their separation. I know that later she had a quiet feeling, but when we got the first letter from him, (posted to Indonesia from America), my Father told her that “Everything will be OK — you are with one of the children and I am with the other.” He was hopeful that

the war would be over shortly, and that by then everything would go back to normal.*

After we had settled in Indonesia we kept a household of five: Noach, myself, Aleid, mother, and Izaak (my cousin.) It was a small house with three servants, and mother and I had not so much to do; it became very difficult for both of us to be at home the whole day, (my cousin had found some work, and was not around during the day.) And so I went to a lady who was at a committee for Refugees and asked if she could help Mother and me. She soon found some work for Mother at a bank, where they started to gather money for “The Spitfire Fund.” The director of the bank was very helpful, and mother knew how to manage the bookkeeping, so it worked out very well. Mother came home from her work with some stories and often the director brought her home in his car. This job, of course, was in Batavia.

Shortly after, Noach and I had to leave Batavia. Mother decided to stay. She had to find a room where she could live, but that was not too difficult. We kept in contact through the regular mail, and Mother came to visit us sometimes, but she didn't want me to come to Batavia.

*What do I mean by “quiet feeling?” She was in a kind of a shock — we all were. I don't know for how long, but



L to R: Eva Boers-Goslinski (b. 1874), Leentje Frank-Goslinski (b. 1876), Foukje Cohen-Goslinski (b. 1876), Anna Frank-Goslinski (b. 1882), Betje v. Tyn-Goslinski (b. 1880)

The Sisters Goslinski, c. 1918

In 1941 the war with Japan started, and February 1942 mother came back to live with us; by then we were living in Bandung. My cousin, who had also stayed in Batavia, had been called up to serve in the Army; he never had been a soldier, and was somewhat proud to be in a uniform. Mother didn't want to stay alone in the city, especially with the news of another war. She missed her work, but she kept herself busy.

In March 1942 Japan occupied Indonesia, and all four of us were moved to a work camp. Noach went to his work and one morning, after he had gone, we suddenly got several Japanese soldiers at the door, come to search the house. They threw everything out of our wardrobe. We had just had breakfast, and on the table there was a bowl with chocolate hagelslag which they

threw on the floor. Then they found a footlocker of my cousin's with some souvenirs he had planned to take back home after the war was over. They emptied it on the floor and stepped on what was inside. Mother objected, and they slapped her in the face. I said: "that is my mother," and I also got a big slap in my face. After a while they left, and I knew that my husband wouldn't be back.

All I knew after several days was that he was somewhere in jail, with no possibility of any contact. The three of us had to go on, and we had some moral support from a few friends. We were still in the work camp, which had some advantages, but a few months later we were put in a "fenced" neighborhood, where we were assigned to live in a garage. Comparatively,



At home in Groningen, 1935 (age 53)



Visiting Asheville, 1955 (age 73)



Anna Frank (82), Noach Benninga and Sam Tromp, Amsterdam 1964



Anna Frank's 88th birthday (1977). L to R: Aleid, Lena, Anna, Sara. Taken on the Bronckhorststraat, Amsterdam.

A Portrait of Mother

it wasn't too bad. Then we were moved again, this time to a "Concentration Camp" that was completely empty; so we could take some pans and also my sewing machine, but we had to give these over to the camp. We moved again and again, and in the meantime Aleid became six years old. We heard that there were some people who had children's books with them, and even a "*Leesplankje*," which was what was used at that time to teach little children to read. They allowed us to use it, and with this Mother taught Aleid to read. As soon as she was able to read a few words, she started the first book: "*Ot en Sien*." She read it endlessly.

August 1945: the atom bomb fell on Japan, and that made an end of the War in the Pacific. We got better food but were advised NOT TO LEAVE the camps because there were terrorists against the Dutch government. We were also given the opportunity to write one letter through the Red Cross. I wrote of course one to Noach, and Mother sent a letter to Saar. At the beginning of September I received already a little note from Noach through some one who had been in the same camp. I also got a telephone call a few days later. Even if the reception was very poor it was very exciting. In the meantime Mother hadn't heard anything from my sister, and the situation outside the camp was still unstable. Despite this, one morning she told me she was going to go and join Noach. The next day she packed her bag and left; Aleid and I were now alone in the camp. I never got up the courage to ask her why she did this, if she thought at all about us staying behind, if

she wasn't worried about the situation of the roads, or anything.

By the beginning of October we were all together again at Noach's friend's house, and one evening we heard for the first time on "Radio Oranje" Lou de Jong telling about what happened in Europe. We were with a group of about fourteen people, and the reaction was: silence. On November 5th, my Mother's birthday, we got the first real letter from my sister, sent off by someone from the Red-Cross. She wrote about Father, that he was away, and that they hadn't heard anything about him. They had given up hope. Mother took it quietly. Perhaps she was prepared; she had already told me several times that she had very little hope of ever seeing him again.

She was happy to know about Sara being OK.

On January 13th, 1946, we took the Johan van Oldebarneveldt back to Holland. Poor accommodations, because we slept in hammocks above our tables and the women were separated from the men. The boat trip took five weeks, and in the last week Mother developed pneumonia with a high fever. She was put in the sickroom on the boat, and the treatment wasn't very nice. The day we arrived in Amsterdam they told her she could leave the boat together with us, but she was very weak. Thank God we got a message that a cousin of Noach's would take mother to Hilversum. Pien, as the cousin was called, was a nurse and worked at that time at an organization called "Oorlogs Pleegkinderen"(O.P.K..) This organization allowed her to bring a car and a driver to the boat, and they picked up Mother; she

arrived far before us at the Van Dam family, where Saar had been hidden in the last half year of the war. By the time we arrived, Mother was already asleep in a warm bed. She was still very sick when we celebrated Aleid's 7th birthday on the 18th of February; she did not know what was going on.

A few days later we were to go with my father-in-law by taxi to Eenrum, and I first consulted the doctor if it was alright for me to be so far away, because at that time it took six hours to travel the distance. He gave permission, and we went. Mother was given very good care by a sister of Mr. van Dam who was a nurse. (While she was at the house being taken care of, another relative of the family was in another room, also sick. That was Mrs. Olf-van-Boven, who I mentioned before, well known for her radio lessons in sewing. Mother knew her, but only because she used to listen to her lessons before the war.) Within about six weeks Mother had recovered, and when we came back to Hilversum for Pesach she looked almost completely her old self again, and even walked around. A few weeks later she was asked to help at the post office to sell the "Children Stamps." She enjoyed doing it, and made some friends again.

My sister would go to Amsterdam to teach at a Jewish Day School named "Rosh Pinah" and when she came home, She and Mother ate together with the family. But after some time Mother started cooking for herself and my sister so she could do her own shopping.

Slowly her financial things got straightened out, and soon Aleid, who always loved to spend her vacations in Hilversum,

went with Mother and Saar to France and Switzerland. Together, they had always a very good time.

Time went on and we got our first son in April 1947. Mother came to take over the household. The B'rith Milah was done by a Mohel who survived the war and came from Groningen. We moved soon to Arnhem where we got two more boys, and I had a very busy household.

In 1952, when Mother was almost 70 years old, Noach and I went together to Asheville, North Carolina. Noach was there for three months, working, and I stayed there for six weeks. The trip was by boat, so altogether I was away for ten weeks — a long time both for me and for Mother, who handled our household very well, but was also tired. Soon after I returned, she went back to Hilversum.

Mr. van Dam had passed away a few years earlier, and soon after Noach and I were both back from our visit to the States, Mrs. Van Dam also became very ill, and died in November 1952.

In 1954 Noach was told to go for at least two years back to Asheville, and I was very glad to move out of Holland, even though we were living by this time in a very nice home in Emmen. I didn't like being in a place where it would be difficult to raise my children in a Jewish way. I knew it was hard for Mother, and also for my father-in-law, but sometimes you have to do things that you feel are right. So on August 5th, 1954, we left Emmen. Noach made arrangements with AKU and American Enka which was very nice. (At that time you were not allowed to take money out of Holland, so the

arrangement was that we paid for our expenses in Holland — a first class boat trip, and the moving expenses — and American Enka paid us back after we arrived. That was how we got our first saving.

Of course it took a while to get settled down in completely new surroundings. But soon after we were settled my Mother came to visit.

In 1957 Mother was 75, and I went with the three boys to Holland; Aleid was already in College. Just about that time, Mrs. Van Dam having passed away, and because of the shortage of living spaces, Mother couldn't stay in the house by herself, unless she bought it. She asked us what to do, and I advised her not to buy, because there was much remodeling to do. But Saar felt differently, and Mother wanted to stay where she was, so she bought it, and they made all the necessary arrangements so that Mother could stay for three months at a neighbor's, while the house was renovated. She stayed in that house until she died in 1979.

During these 22 years she had several people leasing some of the rooms, so she was never alone. Saar already had a car, and also was married. She lived in Amsterdam, but came often to visit Mother. During the week-ends Mother always stayed with them in Amsterdam. Together with Saar she visited us several times, and Noach and I also went often to Holland.

In 1979 Noach celebrated his 70th birthday, and Mother, Saar and Sam came to celebrate it with us. At that time Noach and I would often spend half a year in Jerusalem, and for Noach's 70th birthday we were also here. Saar and Sam stayed in a hotel, and

Mother stayed with us. One morning, after she took her bath, she and I were sitting on our porch, talking about several things. At this time she was almost 97 years old. Suddenly she said to me: "I am glad I am here, but now it is enough." I said: "Well, you are still doing OK, and you can do what you want, so what is wrong?"

Anyhow, soon after that she fell and broke her hip. She was operated here, and at first was recovering well, but after a week I came in early in the morning to wash her, and found her paralyzed in her bed. During the night she had had a stroke. A few weeks later she was discharged from the hospital, and sent to a (miserable) home. With extra help during the nights she was there for about three and a half months, and then she went by ambulance to the airport, and was flown by plane to Amsterdam with Saar and Sam. We stayed still a few more weeks here and on our way to Asheville we stopped overnight in Amsterdam, then on to Philadelphia, where at that time Simon and his family lived. While we were there Saar called to tell us that the doctor didn't have much hope for her anymore.

Noach and I decided right away to go back, and ordered tickets. But that night Saar called that Mother had passed away and they would do the *tehara* on the next day and if they should wait for me. I agreed. We stayed for the *shivah*. I had Peace with all of it.

Mother was still to the last part of her life a VERY STRONG WOMAN IN MIND AND BODY. Not always easy.

A Tribute to my Father

My grandmother gave birth to ten children. Two of them died in birth or infancy. My father was number eight. He had two younger sisters and two older brothers and three older sisters.

My grandfather had a business in kitchen wares, and my father had to leave elementary school after the fifth grade in order to help him with the business. When my parents got married in 1911, my father got the store from his father. One of the things that I remember from when I was a very young child, was that my father would get old used stoves which he would clean and fix up in a separate place outside our house. The work was very dusty and very dirty. When my sister and I went and visited him there, he would always stop working to talk to us. At home there was no shower or tub, but he always came to the table clean and neat.

He was also a member of a big choir for men which met on Tuesday nights. Tuesday nights was also the time when my mother would be visited by a friend, who was also a teacher. Mother would be mending socks, and her friend would read a book out loud. As children, we had to go to bed early on Tuesday nights, so that Mother could enjoy her evening with her friend.

By the time I was about seven years old, my parents started a big wholesale business and a retail store together with two brothers of my father. One of the brothers already had two grown sons, who also got a place in the business; one was a bookkeeper and the other a traveling salesman. My father also traveled for the business, and each of them



Zadok Frank, c. 1941 (age 57)

covered a different part of the country. My mother now had a much easier life, because everything was taken care of and there was no business done from the house anymore. She had a maid "*voor dag en nacht*" — both day and night — and during the day we children were in school. She had time on her hands, and so she started to do some sewing for us, and, if the weather permitted, we would sometimes go swimming.

This luxurious life lasted about one year, and then my two cousins who had a share in the big business, started doing their own business behind everyone's back. Finally

they left, and their father went with them. Father now needed help running the business. My other uncle's son came into the business, and my mother took over the bookkeeping.

The whole transition period was very difficult, but my aunt also helped out and after a time things were again going well. My father made friends with almost all of his customers, and one of the things he could do very well, was to Listen to the personal problems of his clients.

When Father came home after a day traveling, my mother was always very interested to know if he had sold something. On and off it happened that his answer was: "No, because the man had so much trouble with his children and he wanted to talk, so I didn't even open my briefcase. Next time I am sure he will give me an order."

Listening to his clients was not the only thing he could do. I also have good memories about him listening to me. He was a warm-hearted person. But at first I would like to write about one experience where he helped me by listening to me.

