

CONTACT: Bill Zucker, Erik Elvejord
PHONE: 800-637-5029, 206-626-9890
EMAIL: pr@hollandamerica.com

Holland America Line Connections

From Guests Aboard Rotterdam's April 6, 2023, Transatlantic Voyage

My parents, who met while in hiding during World War II, brought me and my sister to America on the Holland America Line ship Groote Beer on March 18, 1955. We were supposed to be on another ship later that year, but my mother's visa would have expired eight days after that ship's arrival in New York, so they booked the earlier passage instead. Exactly why they emigrated, I'm not sure. My dad had parlayed his experience in the Dutch resistance repairing radios from downed planes to a career as an electronics engineer at Philips. The housing shortage in the Netherlands at the time, the Soviet Union looming to the east and opportunity in America all played a role.

— Marianne Adams, marianne@adamsworks.com



My grandfather came to work for Holland America Line in 1902 at the age of 16 to seek adventure and see the world. He joined Holland America Line as a captain's boy and worked his way up to Chief Purser. During his career with Holland America Line, he survived three shipwrecks and once returned to the galley to save the ship's cat, being the last person to leave the ship together with the ship's captain. For this, he was awarded a medal for bravery.

— Deborah Meulen, dctermeulen@gmail.com

The 150th Anniversary cruise is definitely a heritage cruise for me. My dad, Cornelis Hooghart, immigrated in August 1951, taking a transatlantic crossing from Rotterdam to New York City. He was a single, 33-year-old man whose parents had passed away relatively young. My father was a skilled carpenter, coming from a long line of carpenters who repaired windmills as part of their profession. He had quite a group of well-wishers who gathered at the pier in Rotterdam to say goodbye. On a subsequent visit to the Netherlands, he met my mom and later married her and brought her to America, too.



— Linda Kaiser, lekaiser321@gmail.com



I was invited by my high school friend, Sharon, to join her and her parents on a Holland America Line holiday cruise on Rotterdam V out of Newport News, Virginia, in 1977. We enjoyed all the ship had to offer and more. Rotterdam V was truly my ship of dreams! My friend met a young Dutch engineer named Johann on board and formed a quick friendship. As the three of us were enjoying the ocean breeze on deck, Johann turned to me and said, "I have a friend I'd like you to meet. What if we meet in the Ritz Carlton Dining Room this evening?" "OK," I tentatively said. My friend and I had a lovely dinner with her parents and then met Johann in the Ritz Carlton Dining Room. After a while, I looked up to see a young, curly blond-haired Dutch Officer enter the door to the Ritz Carlton Dining Room. I stopped mid sip of my drink and watched intently as he came towards our table.

It was the first time I had ever seen Kees. It was love at first sight. He leaned over and introduced himself, "Hi, I'm Kees, nice to meet you." He was quite the gentleman and very respectful. He settled into the chair beside me and we chatted about ourselves and the ship. Kees and I enjoyed the evening, and I only hoped he did not notice how deeply I was blushing. For the rest of the cruise, we were inseparable as we enjoyed each other's company. The cruise came to an end, and Kees and I parted ways with a promise to stay in touch and see each other soon. After returning home, Kees and I corresponded regularly and even saw each other during a ship drydock in the United States. However, our relationship was a victim of diverging paths despite our feelings for one another.

Over the years, I would remember Kees with a smile and a prayer that life had been good to him. I even called Holland America Line headquarters in New York to see if I could verify his whereabouts with no luck. I eventually got married in my early thirties, and my husband and I settled down to enjoy life and raise a family. My husband, Jim, was a veterinarian and our love of animals brought us together. Life was good and I was happy as we welcomed our daughter, Jessica. We lived a happy, fulfilled life.

I was married to Jim for 32 years. Jim and I moved to Richmond, Virginia, to be near Jessica as retirement approached. But unexpectedly, my husband passed away after minor surgery. I was devastated as my daughter and I moved through the stages of grief. We began our journey of healing by remembering the good times.

