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Holland America Line Connections

From our Fall 2022 Rotterdam Transatlantic Voyage Guests

My grandfather Norbartus Molenaar sailed on *Amsterdam* in 1904. My grandmother Elizabeth Verhulst came with her family in 1913 on ss *Potsdam*.

— Sally Drenth, sally.drenth@gmail.com

Holland America Line is very special to me. I emigrated from the Netherlands to America in June of 1962. I celebrated my 17th birthday on the ship.

— Anna Weibes - van den Brink, ansjew45@yahoo.com

My paternal great-grandfather brought his family from East Prussia aboard *Maasdam* in May 1881. The sailing from Rotterdam helped them avoid the Prussian authorities in Hamburg who were aggressively looking for young men who were of Prussian draft age. My grandfather was 16. They traveled in steerage to New York and on to Canada.

My wife and I have enjoyed sailing on three Rotterdam ships. America has blessed our family greatly, and I often wonder what my great-grandfather would think of me sailing with Holland America over 1000 sea days and never in steerage!

— Fredrick Piellusch, fpießusch@hotmail.com
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My family has been sailing with Holland America Line since 1948 when my mother Elisabeth Jansen accompanied her grandmother from Rotterdam to New York to visit family. They sailed aboard *Veendam*. In 1958 my grandparents sailed from Rotterdam to Montreal and returned from New York to Rotterdam on their first and only trip to Canada to visit us in Kenora, Ontario.

It was the only time I met my grandfather.

In 1967 my grandmother sailed from Rotterdam to Montreal to spend approximately four months in Kenora with us. She returned via Montreal to Rotterdam. I have a memory of her a year later in Amsterdam showing me the sailor doll that she had won somehow.

In 1967 my parents decided it was time for me to meet my Dutch family, so arrangements were made for my girlfriend and I to travel to Holland. We were almost 16. We sailed on *Maasdam* to Rotterdam. Needless to say, the sailing is something I never forgot.

— Bernardine Kelly, kellybernie@shaw.ca

In 1921 my grandmother's brother, Jacob Pijpelink, emigrated to the U.S. aboard *Rotterdam IV*. When he came to the Netherlands to visit family after the war, he was able to provide U.S. goods like nylons and corned beef, which weren't available in the Netherlands.

In 1948 my father — who was named after Uncle Jacob — started sailing with HAL aboard ss *Veendam* as an apprentice engineer. He climbed through the ranks and became Chief Engineer (CE) on ss *Nieuw Amsterdam II*. He was CE in November 1971 onboard *Nieuw Amsterdam* when she made the last crossing from Rotterdam. He sailed until 1974 when he took a job ashore as Marine Superintendent in New York City. My father stayed with HAL and retired from the Seattle office in 1990 as vice president of technical affairs. He was always very proud of his career accomplishments with HAL.

We will always stay faithful to Holland America Line because of our strong family ties to the Line.

— Jaap Lieveisse Adriaanse, japola@xs4all.nl
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(TRANSLATED FROM DUTCH) This is the story of Willem and Marian van de Wiel – Willemars who met aboard *Stratendam* during a crossing from New York to Rotterdam in September 1968.

Story from Willem's perspective:

In 1963, I had the opportunity to attend the University of Minnesota. I was 18 years old and saw something in that adventure. As an 18-year-old boy, I booked the crossing from Rotterdam to New York with *Maasdam*. Even though it was one of the smallest, I thought it was a huge boat. I received my green card and was well established when I was called up for military service. After 24 months as a soldier, I decided to go back to the Netherlands.

Since I liked the crossing with *Maasdam* so much, I chose Holland America Line again. This time with *Stratendam*. On board, I was placed at the spare table close to the walk-in to the galley. In retrospect, it was the best place. At the table were: a nun who went back to Ireland, a lady with her small child, Sigmund (U.N. representative of Iceland to the U.N.) and his wife and two young ladies. And Marian.

Arriving in Rotterdam everyone went his own way. So I contacted Marian by just looking for a phone number in her family name. Got an uncle on the line who told me exactly about the how and what of Marian. She had moved to Amsterdam and was working as a pharmacist's assistant. From there it has become a get-together that has been going on for 53 years now.

It couldn't be more beautiful.

Story from Marian's perspective:

After a year as an au pair in Canada and then a round trip by Greyhound bus from Toronto to Vancouver Island and then through America via LA, New Orleans, New York and back to Toronto, it was time to go back to the Netherlands.