After I got married, Noach and I were living in Leeuwarden. Father came almost every Monday to Leeuwarden, and of course he came to see me.

On February 18, 1940, we celebrated the first birthday of our first child and also the first grandchild in the family. My parents and my sister, and Noach's father and his two aunts, all came to us to celebrate. The aunts were talking about the upcoming Bar-Mitzvah party of a cousin of Noach, which was going to be celebrated in Drachten. For that occasion an Uncle and Aunt of Noach's



L to R: Simon (9), David (11), Betsie (13)

The Turksma children in Drachten, 1936

from Haarlem would also be coming, and they were supposed to stay overnight at our house. We had a guestroom, but they would arrive on Shabbath afternoon, and at that time my Shabbath was very holy to me, and I didn't like the whole idea very much. I had had a very difficult pregnancy time, and during our child's first year I didn't get away much, so I mentioned that I would like to join my husband and the couple visiting us, and also go to Drachten. But before anyone could say anything one of the aunts said: "Oh no... You cannot go, because mothers with children have to stay home." I looked around but no one reacted.

The next day my father came. I said to him: "Did you hear what they said? Mothers with children have to stay home." He said, "I am sorry, but I didn't hear it. But if you would like to go, I will talk to mother and we will do something."

The next morning there was a letter in the mail. My father would come half way between Groningen and Leeuwarden, where we had to change trains, and he would take



Anna and Zadok Frank, Groningen 1932



In his chair, at home, Groningen



With Simon Benninga, Hemelvaartsdag, May 1934



With Sara, June 1936

A Portrait of Father

the baby, and go back to Groningen where my mother had everything arranged. They took care of the baby, and enjoyed the day very much. The next morning I took our guest to the railroad station, taking the empty baby-carriage with me, and after our guests left, my father arrived with the child. They had had a wonderful day and I also enjoyed "a day out".

We couldn't have known then that less than three months later the war would break out. Mother later told me how much they had enjoyed that day.

May 14th, 1940: Germany had occupied Holland, and that was the day we fled from IJmuiden to England. Throughout the war, none of us knew what had happened to any of our family. After we were back in 1946 we heard some of the horrible things. Much later I asked my sister some details about what had happened.

A few days after the occupation, my father took a taxi to go to Haarlem to try to take my mother back to Groningen. He came at first to Hilversum, where my sister was at a family because she was teaching at the "*Rudelsheim stichting*." My father was in a good mood because he was going to bring mother back to Groningen. He promised to come back over Hilversum, and the family where my sister was staying invited my parents for Shabbath. The next day when my father came to Hilversum, he was very sad. He had found the house empty, and overturned, and we were gone.

While we were in Indonesia, and not knowing what was happening at the same

time in Holland, we managed to get some communication with my father through a cousin in New York; we would send our letters to her, and she would send them on to Holland, and in the same way we would get a reply. In one of the letters my father wrote: "Everything is O.K, because you are with one daughter and I am with the other." Little did any of us know what the end would be.

Father, I hope you will rest in Peace, and are watching over us all in the world. You were a Good man, and a Good Father.

Westerbork 7/9.
 Lieve allen!
 Ik sta klaar om naar de trein te
 gaan, want je zult wel gehoord hebben
 dat het hele kamp leeg gemaakt wordt.
 Gelukkig ben ik reeds bij het eerste. Ik zal
 mijn best doen, me flink te hande en hoop
 me elkaar in gezondheid terug zien met
 allen die ons zo lief zijn. By deze ge-
 legenheid wil ik jullie nog een hartelijk
 dankje voor alle moeite en zorg die
 jullie voor my gehad hebben. Hopelijk kan
 ik het jullie nog eens overgese. Ik neem dan
 voorlaapig afscheid van jullie allemaal

met een stonje XXX
 voor de rest een
 milgemeen de hand-
 druk van je Z.

BRIEFKAART

NEDERLAND
 5
 CENT

Jann. A. Van Dam
 Torenlaan 30
 Hilversum

AFZ.

Westerbork 7/9

Dear all!

I'm ready to go to the train, as you have must heard that the camp is being cleared out. Unfortunately, I am already on the first one. I shall do my best to be strong and hope that we see each other in health with all who are so dear to us. On this occasion, I want to thank you all sincerely for all the effort and care that you have had for me. Hopefully I can repay you. For the moment I part from you all with a big XXX. For everyone else a well-meant handshake from your Z.

Father's Last Sign of Life, 7 September 1943

Part II.

Other Stories

Gezegden die ik leuk vind (sayings which I like)

Editor's note: In many societies in which oral tradition is strong, what are considered truths about the way the world works are passed down from generation to generation in the form of sayings. The following are Oma's favorites.

1. **Een was en een leugen worden steeds groter.**
A wash and a lie grow steadily larger.*
2. **Een moeder en haar baby hebben 6 weken nodig om aan elkaar te wennen.**
A mother and her baby need six weeks to get to know each other.
3. **Geld wat stom is maakt recht wat krom is.**
Money can't talk, but it can still solve problems.
4. **(geld) Er is geen hond die het vreten wil maar je komt gemakkelijk van de mensen af.**
Money — there is no dog which would eat it, but people will snap it up (and you will be easily rid of them.)
5. **(eten) Het wordt niet zo heet gegeten als het opgediend wordt.**
The soup is not as hot when you eat it as when it is served.

*[Laundry, Oma says, was done only once every few weeks. For this reason, on the day the laundry was done, one tended to add more and more articles to it.]

[Things aren't as bad as they seem at first sight.]

6. **Laat nooit de zon ondergaan over je woede.**
Never let the sun set on your anger.
7. **Ieder huisje heeft zijn kruisje**
Every household has its cross to bear.
8. **Familie kijven, familie blijven kijven.**
A family that fights together stays together, (but also stays fighting).
9. **Niemand wordt misselijk van woorden die hij NIET zegt dus inslikt.**
You don't get sick from words you *didn't* say, so swallow.
10. **Krakende schepen varen het langst, maar ze kraken ook.**
Creaking ships travel the longest, but they creak the whole way.
11. **Wie het langste leeft heeft toch alles.**
He who lives longest will have everything anyway.
12. **Als het getij verloopt moet je de bakens verzetten.**
When the tides change you have to move the barrels.[†]
13. **Veel beloven en weinig geven, doet de gekken in vreugde leven.**

[†]A metaphor from the shipping world; the floating barrels used to guide ships in and out of harbour had to be moved when the tides changed. Similar to "trim your sails to the wind."

To promise a lot and give little will make only a fool happy.

14. **Beter een half ei dan een lege dop.**
Better half an egg than an empty shell.

15. **Beter een vogel in de hand, dan tien in de lucht.**
Better a bird in the hand than ten in the air.

16. **Wat niet weet, wat niet deert.**
What someone doesn't know can't hurt them.

17. **Anderman's boeken zijn duister te lezen.**
Other people's books are dustier to read.
[It is difficult to understand other people's affairs.]

18. **Je kan je laatste hemd verkopen om rijk te zijn.**
To sell your last shirt to be rich (oxymoronic; there are some things that are not done.)

19. **Hoe meer je moet doen des te meer kun je doen.**
The more you have to do, the more you can do.

20. **Vele handen maken licht werk.**
Many hands make light work.

21. **Armoede is de beste opvoeder.**
Poverty is the best educator.

22. **Zoals je je bed maakt, zo ga je rusten.**

As you make your bed, so must you lie upon it.

23. **Een goed woord vindt altijd een goede plaats.**
A good word always finds a good place.

24. **Zachte dokters maken stinkende wonden.**
Gentle doctors make stinking wounds.

25. **Hang geen vuile was buiten.**
Don't hang your dirty linen in public.

26. **Je went gemakkelijker van een keuken naar een kamer, dan van een kamer naar een keuken.**
It is easier to go from the kitchen to the bedroom than from the bedroom to the kitchen.
[It is easier when circumstance improve than when they worsen.]

27. **Al is een leugen nog zo snel, de waarheid achterhaald hem wel.**
As fast as a lie might be, the truth will catch up with it.

28. **Beter ten halve gekeerd, dan ten hele gedwaald.**
It is better to be half wrong than entirely wrong.

29. **Wie het kleine niet eert, is het grote niet waard.**
He who does not appreciate small things, is not worthy of large ones.

30. **Wie zijn lichaam verwaarloost breekt het huis af waarin hij woont.**

He who neglects his own body is breaking the house he lives in.

31. **Zeg mij wie je vrienden zijn en ik zeg je wie jij bent.**

Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are.

32. **Wat gij niet wilt dat U geschied doe dat ook aan anderen niet.**

Don't do unto others as you would not have done unto you.

33. **De beste stuurlii staan aan wal.**

The best seafarers are always ashore (ironic).

The Story of my Grandfathers

What do I know about my Grandfathers?

About my father's Father, Isaac Frank, I don't know much: he was a hard worker, and he never talked much about himself. So I don't know his story exactly, but I think his father died early, and I know he came from around Amsterdam. I never heard a word about his mother, except this story of how they came to the north: his mother and her five boys had gone by *trekschuit* — which literally means “tugboat.” These were small boats with room for about 30 passengers, which were pulled along a special canal by a horse. Isaac's mother had been told to take enough food with her for two weeks. They went from Amsterdam over the Zuiderzee, which could take 24 hours; however, they had been lucky, and it only took 12 hours.

Nowadays, these stories make a different impression on children, but at that time we had no idea of just moving from one place to another. People lived and stayed in one place, and my family stayed almost always in Groningen. There were some people from the family who moved because of marrying — my grandmother (Mother's mother) felt that children should move away from their parents after they got married, and my aunts went to different places where they met their husbands and stayed to live. My mother, too, went somewhere else, but she ended up marrying her cousin, and another aunt married someone from Groningen too, so they didn't move. So for us my Grand-



Israel Goslinski ready to play cards with his son-in-law, Philip Boers

father's story had adventure, and I enjoyed listening to him.

Another story he told us once was about the time the gas lights were changed to electricity: everyone was afraid because to turn a knob to get the lights on was difficult to do without being afraid. They were used to using gas lighting, which I still remember from our own house. After you turned on the gas you had to light it with a match and there was a flame. To turn on the light without striking a match... It must have felt dangerous. I think there must have been one evening when we were discussing something to do with electricity, and then he must have started to talk about it.

My other Grandfather, Israel Goslinski, had a completely different life which I knew much more about. He was born in Assen, Drente, and his father, Joseph Goslinski, was a butcher, a Hebrew teacher and a Sofer, a scribe who could write a Torah.

His main income, however, came from being a butcher, and he kept a kosher meat shop. At that time the Chief Rabbi for the provinces Groningen, Friesland, Drente and Overijssel was Hartog Joshua Hertzveld. Although he was settled in Zwolle he was very much “The Rabbi” for the provinces under his supervision, and besides his salary, he also held his hand out for gifts — particularly from the butchers. The ones who gave a lot could stay in business, but the ones who couldn’t give much were refused the right to sell kosher meat; my great-grandfather was one of this second group. He was driven out of business, and couldn’t support his wife and his two children. After a while he converted, became a Lutheran, and left home.

What could my great-grandmother do? She had a boy, my grandfather, and a girl. She was an Orthodox woman, and I always had a feeling that she didn’t like to have the boy in the house with them for Halachic reasons — that it wasn’t right to have a boy in the house with two women. All we knew was that my grandfather was sent to “some uncles” in West Germany, at a place called Aurich. We don’t know much about it, but at a certain time my Grandfather came back to Holland and met my Grandmother who came from a good family. At first her family was not happy with the match. For one thing, it wasn’t a *shidduch*, a properly arranged marriage — it was the couple who had chosen to marry. For another, he (my Grandfather that is) came from a broken home. But they were married despite this, and on the marriage license there is only his



Opa Goslinski and Lena Frank, September 1917

mother’s signature, with a remark: “father unknown.”

My grandfather also became a butcher, and though they were not rich they always had room for more people to have something to eat. As far as I can remember there were eight children alive when the Second World War broke out; my mother was the youngest in the family. Her mother must have been a very smart woman. She felt, as far as I know, that if it was possible the children should get away from home. Out of her eight children, five left Groningen to live in other parts of Holland. But my mother stayed in Groningen and became a teacher.

My grandfather was the most pleasant person I have known when I was young: happy, singing with us when we were playing the piano, always optimistic. He loved

to play cards, and that was done in a pub, (a *kroeg*.) After my grandmother died, he stayed at my aunt and uncle's and often came home very late and drunk. When you would tell him to lie down for a while he would answer: "I can lie down long enough when I'm dead." At a certain point in time he started getting a state pension, which today is called the AOW. His income was only three gulden a week, but he used to say: "I am a millionaire, and the state is my financier." Of course everything was different in prices, but I am sure you couldn't buy much for it anyhow.