However, life has a way of bringing people back together in the most extraordinary ways. One day as I opened my computer, I had a Facebook friend suggestion. It was Kees! I called my friend Sharon and told her what happened. She encouraged me to send a picture from 1977, say hi and find out how he was doing.



I reached out to Kees with a picture of us together and asked if he remembered me. How was life? I didn't hear back right away. Then some time passed, and I got a response. Yes, he did remember me fondly and wondered how life had been and asked for my phone number. I received a phone call from Kees on Halloween several years ago. It was as if time stood still, and the years melted away. I heard his voice and immediately knew who it was. By the end of that call, I realized I had once again found my long-lost love. Remarkably, he seemed to feel the same way. He had also lost his love too soon. As I hung up from that call, I realized we had both lived fulfilled lives with partners well suited to our given paths. After many phone calls and COVID travel restrictions, Kees came to visit me, and the rest is history.

We have been back to the Netherlands as a couple, to pay respect to the ship that started it all. The ss Rotterdam V is now permanently moored in Rotterdam as a floating hotel. We walked into the Ritz Carlton Dining Room, and I pointed out the table where we sat the first night we

met and told Kees, "This is where I fell in love with you, the moment I saw you enter through those doors."

Now, we find ourselves embarking on new adventures on the ship where it all began, the *Rotterdam*!!

— Sandra Foley, foleysandra06@gmail.com

Towards the end of WW II, my parents got a care package from the United States with some clothing. Pinned inside the pocket of a coat was a note asking to write to the donor. My parents did and got to be friends with the donors. They convinced my parents to immigrate to the United States and they became our sponsors. After a few years of waiting for the whole immigration process to take place, we immigrated to the U.S. on *Ryndam* in 1953. There were five of us: mom, dad, me, my brother and my sister. I found it fascinating on the ship that tables had raised edges, wet tablecloths were on top to prevent things from sliding off and chairs were anchored to the floor and could only be moved a few inches or turn.

We also took a ship tour, and they took us everywhere. Even the engine room and other below deck areas. After we arrived in the United States, dad ended up getting a job in New York with Holland America Line in their freight department. After several years working there, Holland America Line split and became Holland America Cruises and it moved its Headquarters to Seattle. Dad stayed with the freight department until he retired in New York.

— August Olsen, olsenaugust7@gmail.com

Adriaan and Johanna De Lint are my third great grandparents and were farmers from the Netherlands who came to the United States on *Veendam* in September of 1893. They settled in Holland Township in Orange City, Iowa, and continued to farm for the remainder of their lives. Their children eventually headed west to California, and now here I am in Seattle! I've been employed with Holland America Line for 10 years and had no idea this was in my family history until about five years ago, when I started researching my family's genealogy. Adriaan and Johanna would be proud to know that the company that provided them safe passage to America 130 years ago is now providing fantastic career opportunities for their third great granddaughter.



— Kristen Bass, KBass@HollandAmerica.com

My husband and I went on our first cruise with Holland America Line 40 years ago to Alaska in 1983. Since then, we have sailed 98 or 99 HAL cruises and loved every single one! Imagine our surprise a few years after the Alaska cruise when we were talking about how much we love the "dam" ships and my mother's brother and sister told us that when they immigrated to America from Ireland in the early 1950s, they sailed on the old *Noordam*. Until their deaths, my mother and her sister sailed with us all the time and loved the ships. At this point in our lives, we have also sailed with our son and daughter and their son. That makes four generations of Holland America Line sailors. We hope it continues for many more.

— Annmarie and Pat Bunts, abunts@comcast.net



My father, Stephen Zavacky, became a longshoreman in 1930 and began his work at the 5th Street Pier in Hoboken, New Jersey. This pier was also the home of Holland America Line. Starting in 1930 and until his death in 1963, Dad worked on the Holland America Line pier. One summer in the mid-fifties, dad had to go to 5th Street Pier to pick up his paycheck. There was no ship in port that day, so he took me along to show me where he worked. We lived about a half mile from the pier.