The boat trip was great. In the afternoon at tea there were cans of Verkade biscuits on the table. I chose the dining table at the door (not the best place) because my travel companion knew the steward at that table from her previous outward journey. There was a nice diverse group with us, among others, Willem van de Wiel, an English grandmother with granddaughter, a nun and a couple from Iceland.

On arrival in Rotterdam, I said goodbye to everyone. I quickly went to work in Amsterdam in a pharmacy. Willem only knew my name and that I came from Barneveld. With some calling

around he found me in Amsterdam, and he looked me up. That's when our journey through life began.

We were married in Amsterdam and have three daughters and five grandchildren. Inspired by our positive experiences with Holland America line and the nostalgic feelings, we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary aboard ss *Rotterdam*.

— *Willem and Marian van de Wiel*, vandewiel@casema.nl

In 1971 I lived in Rotterdam and worked in the Harbor loading and unloading ships. It was a summertime job that paid me some money while attending a teacher's college.

One of the captains aboard one of the ships told me I should spend a summer on an ocean liner. So I got the name of the person at headquarters of the HAL Wilhelmina Kade. The interview went well, and I was hired as a bellboy on *Rotterdam* to work on the Upper Promenade Deck. This process went so fast: within a week after entering the HAL building, I was on a plane to New York.

I arrived at Pier 40 and was assigned a cabin with three other bellboys. The experience was great to sail from New York to Bermuda, visit several Caribbean Islands and do transatlantic crossings. As a 19-year-old boy I learned a lot about people, associates, and the locales we visited. I still have a book with pictures and comments, and tickets of where we had been. My work experience with HAL was exciting and rewarding.

— *Jan (John) Vebrmeulen*, fc12oneton@gmail.com

My dad, grandparents and their siblings immigrated to the U.S. on either Amsterdam or Nieuw Amsterdam in 1948. They went through Ellis Island. My own family ended up immigrating to the U.S. in the 1980s. It will be awesome to take the same journey as my dad did in 1948. Just without the worries he had.

— *Bennett Brechtje*, bennett.brec@alumni.uwlax.edu

Our family has fond memories of Holland America Line dating back to 1923. My grandparents (Oma and Opa Hoefkens) lived in Rotterdam. Opa Hoefkens worked more than 40 years for Holland America Line at the offices on the Wilhelminakade. In 1923 he was given a 50th commemorative book.

After World War II my parents immigrated to the U.S. In 1959 my father began work at Holland America Line in the personnel department. I remember as a child, going by train with my dad on a Saturday to New York City to Holland America Line's headquarters at Pier 40. My brothers and I would have fun with paper clips and rubber bands while my dad worked!

My father Arie Van Tol worked his way up in the company and became president of Holland America Line in 1973. He was instrumental in opening tourism with China. I am so proud of his accomplishments with Holland America Line.

June 5, 1976, my fiancé and I were married onboard ss *Rotterdam* in New York City. We honeymooned on the ship. What a very special time with very special memories!

— *Nancy and Richard Hoogmoed*, mesm1@gmail.com

My grandfather Theodore Tresfon had a 50-year career with Holland America Line. As you can imagine, there is a strong family loyalty to sailing with HAL!

— Audrey Tresfon, ajtresfon@aol.com

My family immigrated to the U.S. on a Holland America ship — on *Groote Beer* out of Rotterdam in March of 1955. My memories of the trip include exploring the ship with siblings while my parents were resting in deck chairs. They apparently didn't handle the ship's motion as well as we did. I also very vividly remember coming into New York Harbor and passing the Statue of Liberty. We were at breakfast, and all got up to look.

— Marianne Adams, marianne@adamsworks.com
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My parents emigrated from the Netherlands in the 1950s on passenger ships associated with HAL. My dad (Frank Niesink) first sailed on ss *Waterman* from Rotterdam to Montreal on July 6, 1955. In 1957, he again sailed from Rotterdam with his fiancé (Anne Rensen) on *MS Seven Seas* of the Europa-Canada Line which HAL had part ownership.

— Henry (Rick) Niesink, rniesink@cogeco.ca

My first experience with HAL was as a passenger on ss *Maasdam* in 1958. I was two years old. My parents immigrated to the U.S. from the Netherlands in 1948, and this was their first time going back to visit family. We traveled roundtrip from New York. I remember playing in the nursery. My dad said that everyone was sick at some point, except me and my mother. Thanks for the memories HAL!!

— Linda Vermeulen, lverm.slp@gmail.com

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