When I was almost four year old he took me to be photographed, which was something very special, and we had a picture made of me and him. For some reason, he loved me and I felt that he gave me special attention, but there was no time for a good connection.

In February 1923, when I was nine, he suffered a stroke and lost his speech. After this he spent most of his time in bed. At one time I was in the room and he motioned for me to come close. He put his hands on my head and said something — it must have been some kind of blessing. After that he said "*de andere*," or the other one, so I went and called my sister, and I think he did the same. Even though I was only nine years old I was very impressed, and thought about it a lot. Sometimes I think he looked at me as the older of the two sisters, because he put his hand on me first. But it might also be that I was the one who was around at that moment. I only know that when I think of him I have only pleasant thoughts.

I still repeat one of his sayings: *Sorge, aber Sorge nicht zu viel, es kommt doch wie Gott's haben will*. (Worry, but don't worry too much, it will turn out the way God wants it.) He was a good man.

Helping the Dead

I remember the time I was about ten years old. My mother took out her sewing machine on Saturday night and sewed on long pieces of material. The material was plain white cotton and it didn't have much shape to it. While she was busy on the machine, she told us that my aunt — her sister — asked her to do it for her. What was this for? Well, my Tante Leentje was head of the Hevra Kadisha, the Jewish burial society, and needed shrouds for the dead and in this way my mother could help her and take part in the “mitswa.” I don't remember all the details, but my mother did tell us that her mother did the same as my aunt and it was thus a family tradition to work for the Hevra Kadisha.

Off and on she must have told us several things about her mother and about “helping the dead.” As she used to say: “The living can do mischief, but the dead don't harm anyone any more.” Even though she wasn't able to help at the *tehara*, the purifying of the dead, she was very happy to help make the shrouds. This was a Saturday night activity when my father was at the store, which was open until 10:30 p.m., and my sister and I were doing little things around the house.

When we were locked up in the Japanese camps, someone once asked for help to put a dead woman in her coffin. I volunteered to help. It wasn't a Jewish woman and I had never seen her before, but I felt I could do it because of what I had seen and heard at home.

After the war we had three more children, all boys, and when we lived in Arnhem, an elderly lady who lost her husband and her children during the war often came to visit us. She was very handy and helped me in doing alterations which was very welcome. After some time, she became very sick and I visited her in the hospital. She was shaking all over and didn't recognize me. There was a nurse watching her, but she didn't talk to me at all. When I came home, I cried my heart out. That evening around 10 p.m., I was in bed and thinking of her, and I said the *shema*. In the morning I received a call that she had died at the exact time I had been praying for her soul. I asked when the *tehara* was and if I could come to help, too. They said yes, so at the age of 38 this was my first experience doing a *tehara*. By the time I came home, I was very calm and my daughter asked my why I didn't cry. I said, “I saw her and she was completely at Peace.”

From that moment on, I knew I could do it and that I had inherited it from my grandmother and my aunt. Three months later another lady passed away and again I helped. After a few years, we moved to Asheville, N.C., and shortly after we got settled, I called the Rabbi and told him that if they needed someone to help, I could do it. It turned out that there was no other woman who was capable of doing a *tehara* and that there was no Jewish funeral home. They managed as best as they could. For many years I was the only one to do it and of course I did need the help of the people of the funeral home. At one of the Sisterhood meetings I spoke to the group and asked for

some volunteers; I got three or four women to help me.

Now, I had become part of the community and I knew most of the deceased personally. Some of them I had visited in hospital before they died. After I did a *tehara* I felt a certain Peace. Since I was usually doing this on my own, I had to make decisions alone and on my own responsibility. For instance, once when I knew the person had suffered for a long time and had become very frail, I felt as if my aunt was peering over my shoulder telling me “do it quickly.”

Twice I did a *mitsva* for a man. Once it was for a boy of 19 whom I had known from the time he was born. He had been in my Sunday school and pre-aleph class and when he died I was very upset. I called my partner from the man’s group asking him to take me. At first he refused, but when I told him that I would go anyway, he took me. I knew what I wanted to do and I did it. It gave me Peace.

The second time, it was for my own husband. He also suffered much and I had again the same feeling: Peace for him! I left everything at home when the man from the funeral home called and I went.

When my mother died, Noach and I were in Philadelphia where Simon and Terry lived then. My sister asked me if I would help for the *tehara*. Mother had had hip surgery in Jerusalem and I helped her every morning while she was in the hospital. While she was there, she got a stroke and I came every morning around 7:00 AM to help her. After the *tehara* was over, I had the same feeling again: Peace for her!

Here in Israel, I am sometimes asking myself how the people feel who do the *tehara*. It seems to me sometimes that they do it in a very business-like manner without much feeling. Anyhow, I am thankful for what I was able to do. To be a member of the Hevra Kadisha is an inheritance: My grandmother, my aunt, I myself, and now also my son in Fresno who also helps many times at a funeral.

My Clock

Here is a story of my clock. It used to be “our clock” but this week I felt it was now mine.

Here is the whole story. I became engaged with Noach Benninga in 1933. Noach’s mother was one of eleven children, two of whom died early. She herself passed away when Noach was only three months old, and Noach’s Father didn’t have much contact with her family, the van der Hals. Noach knew only a very few uncles and aunts, mostly the ones who lived very close to Eenrum. The grandparents from his mother’s side as well as the grandparents of his father’s side were already gone by the time I came into the family.

I made it my business to get to know most of the other side. So one time we went to Arnhem where one uncle and his wife and one son lived. From there we went to Apeldoorn and visited a sister of his mother. She was very happy because she didn’t know Noach at all. Some time later we were in Rotterdam, where two brothers of his mother lived, and it was only possible to get introduced to one, because the two brothers didn’t talk to each other. The one we visited and his wife were very friendly, and later we had some contact with them. In 1936 Noach spent one year in Amsterdam, and when I came to visit him I called the youngest brother of his mother and they were also happy to get to know us.

In 1937 we got married, and the uncle and aunt from Rotterdam told us we should go to Delfzijl where a good friend of theirs was selling clocks, and we should choose a clock.



The Clock

I think the price was 25 guildens. We liked the clock very much, and it was a useful piece in our household.

In 1940 we left Holland, leaving everything behind. My Father later took care that all our belongings were hidden.

In 1946 we came back to Holland, and at first we were living in Eenrum. At a certain time we got one of the boxes with some household things in it sent to Eenrum. In this box was the clock, and when I took it out the key to wind up the clock was still there. I wound it up, and it ran perfectly. I was so touched that I stopped unpacking the box further.

The clock was OK and as you all know from my other stories we moved several times. One time, when we were already in the States, the clock stopped and we brought it to a specialist, who fixed it. Another time — I remember that we had just had visitors from Teaneck, N.J. by the name of Ed and Hetty van Voolen — the clock again stopped. We were ready again to bring it to the clock man, but Ed van Voolen

said: "Give me some oil and a toothpick." I watched him as he fixed it, and after some time the clock was running again.

Since that time the clock has stopped a few times, and even this week it stopped again. I put the clock upside down, took some oil and a toothpick and lubricated the clock according to what I had seen Ed van Voolen do, over forty years ago. After a short time it started up again and I put it back up in its place. During the nights I sometimes add a little more oil. MY CLOCK RUNS AGAIN PERFECTLY.

The Story of My Sewing Machine

Before the war, while we were living in Leeuwarden, we had a good radio and there were several good teaching programs you could follow. One of them was called “How to Sew.”

I took a subscription, and would receive a written lesson for each broadcast, which made following it very easy. The teacher’s name was Miep Olf van Boven. Although I didn’t have a sewing-machine at the time, I still enjoyed the lessons.

On July the 2nd, 1940, we left London on the Orient Line. It was a very big boat, and it took five weeks to get to Fremantle, Australia, where we had to wait for the next boat to take us to Indonesia. On the 29th of August, 1940, we arrived in Batavia and we were taken in by a very nice Lady; we stayed in her house for four weeks, until we were able to find a little house of our own, and buy some simple furniture. In this house we lived with my mother and a cousin.

While we were living with our first hostess in Batavia, this lady gave me some advice about how to make my life in Indonesia bearable. She told me: “Do things for your child, take care of her yourself, prepare your food, and then tell the *Kokki* what she has to do. And start sewing something for your child: materials are not expensive and if you make a mistake, throw away the material and buy a new piece.”

I didn’t have a sewing machine, but we soon moved from Batavia to Bandung, and later to Surabaya. There I met a friend, and

at a certain point in time she went with me to a shop where we bought together a used Hand Sewing machine for 25 guildens. I started sewing for my child, and remembered the lessons from the radio broadcasts. We moved several times, from Surabaya back to Bandung, but I always took with me my sewing machine.

In December 1941 the war with Japan started; less than two years later, in September 1943, we were moved to a “Work Camp,” because Noach was working to make medicines for the Japanese. Not long after that he was taken from his work to jail, and finally to a concentration camp.

Mother, our child and I were also taken to different camps, but I took my machine with me all the time. Finally, we were living in a kind of a garage, which had previously been used for horses and a carriage, but had now been converted into living quarters. In March 1944, a lady came to tell us that at a certain date we would be taken to a concentration camp which was absolutely empty. She told me that if we had some things that could be used we should take them, but that as soon as we would enter the camp, we would have to give them to the Japanese. I took my sewing machine, and of course it was right away taken away from me to be used in a sewing-room. We were transferred from one camp to another, but in March 1945 we came again to the first camp, the one where I had left my sewing machine. As we were walking into the camp I said to my mother: “There, my sewing-machine is still there.”

In May 1945 we heard that Holland was free, but for us it still took until August

1945. After we heard about the Atom Bomb, and a few days later about the surrender of Japan, I went to an office and told them about MY SEWING MACHINE, and asked them if I could take it back. My prison number was on it and I got permission to take it back. A few weeks later I was able to leave the camp with the help of the Red-Cross. At the railroad station a friend of Noach was waiting for me and my child. My Mother had already gone ahead. It was a difficult trip from Batavia to Bandung because it went through seven tunnels and the night before the rebels had kidnapped fifty people from the train in one of the tunnels. But as they say, "God was with us." We made it to Bandung and... With the sewing-machine.

During the few months that we were at Noach's friend's house the machine was used very often. Finally, we were able to go on a boat back to Holland and Noach said: "Leave that thing here." I refused, and it went with me to Holland, to Eenum, to Arnhem, to Emmen and finally to Asheville, North Carolina. There I sewed together with a friend who also had a machine, drapes, and later I made many things for the three boys.

Then, in 1956, I saw an advertisement that there were electric sewing machines on sale for fifty dollars. So I went out and bought an electric machine, a "Nechi." I said to the man: "I have an old Singer sewing machine, can I get something for it?" And he said: "Yes certainly, I will give you a buttonhole attachment for it." I agreed, and I used that machine very often until I moved to Jerusalem, when I donated it to

the Jewish Community Center in Asheville. I hope they use it sometimes.

Part III.

Letters

Letters to my Grandchildren, May 2006 — December 2007

It's almost May!

Dear Grandchildren!

The month of May is just around the corner, and so it is time to keep all of you up to date. But... Before May will start there is good news from Maya and Amir. Their son, Jonathan, was born on April 27 or 28. The reason I don't know exactly the right date is because of the time difference. Everything is OK, and Michal is ready to go, and will leave on Sunday morning.

So now that you know the news, I will start with my letter. This time I will begin first with some historical things, and then the second part will just be a regular letter.

On May 5th, 1945 World War II ended, almost exactly five years after it had started for us in Holland. Officially the war started on September 3rd, 1939, but for us it only really began when Holland was occupied. The date was May 14, 1940. On this date we fled Holland, and on the 16th of May we ended up in England. On the 17th of May, after we were checked by some security people, we were allowed to go to a hotel on the east side of London.

It was a Jewish neighborhood, and the owner of the hotel and his wife were very

friendly. We were able to afford this because before the war, my parents had put some money in a London bank, for security. This money my mother could now get to. In addition, Noach and I had some money in England also, because we had applied for a "capitalist affidavit" to go to Palestine. (At this time, the English didn't like to let Jews go to Palestine, but if you could prove that you had a certain amount of money you could get a special permit.)

I don't know if and how much they charged for the hotel, but we were there for two weeks. When we arrived at the hotel on Friday, we saw that across the street was a small textile store. The next day was Shabbath, and we got a call from the police. They asked Noach if there were older people with us - my mother and my uncle were at that time 58, and Noach told them about it. They said they would come on Sunday to talk to all of us. They also told us not to leave the hotel before they came. But because we had no underwear with us, we crossed the street and bought some for each of us at the store. When the policemen came back on Sunday, they already knew that we had been across the street. The next day we had to go to the police station to get gas masks. For the

rest of the time they didn't bother us.