When I got to be nine or 10 years old, one of my jobs when out of school was to take lunch to my father at the pier. Those were not quiet days. Freight was coming and going, loading and unloading. Passengers disembarking and embarking. Slings and palletes were brought up from the holds and placed on the pier. After lunch, I would watch all this activity.

And here at Hoboken's 5th Street Pier, I had my first contact with the Dutch. From the officers, sailors, waiters, stewards and the other crew members, I heard English with a Dutch accent. I saw my first guilder. I tasted Dutch chocolate. I began to see a world beyond the Hudson River. All these bits and pieces were an introduction to a life-long connection.

To my father and me, these Dutch ships would become "our ships". But I was impressed by ss Nieuw Amsterdam. I would check the Shipping/Mails section in the Daily News to see when she would be in Hoboken so I could see her and dream about where the ship had been and where it would be sailing. Then, in 1959, I had my first glimpse of ss Rotterdam V. My father called our apartment and told my mother to send me down to the pier. There was this brand-new ship. My father took me aboard to have a gander at this gorgeous sea-going creation. Afterward, when we stood shoreside looking at ss Rotterdam, my father asked me what I thought of the ship. Wistfully I said, "Someday, I'll go somewhere on her."

Fast forward to the 1970s. Two young, working adults were looking for a special vacation, something that would be memorable. I thought it would be neat to go back to our childhood days and to re-live some memories. Anita and I decided that sailing with Holland America Line was the perfect solution. To make my wish as a 12-year-old come true, we made it a point to sail on ss Rotterdam V on one of her weekly runs from New York to Nassau and Bermuda. This was the start of a beautiful relationship.

We had only time enough for one cruise a year. That first cruise of ours in 1975 sailed from the Passenger Ship Terminal in Manhattan. Yet, as we sailed down the Hudson, Anita and I stood on the ship's starboard side so we could see 5th Street Pier. It was our link to times with my father and "our ships." We sailed that first time in August of 1975, re-establishing our decades-old relationship, and so it continues. Anita and this longshoreman's son have been sailing exclusively with Holland America Line since then, and we wouldn't have it any other way.

— John Zavacky, zavackyj@tampabay.rr.com

My parents and five children were immigrants coming to the United States on ss *Groote Beer* in January 1957. I was one year old. I have written a book for my nieces and nephews based on a diary my father kept while traveling on ss *Groote Beer*.

— Maria De Haan Petrola, mardehpet@icloud.com

In 1946, my parents George and Wilhelmina Van Zoest began working for KLM in Amstelveen, and this is where they met. They married in 1949 in Rotterdam. After much deliberation, they made the difficult decision to leave their friends and family behind and start a new life in Canada. They left Rotterdam on May 1, 1953, sailing to Halifax on Maasdam. My parents settled into Hamilton, Ontario. In 1957, KLM contacted dad and rehired him as a salesman in Southwestern Ontario. He was transferred to Vancouver in 1969.



My parents loved their life in Vancouver. After my dad retired from KLM, my parents decided they would like to try cruising. They asked if I would mind coming along to give them a hand. I happily left my husband and children behind and boarded my first HAL ship (the old Noordam) in 1990. We instantly fell in love with cruising and with the wonderful Holland America Line experience! My mom especially felt at home speaking Indonesian with the crew and Dutch with the officers.

I enjoyed numerous Pacific Northwest cruises, four trips to Alaska, and a voyage from Vancouver to Hawaii with my parents on various Holland America Line ships. Each voyage was exquisite and provided countless special memories of sailing with mom and dad. They were also on the final cruise on the Pacific Coast for Rotterdam V, which is now permanently moored in Rotterdam and used as a hotel. My mom passed away in January 2010 and my father in 2015. I cherish the many memories I have from our voyages.

I have sailed at least once every year since 2000, always on a wonderful Holland America Line ship, to Alaska, Hawaii, Caribbean and up and down the Pacific Coast. This very special 150th Anniversary cruise will be my 30th voyage and I cannot wait to make some amazing new memories as well as fondly recalling old memories of special times sailing with mom and dad.

— Susan Murphy, susanvzmurphy@gmail.com

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