That was a part of our history, and now the other part.

You all know that I went with Terry, Simon, Noach and Orit, and Sara and Zvi to Holland. Sara Tromp and the family joined us in Lunteren shortly after we arrived. We were there for Pesach, and had a good time. We left Lunteren on Tuesday the 18th of April, after a very relaxing week.

Now we go into May. Terry is leaving for St.Louis on May 2nd for Estelle's 85th Birthday. She hopes to be back on the 8th; Estelle's birthday is the 4th of May. On the same date there will be the Be'rith Milah of our new addition to the family, Maya and Amir's son. Michal is leaving Sunday morning. David is not going.

On May 10th Chana goes to Holland, at first making a trip with an old girlfriend from Eenrum, and then she will go to Amsterdam for Saar's birthday, which is on the 15th of May. She hopes to be back in Jerusalem on the 17th. On May 14 David goes also to Amsterdam for Saar's birthday. He plans to go on the 16th to Rome, where he hopes to meet Amos and a cousin of Michal, and they are planning to do some bicycling together. These plans were already made a long time ago. He was thinking of coming back on the 25th, but now, since the baby came earlier and Michal will be back on the 15th, I don't know if he will go according to his plans. On May 23rd Alexi will have his birthday. He will be 25 and is working hard. I hope he will have a very good year.

Last but not least, on May 29 Michal and David are having their Anniversary.

I hope all of you are doing well, and I am looking forward to hear from you too. I love all of you, and wish you lots of luck.

Shalom and Le'hitroth, with a kiss from,

Your Oma

June, the month of the summer!

Dear Grandchildren!

May is about over, and June is coming. The weather is already hot and for me that is not easy. But what can I do?

What is special about June...? When I think back, there are some special days in June which I remember. Our Parents had their wedding anniversary on the 11th of June, and when Saar and I were about 15 and 17 years old, we went to a florist and bought some flowers for them. Their 25th anniversary was in 1936, and at that time I was already engaged. There was a very nice celebration where almost all the family were together, and during the sit-down dinner there were several speeches, and songs that were printed out and everyone sang together. Nice memories.

This year we will start the month with Shewoe'oth [Shavuot]. Right after that, Terry will go to St. Louis, where she will join her high school friends for a school reunion.

The birthdays and occasions in the family for this month are:

June 8 Inbal, the oldest child of Shlomit and Joav, will be 5 years old and the next day Hagar will be 2 years old.

June 13 there will be the official ceremony for the Students in Baltimore who are getting their Licenses as Lawyers. So Zachary

is our first Lawyer in the family. Mazzel Tov Zachary. He will have his birthday on the 18th.

In the States the summer vacation has started already, but here it will begin only at the end of June. So from me to you this is the end of this letter; I received several nice letters back on my letter from May. Danny wrote about his garden, and some others also wrote about themselves.

Thank you all, and keep in touch with,

Your Oma

July, the month of summer vacation starting

To my Grandchildren!

I remember the time I was in Elementary School, and even when I was teaching at a Kindergarten in Holland. The summer vacation started on the second Friday in July, and ended on the third Tuesday in August. Everyone thought this was long enough.

What did we do during these weeks? Several times, together with our parents, we took a 10 day vacation. I remember a nice time in the southeast of Belgium, at a place called Spa. There we made nice walking trips, and also trips with a bus and sometimes with a touring boat. We stayed in a good Jewish Hotel, which was very pleasant.

Another time we took a bicycle trip in Holland. Our bicycles were sent by train a day before we began the trip, to Zutphen. The next morning we left by train to Zutphen, and there were our bicycles waiting for us. We rode them over the dikes, all the way to Arnhem. My father rode next to me, and Mother was next to Sara. I wasn't such a good rider, and after about an hour we were on a wider road. Even the ride over the dike was nice, because the surroundings were very interesting, and my father was relieved to be on a wider road. In Arnhem we stayed in another Jewish Hotel, where our parents knew the owner. It was a good vacation.

Now let see what the special dates in July are.

The 2nd of July brings some memories. In 1940 it was the date that we left England; we went to Southampton, where we boarded a big ship headed to Australia. The trip took five weeks, and we arrived in Fremantle on the 5th of August, near Perth. (You can read all about it in the second chapter of My Story.)

July 6 was the wedding date of Saar and Sam Tromp.

July 7 Chana and Naftali are celebrating their anniversary, and this year it will be 46 years. I Wish them Mazzel Tof !

July 8 It would be Opa's birthday. He would have been 96 this year. July doesn't have many more special days for our family.

I hope all of you will have a nice vacation, and I would like to see you visiting ME sometimes. Maya and Amir and Noami and Jonathan are here now, but I haven't seen them yet. They are having much trouble with their "Jet Legs."* I am sure I will soon see them all.

Much love to all of you, and a kiss for whoever wants one, from

Your Oma

*Most likely a neologism combining jet-lag with sea-legs.

The end of July

To my Grandchildren!

July is almost at the end, and we all know it is not a pleasant time here. I am sure most of you have been watching T.V. and I don't like to go into details about the news.* Joel and Heftzi are here in Jerusalem with all their children, and they are now renting an apartment somewhere. Chana is very busy with them, but she said that the good thing is she gets to see the children some more. Today, July 26, the twins were at a summer camp across the street from where Chana and Naftali are living. They liked it very much.

I continue going along in my regular way, but when I see the news I get upset. As far as I know, Jacques is planning to be here for a few days, but I don't know if his trip will go through, because of the situation. At the end of August every one in my family will be away. Simon and Terry are going to Switzerland and Holland, and David and Michal are planning to go to London, for the wedding of the daughter of Eleine and David Carmen. Chana and Naftali are going to the States for meetings and a vacation. I will be very happy to see them all back here.

I add to this letter the story about "My Clock," which I wrote a few weeks ago. I hope you all enjoy it.

[For the story of My Clock, see page 109]

With this story I will close. My best wishes for everyone, and I hope we will soon have good peace.

Much love to all of you from,

Your Oma

*Oma is referring to the 2006 Lebanon War, which had begun on the 12th of July.

August

To my Grandchildren!

I hope all of you are doing well. August was for me a month with mixed experiences. We all know that the “War” started already in July, and it was especially in the North of the country very bad. Here in Jerusalem we didn’t notice it very much, but of course lots of young men were called up for reserve duty. On August 2nd my next door neighbor moved out, and went to the United States. I knew that the apartment was re-rented again to an elderly man, who would come in with a Philippine girl. The children of the man cleaned it and painted it, and about two weeks ago the man moved in. He is now 100 years old.

On August 5th Jacques came, and Danny also came. Jacques’ trip was very much delayed, so instead of arriving early in the morning, he arrived in the afternoon. Anyhow, it was nice to have him here, even if it was only for four days. Danny stayed about ten days. While they were here I had some trouble with my intestines, but Jacques and I had a nice time anyway, and he went out with his brothers and sister. Danny went to visit his friends, and still I saw him several times. Just before he was ready to go back home he got a message from Tao Kai, that his mother passed away, and of course he had to go to Singapore. I wrote him, and I received a nice note back.

On the 23rd of August Chana, went to Detroit for a convention. Naftali joined her after the week-end, and Simon went to Switzerland and then on to Amsterdam, St Louis and Los-Angeles. Terry stayed home,

and has been as always a very nice help to me.

Michal and David and the two younger girls went to London for a wedding, and they are now back again. So for me it was what I thought it would be: a very quiet time. But some unexpected things happened during the week-end, and the days went by quickly. What happened during the week-end? On Friday I went out with one of my bridge friends for a nice Brunch. On Friday night I went with Naftali to Terry for the Friday night meal. Shabbath morning I had an interview with a teacher of Nurit, which was very interesting, and in the evening I had my regular bridge game. Sunday morning I had my regular volunteer, and we took a nice walk. In the afternoon I was invited for a barbecue at Ramat Rachel, in honor of my new neighbor. Terry went with me, and we enjoyed it both.

Now September is at the front door, and in a few weeks it will be Rosh Hashanah. Noah and Orit are leaving in a few days to spend some weeks in Berlin, and Sara will be back home in about two weeks. My traveling family. Amos is coming with Nurit and Jael.

I wish all of you a “Good Healthy and Peaceful 5767.” Perhaps you will be in contact with YOUR OMA.

Much love and a kiss from,

Oma

September, the High Holidays

Dear Grandchildren!

Rosh Hashana is over, and Jom Kippur is almost here. I am sure everyone knows the meaning of all these Holidays. I hope you all had a Good Rosh Hashana, and will have also a good Jom Kippur.

For me these days bring back memories from many, many years ago. While I am sitting here in my apartment, my thoughts are going back at least 75 years. How was it at that time in our family?

Before Rosh Hashana my mother cooked and baked, and the first evening we had our meal more or less like it is done here in our families. We ate either before the synagogue service or after, according to the time of the year. It was mostly only our own little family. Later on we went to visit one of my aunts, Father's youngest sister, and her husband. Why? Because they had a butchery, and because they were always busy on Shabbath. But on Rosh Hashana and Jom kippur they absolute closed their store, and that was a time when my Grand Parents were at their house. So every one of the family came to their house specially, to wish our Grand Parents a Good Year. All I remember is this: it was a very nice evening with lots of sweets. The days after we went to our other uncles and aunts, and on the second day my parents received many of our cousins. Because my parents were the youngest in their family, several of our cousins — the children of their siblings — were already married. They would come,

and their children also. At the end of the day my mother counted how many visitors we had had during the day, and it was most of the time over forty.

You have to realize that most of my parent's sisters and brothers lived in Groningen, and often the ones who were living somewhere else would come home for the High Holidays.

Now we are entering the month of October, and I hope for cooler weather. First we move our clocks back one hour, so on the night of Shabbath we can sleep an extra hour!!! But Sunday everyone has to prepare themselves for Jom Kippur.

October 3rd is the day that your Opa and I got married. That is now 69 Years ago.

October 12 Sharon will have her birthday, and on the 16th Suzie is celebrating hers.

And last but not least, this old woman also has her birthday in October. So that is for now all my news, and I wish all of you a good month, and if you have some time I like to hear from you!

Much love to all from,

Your Oma

The End of October, Mother's Birthday

To my Grandchildren!

Here we are at the end of October. I hope you all had a good month. I am not sorry this month is over, even if no-one knows what November will bring. Let's hope it will give us some good times.

As usual, my thoughts are going back years and years ago.

On November 5th my mother had her birthday. While Sara and I were still living at home, we got every week some pocket money, and Mother insisted that we should buy something to embroider. Many times during our vacations we tried to buy something to work on, like a pillow or a table cloth, or any other little thing she could use. I remember one year I bought a small tablecloth to embroider; I think it was in Zandvoort when Saar and I were there for a visit. Someone went with us, and I bought a small tablecloth. At home I worked on it when I was in our own room to do some homework, and I finished it in time for Mother's birthday. One time I had asked my mother what she would like to have, and she had answered: "You know I like something you made yourself, but it has to be finished."

What I at that time didn't know, was that someone whom she knew was also in the same store and saw us buying the tablecloth. She told my mother that she had seen us, and that she thought my mother would get this tablecloth as a present after we came home from our vacation. I had the tablecloth embroidered, but it had to be

finished professionally. So when Mother's birthday came I had tears in my eyes. When I gave it to her I burst out: "I don't know how to finish it, but I still have some money left, and you have to go with me to a store where they will do it."

We did go to a store, and they put lace around it, and both of us were happy .

Our special days in November are:

November 16 David has his birthday.

On the 18th it is Lilach Arnon's birthday, (but they celebrate it usually on the Jewish date.)

On the 24th Zvi Benninga will be 21, and hopefully he will be out of the army before his next birthday. On the 28th of November Sara Benninga has hers, and most of the time their birthdays are celebrated together.

And there we are again for the month of November. In Holland they are already busy with all kind of goodies for Sinterklaas. Have a good month and perhaps I will hear from you sometimes too.

Much love to all of you from,

Your Oma

December; Water, then and now

Dear Grandchildren!

December has special celebrations. In Holland it is Sinterklaas and of course at the end of the month it is Christmas. Here in Israel it is Chanukah. I am sure all of you know all about these celebrations.

I would like to talk now about something which has nothing to do with these days. What is poking around in my head? You never will believe it: I would like to talk about "WATER". I am sure you will think that I am crazy, but I heard many people lately who are not feeling well, and most of the time it came out that they were not drinking enough "WATER."

Today we open our faucets and the water runs, and when it doesn't run, we are very upset. Nowadays lots of people are traveling by planes, and by the time they are back home they are not feeling well. They call that "Jet legs," but usually after you are back home there is so much to do again that they forget to take care of themselves.

When I am thinking back years and years ago, as I do so often, I am thinking of the time I came for the first time to Eenrum. They did not have faucets; in the kitchen they had only a pump. You had to move it up and down with a big swing, and only then would some water come out. That was the water they used to make coffee or tea. Teabags didn't exist. Outside of the house they had a big barrel, and the barrel was filled with the water from gutters, which would drain through a special pipe, and into



lange zakketel



zakketel
gewoon model

Zakketels from the Brothers Frank catalogue. Sketch by Sara Tromp.

a barrel. It was very soft water, and nice for the laundry, but it had to be taken out with a bucket.

There also was a well, which I hated very much. The water was always cold, and in winter time the first thing people did after they got up, was to put a kettle on a kerosene stove, so by the time they were ready to wash their face and hands the water was warm enough. These kettles were especially built to fit into the big coal stoves in the kitchen: on the top they looked like regular kettles, but they had a longer section, which would fit into the stove itself. The

water was filled the evening before, because it was very well possible that during the night the water in the pump would freeze. During the winter, some pots and pans and a big tub were all filled with water; often there would be ice on the top of the water in the mornings. Of course, to have the water in the morning you would also have to fill the kitchen stove with coal. The kettles were called “zakketels.”

Today, we don't think at all about water, and we are used to having it as we want it — hot or cold — when we want it, and we never give it a second thought. But water is the basis of Life, and it is very important.

Much love to all of you from

Your Oma

January 2007: The Store of My Parents

Dear Grandchildren and friends!

In Groningen, Holland, stood A HOUSE! I am sure you will say: "Only One House?" No, there were and there still are lots of houses in Groningen, but the house I am talking about and which you might find at the bottom of this letter, was for me till now a very important house. It was the store of MY Family. I will say this time something about "This House."

My Father, Zadok Frank, had two brothers, both of whom were older than he was. All three brothers were having the same kind of business, in the same town. One day, my Father thought of something each of them needed, and each of them would order the same thing at the same time, but in a small quantity. My father talked to them, and came up with an idea to buy a big amount together, so that each would get a better price for what they needed. All in all, out of that Idea came the idea to start a business together. That was how the place you will see on the picture came to be. The three brothers divided the work: the oldest brother was in charge of the retail store, the second one was in charge of everything in the warehouse, and my father was traveling.*

The oldest brother had at that time already two grown-up boys, who were also in the business: one was in charge of the office, and the other also traveled through a particular part of the country. At a certain

time the cousin who traveled did some business for himself, and soon my uncle and his two sons left the business and started their own, together with the third son.

That was a big change, because it meant that someone had to take over the office. My Mother took that job. Around the same time another cousin came into the business and traveled.

Everything went well, and soon the business was enough to take care of three partners (my father, his brother, and his brother's son),[†] two extra traveling salesmen, four people in the warehouse (three of whom were married), and two ladies who worked in the office, of which my mother was the head. In the retail store there were also a young lady, my aunt and my mother, who would help out, if it was necessary.

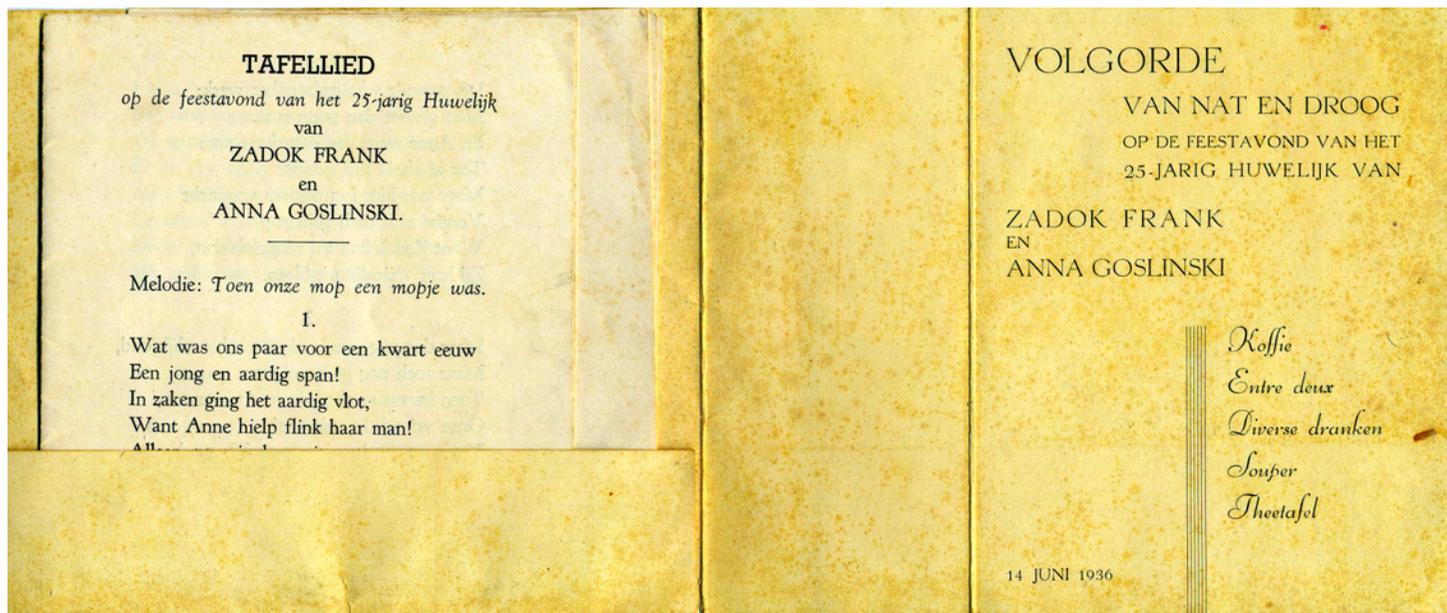
As you can see, it was a nice and profitable business. Almost every year there was a profit made for the three partners, and a catalog was printed of all the things which were being sold throughout the country. Sara Tromp still has the last catalog, which was printed in 1939. After that the WAR came, and in 1945 the Germans put some gasoline barrels in the building, and

*That is, he was a traveling salesman.

[†]This brother of my father was called Simon, and he was married to a sister of my mother, Leentje. (You probably know that my mother and father were also cousins, so this was in fact a marriage of two brothers and two sisters, all of whom were cousins. The son of Simon and Leentje, who was also in the business, was Izak Frank, who escaped with us from Holland and eventually died working on the Burma railroad for the Japanese; and you can read more about him in My Story. Izak never finished high school, because he had to go into the business when he was 17 or 18. To this day I have a picture of his mother together with his daughters in the living room. They were taken by the Germans.

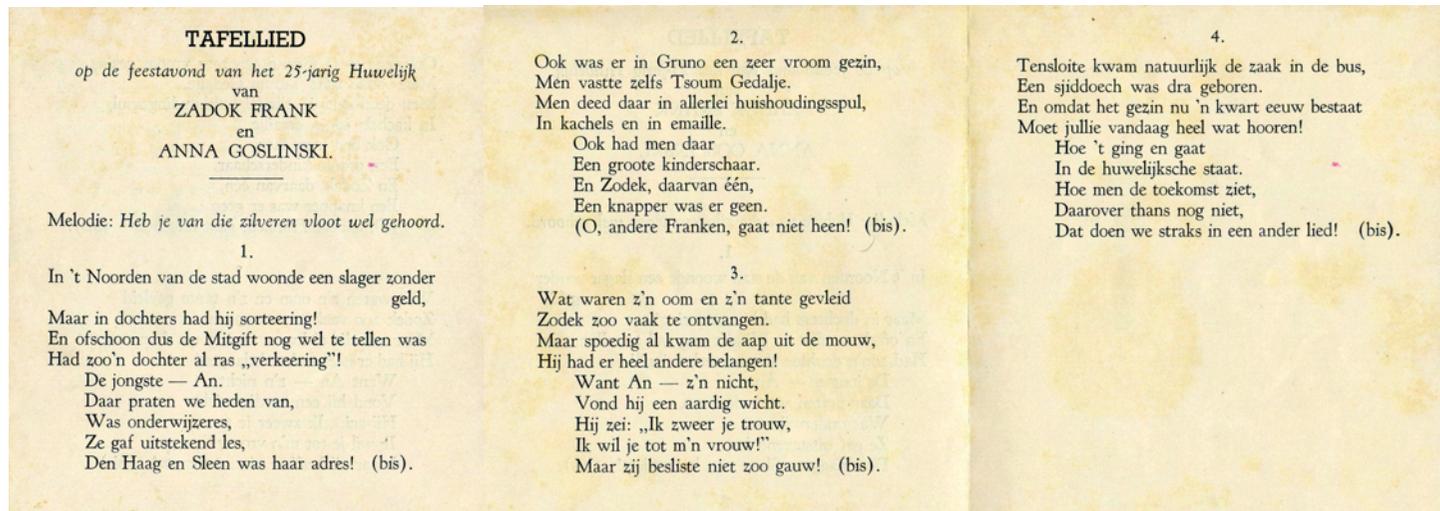


Outer side, picture the store on the corner of Oosterstraat and Gedempte Kattendiep, after the renovation; bottom left, name of guest (Ms. Lena Frank). Note the fold lines on both sides of the entrance; when folded, the place holder held a three dimensional shape, reflecting the corner on which the store was built.



Reverser side; on the right, the program for the evening, including the menu; on the left, a pocket containing comical songs composed for the occasion and sung as a group.

A Place Holder for Zadok and Anna Frank's 25th Anniversary



A Tablesong

ON OCCASION OF THE 25TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY OF

ZADOK FRANK AND ANNA GOSLINSKI

Sung to the melodie of: "Have you heard of the silver flute?"

1.

In the north of the city lived a butcher
 Who had no money,
 But in daughters he was rich!
 And even though the dowery had to be
 counted out carefully,
 He had a daughter for whom the boys would
 line up outside the door!
 The youngest — An,
 Of whom we speak,
 Was a teacher,
 She gave outstanding lessons,
 In Den Haag and Sleen was where she lived!
 (repeat)

2.

And also in Groningen there lived a very
frum family, where they fasted even
 on Tsom Gedalya.
 They dealt in all kinds of householdgoods,
 In stoves and in emaille.
 And they also had
 A whole crowd of children.
 And Zadok, one of these,
 A better looking boy you couldn't find,
 (Which doesn't go to say the other Franks
 were not good looking!)

3.

How flattered were his aunt and uncle,
 To recieve Zadoks visits so often.
 But soon the truth came out,
 He had an entirely diffrent interest!
 For he found An — his cousin,
 To be an attractive girl.
 He said: "I swear you true,
 I will take you for my wife!"
 But she did not decide so quickly! (repeat).

4.

In the end, of course, the matter was settled,
 And a *Shidekh* was born.
 And because the family now exists for
 a quarter of a century,
 You'll have a lot to hear about tonight!
 Of how it goes and how it went,
 In the married state,
 Of how they see the future,
 Of these things we will not now speak,
 And leave them for another song! (repeat)

the Canadian Army bombed that part of town, and nothing is left.

This picture was made in honor of my parents 25th anniversary. In the corner it had the names of the different guests, and it was put at the dinner on a plate so you could see where you were supposed to sit. Inside the menu was printed, and there was also a little holder with songs which we would all sing together.

This is my NEW YEAR letter, and I hope we all will have a Good and Healthy 2007.

My calendar has only one birthday and that is: Naomi Weiss, who will be three years old on January 4th. There are also two anniversaries: one on Jan 9th, for Terry and Simon, and one on Jan 30th for Suzie and Jack. Mazzel tof to all, and please let me hear from you too.

Much love,

Your Oma-Lena

February, Leaving Asheville in 1994

Hello Grandchildren and all who are interested,

January is almost over, and as we all know through the news, it was not a pleasant month for the country. The political situation is bad and the “big people” are not behaving very well. The weather was most of the time too nice, and only a few days we had a hard rain, which we needed very much. The hospitals are all working at about 200% of their capacity because of flu patients. And today there was a suicide bombing in Eilat. All in all, not very pleasant.

Tomorrow, January 30th, it is the anniversary of Suzie and Jack, and of course I wish them many, many more years together.

February is for me a special month, with some very special happenings. In February 1939 our first child was born, and all of you know who it is: Aleida Chana. She was an easy baby, and as you also all know, we left Holland with her being only 15 months old.

Another special date is February 16th, 1994, when I left Asheville, N.C., to move to Jerusalem. Just before that, at the end of January, the Jewish Community had a special weekend to honor me. It was an evening I never will forget. I was without any of my relatives, but my memories are still very deep inside me.

Simon came about ten days before I moved to be with me, and we left together. We arrived in Israel on February 18th, 1994 — exactly on Chana’s birthday.

Moving out of Asheville, after living there almost 40 years, was not easy. When I arrived here — it was on a Friday afternoon — my sister treated me to a weekend stay in a Hotel. At that time it was called the Moriah Hotel, (today it is already called something else.) I was very glad to be able to get back to myself. During the weekend I looked at the apartment where I was going to live, and it was far from being ready. What to do? Well, again with the help of my sister, I stayed in the Hotel.

I was not a Tourist anymore, and at the end of the almost three weeks I hated the breakfast at the hotel, with all the luxurious food. I left the hotel in the mornings by bus, and went to the apartment to see how far the workers were, and what we had left in the apartment. During the time we hadn’t been here the apartment had been rented by different people, and I found a pair of crutches, bags with dirty underwear, and other left-over things. I wanted to empty what was supposed to be the guest room, because when my lift would come I needed a place in which to put the 65 boxes.

The lift arrived after Pesach, but already before that date I had moved into the apartment, because I had had enough of being in the Hotel. In the meantime, Chana got a very nice girl who was willing to help me, and together we scraped the cement and the paint off from the windows and walls.

Around the beginning of May I was finally almost settled in. Then I got an invitation for a wedding in Holland and I went.

So much for my experiences. Now we have several birthdays in February.

February 2 Joav (Shlomit's husband) has a birthday. Happy birthday Joav.

February 11 Maya Weis-Benninga has her birthday. On February 11 also Nettie who helps me during the weeks very much, has her birthday.

February 18 is Chana Arnon's birthday, and it is also the 13th anniversary of my being here.

On my calendar there are more birthdays mentioned, but these people are not here anymore. I wish all of you a nice day for your birthday, and Many-Many more to come. Stay well, and believe me that I WISH ALL OF YOU ALL THE BEST AND MUCH LOVE.

Keep in touch with

Helen Benninga

February is Over, Ready for March

To my grandchildren!

Here I am again. I hope everyone is doing well. This winter has been an unpleasant time. Many of the family have been sick with a bad flu, and several even had such a bad cold that it developed into pneumonia. They of course had to take antibiotics. So far I have been OK.

March is the month of Spring, and I hope everyone will be recovering from whatever they had. I am still busy with several little things. March starts right away with Purim. Besides reading the "Mekillah" we also eat "Homentashen."

As all of you know, I grew up in Holland. My Mother made something like everyone else in Holland did. It was called: "Kiesh-liesh." I would like to know where the word and the custom came from, but of one thing I am sure: it was an enormous amount of work. The dough was made of butter, flour, eggs and water. After it was ready, it was rolled out in very thin pieces. My Mother put the pieces on a sheet, and they were then put in hot oil for a few seconds. We ate them with powdered sugar.

When I came to Asheville, N.C., no one knew about any of these things. Soon I learned to make the "Homentashen" the way we have them here too. One of our Shul members made the dough, and several kinds of fillings, and several women helped making the "Homentashen." Of course I helped too.

Do any of you know what people do in other parts of the world? Please let me know.

I wish everyone a GOOD PURIM.

Here are as far as I know the birthdays in the month of March:

March 6 Danny Arnon (Boston)

March 7 Michal Benninga

March 20 Ephraim Benjamin Arnon (Haifa)

March 21 Carmella Yemini

March 28 Shlomit Arnon (Tel Aviv)

March 30 Noach Benninga

I wish all of you a very nice Birthday, and many GOOD and Healthy years. Much love to all of you from

Your Oma, and friend, Lena

April and Pesach

Dear Grandchildren and family and friends!

Here we are already looking at April, and this year that also means Pesach. For me this is, I think, the most difficult Holiday of the year. Most people feel that a big Spring cleaning has to be done, and they already start right after Purim. I have at this time very many personal difficulties. Why? Deep down, I feel I should do much more than I do.

As most of you know, I come from a conservative background. When I got married, the first year we went to my parents for the Seder and stayed for a few days. That was like being a child again. The second year Pesach came only six weeks after our first child was born, and we stayed in our own house in Leeuwarden. I had only a minimum of other dishes, but we managed. That was 1939.

1940 We were in Haarlem, and I don't remember very much about the Seder. Pesach was at the end of April, and I even think the last day was the first of May. I had a big basket in which I put all the Pesach things, and I was planning to put it away. I never got that far because, as all of you know, the war in Holland started on the 10th of May, and we left Holland on the 14th.

1941 We were already in Indonesia, where we did have a kind of Seder. I don't know if we had a Haggadah.

1942 Indonesia was occupied by Japan, and I think that year some Rabbi asked some ladies to help in making a few matzos. I was one of them, and I got some extra ones, because my Mother would be with us. I got seven matzos, and all the other ladies got only three. That was not much for a whole week.

1943 We were still together as a family in Bandung, but we were in a work camp and had no way of having a Seder.

1944, 1945 These were the darkest years. We lost track of time, and had no idea when exactly it would be Pesach.

1946 We were just back in Holland, and we were living in Eenrum. Mother and Saar were in Hilversum with the family van Dam, and we went there for the Seder.

1947 Just one day before the first Seder night Simon was born. My mother took care of the household, and I was in bed listening to the Seder, which was conducted in the next room, with my newborn baby next to me. What a blessing, to have a HEALTHY baby after what we went through, and feeling healthy myself. Noach's cousin, Pien Mok, was my nurse and we had a very good time together.

- 1948 We lived in Arnhem. I don't remember much about our Seder that year, and also the few years afterwards. By the time our boys were about 2, 3 and 4 years old I knew they hated matzos, and I constantly made coconut and almond cakes. I remember one year in particular. We didn't have a kosher baker at that time, Noach was already working in Emmen, and the last day of Pesach fell on a Sunday. On Shabbath the baker came, and I bought some raisin bread to have for Sunday night. As soon as one of the boys noticed that there was bread in the house, they started eating it. At that time I told my father-in-law: "In Israel they have only seven days of Pesach, so I will have seven days too."
- 1953 We moved to Emmen, and there we had a good Pesach. Also in 1954 we had a good Seder, and by that time we knew that we were moving to Asheville, N.C.
- 1955 Our first Seder in Asheville. It was a little strange, but soon we got used to everything and most of the following years were OK. The children left when they had finished high school, and each of them were most of the time busy, and by the time they finished their college and got married they were very busy, but sometimes we had some of them with their family home for a Seder.
- 1993 Noach was weak, and we decided to have only a few adults. The night before the Seder he got very sick, and I called the doctor and took him to the Hospital. Simon and Terry were with friends in Atlanta, and when I called them Simon took his car and came to Asheville. NO SEDER-NO PESACH. Noach died on Thursday morning, the third day of Pesach. In 1994 I moved to Jerusalem and here I am and since then most of the Seders have been good, but always in different places.
- I hope all of you will have a Good Pesach.
- April 3 is Simon's birthday
- April 5 we will have Yahrzeit for Noach
- April 27 Jonathan Weiss will be one year old. Mazzel tof, Jonathan, have a nice birthday with your Parents and your big sister.
- Love to all of you from your Oma, Mother and friend, Lena

May, the month without an “R”

Dear Grandchildren!

Here I am again! It is May, and what does that mean for me? Of course I think of the time when I was young. One of the things my Mother always told us was: “May is the first month without an R.” It meant that we didn’t have to take any Cod-liver oil anymore, until there was an R in the month again. May, June, July and August were supposed to be the “Summer Months.” Now we all know that, especially in Holland, the summer isn’t always warm. I don’t know anymore if it was at that time different from now, but that was it. In the States everyone is looking in May for a job for the three month summer vacation. Only if you are sixteen years or older, are you entitled to get a job. So what did our children do before they became sixteen?

We arrived in Asheville in August 1954, and at that time we were busy with finding schools, a place to live for when our lift would arrive, and getting acquainted with a new life. At that time our children were the following ages: Chana was fifteen and a half, Simon was seven years old, Jack had just turned six, and David was not yet five.

In Holland Chana was already in high school, and should have been going into the 4th year. (At that time high school had five years of study, and started with what was called first grade high school, and on.) When we arrived in Asheville, she took a little dictionary with her, and went on her own to Asheville High School to enroll her-

self. I didn’t have the time with three little boys to go with her. Based on the fact that she would have graduated in Holland two years later, they told her that she should enter the 11th grade.

Schools in the States started after Labor Day, so we had only been in Asheville for about two weeks before the children went to school. A very good friend helped me to get Simon and Jack into elementary school, but before we could do that, we had to go looking for a permanent place to live. Our lift came only around October, so we lived at first in a house of some Dutch friends who were still in Holland. I did not have a driving license, and it also took a while before we got our first “Secondhand car.” It was a 1949 Chevrolet. The house we rented in the meantime was on the other side of town from where our friend’s house was. Almost every day our friend came early in the morning, to get me and the three boys, and to bring Simon and Jack to school. David didn’t go to a Kindergarten school until we had moved into the new place. Then she brought me back, and I started working in the house. Elementary school was daily from 9 a.m. until about 2:30 p.m., and our friend again helped me picking up the children. Chana knew her way very quickly, and went by bus back and forth.

It was not easy, but because I had spent six weeks in Asheville in 1952, together with the family Spaanbroek, I knew where to go to do the shopping. During that visit I had worked together with Mrs. Spaanbroek, and so some of the things were not as difficult

16 July, 2007

Dear Noach and Orit !

You advised me to write something about what happened to me in the last two months. I don't know if I am able to put much on paper but I will try.

To my Grandchildren!

It has been a very long time since I wrote my monthly letter, and of course you all know what happened on May 12th, and also what happened a week later. Perhaps you know the reason for it.

I had made reservations on May 14th to go to Holland, for Saar's 95th birthday. On May 12th I was scheduled to get some visitors from Holland, whom I had not seen in 50 years. The connection was that their father and Opa used to work together in the Nylon plant in Emmen, and that we, as two couples, were very good friends together. I knew several details from the family, and for many years I felt I should tell their son all the little things I knew. At the end of April I wrote the oldest son a short letter, and soon after he replied. He and his wife were planning to come to Israel on the 11th of May, so back and forth they decided to come to Jerusalem on the 12th of May. Early in the morning I had two friends over for a cup of coffee, and around 12 o'clock we took the cups inside, and suddenly I fell on the porch. The two ladies got me up, and helped me into my big chair, but I right away knew I had hurt my back. Anyhow, the guests from Holland came, and we talked, but after a few hours I had so much pain that I

couldn't move, and was taken by ambulance to the Hospital.

When I was released from the hospital I went home, but I felt very weak and felt that I had to have Peace and Quiet so I could get better. I went to the Home, Beit Bart, with good spirits and after I was nicely received by the Head nurse I had some confidence. I was put in a room with another woman who didn't open her mouth and only looked with an unpleasant face at me. When I opened a window she closed it, and when the light was on after 7 or 7:30 at night she got upset. The help was minimal, and after the lights were out no one came to check anymore. My appetite got less and less, and I felt worse everyday. The first night I was there a man who slept in the room next door to where I was became delirious, and no one slept until he was given something to calm down. That was my first shock in the home, and when I think about the whole thing now I shudder. I was in a very dangerous situation.

All in all I had a difficult time. It is now already more than eight weeks since I fell, and though I did improve some I am still not where I would like to be. I hope to be able to write you soon again, but for the time being this is enough. I stop and wish you a good night sleep.

Much love from your Oma

27 July 2007

To my Grandchildren, Children and friends!

After two months of being unable to send any letters, I now feel much better and I want to be back to my regular routine. All of you are aware what happened with me, and since I am back home again and with enough help, I manage to do many things again for myself. I try to get out as much as I can, but walking only goes with my cane, and the strong arm of someone. The weather hasn't been helping, because you all know that around here it is very hot, and, unusually for Jerusalem, it is sometimes very humid. An air conditioned house is really a blessing.

What am I doing with myself? I make my own meals, eat by myself, clean my dishes, etc. I read the newspaper and some magazines, do some word puzzles, knit a little bit, and when I get some visitors I am very happy. This past week I went for the first time again to a meeting of the group I always like to go to. Some of you have been writing or calling me and I like that very much. So I will stop now, and hope I will hear from more of you.

Have a good week and much love to all of you from this "OLD LADY,"

Helena Benninga, e-mail: helena@013.net.il

October 2007

Dear Family and friends,

I am late with my monthly letter, and I appreciate it very much that Tao-Kai wrote about "October." I enjoyed your letter very much. I hereby send you some pictures, which have to do with this time of the year. Now all the Holidays are over and most people I speak to are tired, because the last few weeks they didn't do ANY SHOPPING, and now their refrigerator is almost empty, and they have to do now much shopping and cooking. I am also in the same boat.

I am sure most of you know that Sara Benninga is in Germany in the Hospital because she had last Tuesday a serious appendicitis operation. Terry flew right away over, and she is now with her. Sara has still pain, but is in good hands and it will take some time. So I stop, and hope all of you are doing OK.

Much love from Lena Benninga

November 2007

Dear Grandchildren and Children and friends,

I am sorry to be late in sending my monthly letter, but instead of MY NEWS I send you three attachments which I hope you will be able to read. The first one is about an exhibition where Saar will put some of her paintings up. I hope some of you can read it. Tao-Kai sent me a letter about "Head of the Charles regatta," and the third one is the first letter from Zvi who is traveling through India. I liked each of these letters, and wanted to share them with all of you.

I wish you a Shabbath Shalom and a good month ahead and a good week and love to all.

With much love your Oma, mother and friend

Helen Benninga

December 2007

Dear Grandchildren, Children and Friends,
December started already, and it is time to let you know what I am doing and thinking. Of course I am not doing as much as I used to do and as I would like to do, but I am thinking perhaps even more.

Once I was talking with Noach Benninga Jr. and our conversation was about the time we were living in Asheville, N.C. At some point he asked me: "Oma, do you feel homesick for Asheville?" I answered: "No."

When he left I was thinking, and I came to certain thoughts. In 1954 we moved to Asheville as a household of six from Holland. Opa and I had been to Asheville two years before for a long visit, and besides our stay at a family named Spaanbroek, we went all around the area, sometimes with Mr. and Mrs. Spaanbroek and sometimes just the two of us. Mr. Spaanbroek worked at that time already for many years at American Enka, and took Opa every morning with him. I was with Mrs. Spaanbroek at home and we did many things together, for example, we did the shopping together and I helped Mrs. Spaanbroek a little bit in her household. Together we became good friends. Opa and I went to the Conservative Shul and also to the Reform Temple. Mrs. Spaanbroek knew many Jewish people, and we went together to Hadassah meetings, and also to some other Jewish meetings. All in all, I got an impression about Jewish life in Asheville. By the time we moved there, we knew a little bit where we would go. I was just 40 years old, and after our lift from

Holland arrived, and we found a house to rent, we started a completely new life.

After a while the four children got settled in schools, and I found some volunteer work. I worked in the Soda shop of the Mission Hospital, and besides learning some more English, I got a lot of new experiences. We became members of the Conservative Congregation, and I became a member of their Sisterhood. After half a year I got my driver's license, and when Noach didn't need the car I could go where I wanted to go, or had to go. As soon as the boys were big enough to sit through a service we went on Friday night to Shul. I became active in the Sisterhood, and also helped for many occasions.

In 1956 Chana, (or Aleid), went to Greensboro, N.C., to a Women's College. At that time she didn't have a driver's license, so I was the one who brought her to Greensboro. There also wasn't an I-40 highway, so the evening before I wrote down exactly how I had to drive to get there. The way passed through several small places, and after about 70 miles we came to a bigger highway. The way there was about 180 miles, and it took about two to three hours. We found our way to the college, and that night we slept in a small hotel. The next morning I went with her to her room, and then I went back to Asheville. The weather was good, and I was proud and happy that our child was able to be on her own. She was not yet 18 years old. All these things I was able to do, and I knew I never could have done them if I would have stayed in Holland.

At the age of 80 I was a widow, and our children were three of them in Israel, and one in California. You all know that I moved at that time to Israel, and after I was more or less settled down here I tried to get some Volunteer work. But my Hebrew was, and still is, very poor, and wherever I filled out a form I never heard from anyone.

So that is the answer to Noach's question. I am not Homesick for Asheville, but I am looking back to the time when I had more energy and could do some volunteer work.

But I am glad to be among most of my children and Grandchildren, and thankful for the contact with my family, even the ones who are not living in Israel. Asheville is for me still a nice, beautiful and pleasant place to live. So this is enough for now. If any of you would like to know more about it, let me know and I will tell it another time. For now I wish everyone a GOOD HEALTHY WINTER and a HAPPY 2008.

Much love to all of you from your Oma and Mother and Friend

Lena Benninga

Other Letters

Letter to Myra or: On Pien Mok and the Family de Hes

Dear Myra, after a too long a time of not being in contact, I finally want to CONGRATULATE YOU WITH YOUR BIRTHDAY. I know there will be a big great party, and I wish I could be there too. As a present for your birthday I can only give you my memories on our connection to you and your family. For this I sat down, and let my thoughts go back to 70 years ago, or even a few years before that.

Noach and I got engaged on November 12th, 1933. Before that date I was introduced to the whole Benninga family. One time we were in Haarlem, and of course we went to Tante Jans and Oom Giel, and we were also introduced to their daughter, Pien. Pien felt like a sister of Noach, and she and I soon became close friends.

In 1934 Pien came to Groningen to work. She told me about a very good friend from Breda, who had gotten married to someone from Drachten, and became pregnant right away after she got married. The young couple lived in Antwerpen, and as soon as the baby was coming she would go to help her friend. The time came, and Pien went to her friend right away. Two years later another

baby arrived, and little did I know about all of what was going on with her friends.

Two month before the War broke out, we moved with our little girl of 13 months, to Haarlem. Noach was still working in Groningen, and one day in Leeuwarden, and I didn't like to be so much alone.

We all know what happened after that, but after the war was over, and we came back from East India, or Indonesia, the first person we saw waiting at the dock where the boat had landed was Pien. My mother was very sick, and Pien took her to Hilversum by car, where we arrived much later. Pien was working for the organization called the Oorlogspleegkinderen, and her job was to find the children who had been hidden, and to try to get them back if possible to their relatives or in special homes. A very difficult job.

Needless to say, the contact between the three of us all picked up just where we had left it.

In the middle of 1946 I was sure that I was pregnant, and we asked Pien if she would be my private nurse. Of course she would like to do it, but she also was preparing to go in 1947 to America where her friends were living since before the war, and they were sponsoring her. But she was there helping me when our first son was born, and the time after was marvelous.

Pien left around July, and the contact between her and us was unchanged. Through her we became also closer to the family de Hes: Rie and Max and Myra and Tillie became like family for us. Rie was a perfect dress maker for her children, and because the two girls never got Hand-Me-Downs, we received at least twice a year a big gift package with dresses made by Rie. Thanks to this our daughter Aleid had an extremely fancy wardrobe.

Sometimes we even could help other people with what was in the Packages. Pien had a marvelous time of her life in San Francisco and later in Mateo. When she passed away I promised myself to stay in touch, and I am ashamed of myself that I didn't do as much as I would have liked to do. But this was and is a good time to try to start again.

Myra I hope to will have MANY, MANY MORE GOOD YEARS TOGETHER WITH NATE AND YOUR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.

A big kiss for all of you who want to have a kiss from an old woman. A special one for the Birthday girl from a real friend,

Lena Benninga

Letter to the Kaplan Children or: Holland, America, Israel

To the children and grandchildren of Molly and Lou Kaplan,

Dear family! Today it is the day that you all are at the cemetery to say "Good Bye" to your Father and Grandfather. In my thoughts I am there too, because I only have the best memories of Lou and Molly. Because of my thoughts I feel the urge to tell you about what I know and remember of both of them.

In August, 1954, Noach and Helen Benninga moved with four children to Asheville, N.C. Soon after, while we were still waiting for our lift to arrive, we found a place to live, and we went on a Friday evening to the Conservative Synagogue, Beth Israel.

Everything was strange, but the service sounded familiar, and the President - a certain Mr. Kaplan - soon came over to us, and introduced himself. Noach and I became members of the shul, and both of us also became involved. Noach and Lou became friends, and at that time the Kaplans were living in Canton, (about 10 miles from Asheville.) They had a workplace for car repair, at that time we had a 1949 Chevrolet which often needed some repair work. Whenever this happened, Noach would go to Lou for the repair, so they saw each other on a regular basis!

The first Rosh Hashana in Asheville, Molly came to me and asked: "have you ordered already your fish for the gefilte fish?"

I looked at her and said: "I never made gefilte fish in my life."

Honestly I didn't know what it really was, because in Holland we ate fresh fish, and in the few years after the war when I was living in Holland, I never got to know gefilte fish.

Sometime later we were invited for an evening at their house in Canton for coffee and tea with some pastry, and Molly arranged it with some people for us to follow them to their house. There we met several people who were all friends of the Kaplan's, and we had a very interesting and pleasant evening. The people we met at that time became later very friendly with us.

A few years later, the Kaplans moved to Asheville and lived not far away from us. The friendship was very good, because Lou, who knew very much about Jewish law and traditions, gave some courses at the Jewish Community Center, and our daughter, Adelaide (now Chana), enjoyed the lessons very much.

Later I got introduced to the Sisterhood, I remember that it was at Chanukah. Molly asked me again if I was "making Latkes," and again I didn't know what she was talking about. Jokingly she said: "Are you really Jewish? You didn't know what gefilte fish was, and now you don't know about Latkes?"

What could I do? I came from an other part of the world. We laughed about it.

In 1960 Simon was ready for his Bar Mitswah, and the rabbi we had at that time was very sick. And there was Lou, ready to help, and Simon's Bar mitswah was very good. Molly was one of the few women who

off and on came with a box of cookies, which I could put in a rented freezer.

In 1974 we came after Noach's retirement for half a year to Israel, and there we met Molly and Lou again. They knew already several nice people, and Molly again invited us to meet their friends, who after a while became again also friendly with us. After Molly passed away, and a few year later also Noach was gone, I moved to Jerusalem. A few years after that I received a call from Lou.

All in all I am thankful to get to know the Kaplan Family, which means I get to know Lou's brothers, his children, and some of the Grandchildren of Molly and Lou.

MAY GOD BLESS ALL OF YOU.

I hope you will keep in touch with me:

Helen Benninga

e-mail: helenb@013.net.il

address: R'h Uziah 15/4

Jerusalem 93143

Appendixes

Significant Dates in Helen Benninga-Frank's Story

- October 18, 1913** Helena Frank born in Groningen, the Netherlands
- Feb.-Nov. 1924** At age ten, is sick for ten months with Chorea
- Fall 1928** At age 16, begins course for kindergarten teachers
- Nov. 1933** Engaged to Noach Benninga
- 1934** Completes degree for Kindergarten teachers
- October 3, 1937** Marries Noach Benninga
- February 18, 1939** Aleida Chana Benninga born
- September 1, 1939** Invasion of Poland begins
- Nov. 1939** Dutch army call-up; go to relatives in Amsterdam for four days
- March 1940** Move from Leeuwarden to Haarlem — “behind the water line”
- Early May 1940** Dutch army call-up
- May 7-9, 1940** Lena's parents and Noach's father and aunts come to Haarlem
- Fri. May 10, 1940** Germany invades Holland (and France, Belgium and Luxembourg)
- Tues. May 14, 1940** Lena, Noach, Chana and Oma Anna flee to England
- July 2, 1940** Leave London for the Dutch East Indies
- Aug. 26, 1940** Arrive in Surabaya
- Sept. 1940–1941** Live as colonials in Batavia – Bandung – Surabaya – and back to Bandung for 15 months
- Dec. 7, 1941** Pearl Harbor bombed
- Jan. 11, 1942** Japanese invade Dutch East Indies and Dutch Borneo
- March 8, 1942** Dutch on Java surrender to Japanese
- Early 1943** Family moves to a work camp in Bandung
- Sept. 1943** Noach is taken away by the Japanese
- Feb. 1944** Move to a fenced-in work camp in Bandung

June 1944 American invasion of Normandy

July 1944 Move to Adek – a (Japanese concentration) camp

May 1945 The War ends in Europe

Aug. 6, 1945 First atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima

Aug. 20, 1945 Learn that the War is over

Early Sept. 1945 Receive a note from Noach

Early Oct. 1945 Reunited with Noach in Bandung

Jan. 13, 1946 Leave Indonesia

Feb. 1946 Return to Holland, to Eenrum

April 3, 1947 Simon Zadok Benninga born

Jan. 1948 Move to Arnhem

Aug. 13, 1948 Jacques Benninga born

Nov. 16, 1949 David Benninga born

Oct.-Nov. 1952 Noach and Lena visit Asheville, N.C.

Feb. 1953 Move to Emmen

Aug. 1954 Family moves to Asheville, N.C.

List of Family Members Taken by the Nazis

Editor's note: The following information has been derived from the various family trees connected to the Frank and Benninga families and thus includes people related to Helena Benninga-Frank either by blood or by marriage. This project is still in progress and is not yet complete. Listings are alphabetical; where a name reoccures, it signifies another person, even if no other information is given. (One should take into account the tendency to name children after family members from previous generations, a custom which leads to the duplication of names.)

Betje Benninga b. 8 Jan. 1885, Eenrum, Holland; d. 14 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Coba Benninga van Dam d. 28 Sep. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Frouwktje Benninga b. 4 Feb. 1888; d. 23 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Never married - lived with Simon Benninga, and raised Noach Benninga.

Hendriejette (Jet) Benninga b. 15 Oct. 1880, Eenrum, Holland; d. 23 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Never married - lived with Simon Benninga, and raised Noach Benninga.

Jacob Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Jacob Benninga d. 31 Jan. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Jantje Benninga b. 31 Oct. 1873, Eenrum, Holland; d. 2 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Jennie Benninga Jansen d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Kaatje Benninga van Israels b. 30 Jan. 1854, Grijskerk, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Kaatje Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Kaatje Benninga b. 22 Apr. 1882, Eenrum, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Kaatje Izaks Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Lea Benninga d. 23 Jan. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Mietje Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Mozes Benninga d. 23 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Noach Benninga d. 23 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Philip Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Rozette Benninga b. 18 Aug. 1886, Eenrum, Holland; d. 14 May 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Simon Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Simon Benninga d. 10 Dec. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Sophie Benninga Zadoks d. 12 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Tineke Benninga d. Auschwitz, Poland.

Eliazer Berkelo b. 2 Dec. 1908, Groningen, Holland; d. 31 Jan. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Greengrocer.

Samuel Berkelo b. 20 Feb. 1937, Groningen, Holland; d. 12 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Wilhelmina Berkelo van Coevorden b. 10 Feb. 1911, Groningen, Holland; d. 12 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Benjamin Salomon Cohen b. 4 Nov. 1878, Leeuwarden, Holland; d. 15 Dec. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Levie Cohen b. 9 Mar. 1871, Leeuwarden, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Simon Heiman Cohen b. 1 Mar. 1888; d. 17 Sep. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Benjamin de Levie b. 23 Mar. 1866, Veendam, Holland; d. 16 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Simon de Wijze b. 2 Feb. 1890, Beugen, Holland; d. 3 Dec. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Abraham (Bram) Frank b. 4 Apr. 1900, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Transported: 16 February 1943.

Elkan (Elie) Frank b. 12 Feb. 1871, Groningen, Holland; d. 16 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Salesman. Transported: 16 February 1942.

Emma [Emmy] Roeper Frank b. 21 Nov. 1903, Winterswijk; d. 15 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Froukje Frank b. 14 Apr. 1881, Groningen, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Hendrika (Rika) Frank b. 27 May 1887, Groningen, Holland; d. 30 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Ina Frank b. 29 Jul. 1936, Groningen, Holland; d. 16 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Izak (Ies) Frank b. 19 Nov. 1896, Groningen, Holland; d. 31 Jan. 1945, Auschwitz, Poland. Bookkeeper for the Brother's Frank Wholesale and Retail Kitchenware. Never married. Transported: 16 February 1942.

Juliette Frank b. 15 Dec. 1925, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Feb. 1943,

Auschwitz, Poland. Transported: 16 February 1943.

Leentje Frank b. 26 Feb. 1873, Groningen, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Leentje Frank Goslinski b. 31 Dec. 1876, Groningen, Holland; d. 11 Jun. 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Social worker and president of the women's group "Menorah Tehorah". Transported: 8 June 1943.

Leny Frank b. 27 Dec. 1932, Groningen, Holland; d. 16 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Marianna [Janny] Frank van Minden b. 7 Oct. 1896, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 19 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Rozet Frank b. 3 Jan. 1924, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Transported: 16 February 1943.

Sara Frank b. 5 Aug. 1879, Groningen, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Simon Frank b. 22 Mar. 1875, Groningen, Holland; d. 11 Jun. 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Merchant - dealt in stoves and houseware.

Zadok Frank b. 19 Jul. 1884, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Transported: 7 September 1943. Father of Helena Benninga-Frank.

Bernardus Goslinski b. 8 Mar. 1922, Groningen, Holland; d. 30 Apr. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Betje Goslinski b. 29 Jan. 1881; d. 23 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Eva Goslinski b. 3 Apr. 1874, Groningen, Holland; d. 7 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Frederik Goslinski b. 20 Mar. 1904, Groningen, Holland; d. 28 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Cattle trader.

Frouwke Goslinski b. 7 Jan. 1879, Groningen, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Frouwkje Goslinski Gosschalk b. 6 Feb. 1896, Groningen, Holland; d. 22 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Henriette Goslinski Mozes b. 13 Mar. 1904, Rossum, Holland; d. 5 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Israel Goslinski b. 19 Aug. 1893, Groningen, Holland; d. 28 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Cattle trader, lived in Amsterdam.

Jeanette Goslinski Loete b. 16 Sep. 1895, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 29 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Leentje Betje Goslinski b. 12 Jan. 1900, Groningen, Holland; d. 27 Aug. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Lena Goslinski Frank b. 18 Dec. 1873, Kampen, Holland; d. 5 May 1942.

Marianna Sara Goslinski b. 24 Aug. 1922, Groningen, Holland; d. 29 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Pauline Rosette Goslinski b. 7 Jul. 1938, Groningen, Holland; d. 22 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Roosje Goslinski Manassen b. 24 Mar. 1922, Elst, Holland; d. 28 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Rosette Goslinski b. 12 Feb. 1925, Groningen, Holland; d. 29 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Rosette Goslinski b. 13 Dec. 1920, Groningen, Holland; d. 29 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Salomon Goslinski b. 29 Nov. 1870, Groningen, Holland; d. 5 May 1942. Painter and painting teacher.

Samuel Goslinski b. 7 Oct. 1901, Groningen, Holland; d. 31 Mar. 1943, Central Europe. Salesman.

Sara Goslinski b. 21 Nov. 1894, Groningen, Holland; d. 3 Dec. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. In meat business, had no children.

Sedje Goslinski b. 2 Sep. 1908, Groningen, Holland; d. 4 Jun. 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Teacher.

Sibylla (Bella) Goslinski Herz b. 16 Mar. 1913, Spellen, Germany; d. 22 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Simon Goslinski, b. 29 Jul. 1869, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Merchant.

Simon Goslinski b. 21 Jan. 1935, Groningen, Holland; d. 22 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Simon Adolf Goslinski b. 25 Apr. 1927, Groningen, Holland; d. 31 Mar. 1943, Central Europe.

Simon Jacob Goslinski b. 22 Apr. 1920, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 31 Mar. 1944, Central Europe.

Solomon Goslinski b. 6 Dec. 1896, Groningen, Holland; d. 28 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland. Cattle trader.

Abraham (Bram) Marcus b. 1910, Groningen, Holland.

Eva Meijer Nieweg b. 30 Sep. 1887, Green Bay, Wisconsin, USA; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

Frouwjke Meijer b. 21 Sep. 1887, Bedum, Holland; d. 30 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Jozephina Meijer b. 8 Dec. 1883, Bedum, Holland; d. 9 Apr. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.

Klaartje Meijer b. 4 Oct. 1876, Bedum, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Louis Meijer b. 24 Dec. 1885, Bedum, Holland; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

- Louise Meijer** b. 28 Apr. 1913, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Rika Meijer** b. 5 Jun. 1879, Bedum, Holland; d. 15 Dec. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Rozetta Meijer**, b. 9 Dec. 1890, Bedum, Holland; d. 11 Jun. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Gezina Mok** b. 16 Dec. 1917, Haarlem, Holland; d. 25 Jan. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Noach Simon Mok** b. 21 Aug. 1915, Haarlem; d. 9 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Samuel Mok** b. 17 Jul. 1879, Haarlem; d. 7 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Shopkeeper.
- Mozes Mozes** b. 25 Jan. 1884, Hoogezand, Holland; d. 22 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Levie Muller** b. 6 Feb. 1874, Groningen, Holland; d. 20 Mar. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Noach Muller** d. 1943, Poland.
- Hanna [Annie] Nieweg**, b. 7 Mar. 1913, Groningen, Holland; d. 21 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Jozef [Joop] Schwartzberg** b. 1 Dec. 1881, Assen, Holland; d. 30 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Salesman - colonial goods, spices and tropical fruits.
- Director of Joz. Swartberg's Handel Maatschappij.
- Louis [Lou] Schwartzberg** b. 9 May 1912, Rotterdam, Holland; d. 21 Oct. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Maria [Puck] Schwartzberg** b. 4 Sep. 1918, Rotterdam, Holland; d. 21 Sep. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Leo Simons** b. 30 Sep. 1911, Hoogezand, Holland; d. 31 Mar. 1944, Central Europe.
- Levie Simons** b. 6 Apr. 1879, Hoogezand, Holland; d. 20 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Ariel Stoppelman** d. Auschwitz, Poland.
- Abraham [Bram] Ter Berg** b. 18 Mar. 1907, Arnhem, Holland; d. 21 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Rosina Henrietta [Ina] Ter Berg** b. 16 Jun. 1938, Arnhem, Holland; d. 21 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Betsie Jacob Turksma** b. 11 Sep. 1923, Smalingerland, Holland; d. 9 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- David Julius Jacob Turksma** b. 19 May 1925, Drachten, Holland; d. 14 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Dora Jacoba Mozes Turksma** b. 20 Apr. 1921, Drachten, Holland; d. 23 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.

- Jacob David Turksma** b. 9 Apr. 1888, Drachten, Holland; d. 14 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland. Salesman.
- Mozes David Turksma** b. 26 Jul. 1885, Smallerland, Holland; d. 3 Sep. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland. Salesman.
- Simon Jacob Turksma** b. 12 Feb. 1927, Drachten, Holland; d. 14 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Jacoba van Dam** b. 28 Aug. 1867, Warfhum, Holland; d. 16 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Reina van Dam** b. 29 Nov. 1864, Warfhum, Holland; d. 19 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Caroline van der Hal van der Hak** b. 10 Nov. 1888, Weener, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Grietje van der Hal** b. 8 Jun. 1915, Usquert, Holland; d. 15 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Jette van der Hal** b. 26 Jan. 1910, Groningen, Holland; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Julius van der Hal** b. 1 Feb. 1918, Usquert, Holland; d. 30 Sep. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Kaatje van der Hal Cohen** b. 11 Dec. 1885, Eenrum, Holland; d. 15 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Levie van der Hal** b. 6 Dec. 1875, Usquert, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Lucretia van der Hal** b. 4 Feb. 1874, Usquert, Holland; d. 27 Nov. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Meijer van der Hal** b. 29 Apr. 1915, Groningen, Holland; d. 31 Mar. 1944, Blechhammer, Germany.
- Rebecca van der Hal van Zuiden** b. 12 Feb. 1882, Enschede, Holland; d. 23 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Roosje van der Hal van Zuiden** b. 10 Feb. 1880, Enschede, Holland; d. 28 May 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Salomon van der Hal** b. 20 Jan. 1888, Usquert, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1945, Bergen-Belsen, Germany.
- Hillechina Rosina van der Laan van Hoorn** b. 18 Apr. 1914, 't Zand, Holland; d. 23 Nov. 1943, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Hanna (Annie) van der Laan** b. 10 Jan. 1913, Noordbroek, Holland; d. 19 Oct. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Izak van der Laan** b. 24 Nov. 1909, Noordbroek, Holland; d. 1 Aug. 1942, Auschwitz, Poland.
- Benjamin van Tijn** b. 12 Dec. 1929, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 9 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Benjamin van Tijn** b. 16 Jun. 1880, Oostellingwerf, Holland; d. 23 Jul. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.
- Betty Louise van Tijn** b. 26 Aug. 1935, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 9 Apr. 1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Helena van Tijn de Jonge b. 16 Dec.
1902, Enschede, Holland; d. 9 Apr.
1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Mozes (Maurits) van Tijn b. 17 Jul.
1905, Amsterdam, Holland; d. 9 Apr.
1943, Sobibor, Poland.

Sara Sophia van Tijn b. 17 Apr. 1933,
Amsterdam, Holland; d. 9 Apr. 1943,
Sobibor, Poland.

Hanne (Annie) Vissel b. 11 Aug. 1906,
Groningen, Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943,
Auschwitz, Poland. Unmarried.

Jacob Vissel b. 7 Mar. 1874, Groningen,
Holland; d. 12 Feb. 1943, Auschwitz,
Poland. Salesman.

Joseph (Jo) Vissel b. 30 Apr. 1910,
Groningen, Holland; d. 30 Apr. 1943,
Auschwitz, Poland. Unmarried.

Mozes (Mo) Vissel b. 18 Feb. 1905,
Groningen, Holland; d. 30 Apr. 1943,
Auschwitz, Poland. Unmarried.