

JOHANNES FREDERIKUS ANTONIUS

Born *Wednesday, 03 May 1916*

Died *Tuesday, April 07, 1981*



Jan was born in a hospital in Enschede because he was premature at seven months. As a result, he had to stay in an incubator for a while. After regaining his strength, he was allowed to go home, to the Grotestraat corner of Ennekerdijk in Borne.

As a toddler, his brother Bernhard often walked with him in the stroller. It happened once that Bernhard had to play horse and pull the stroller. Of course it didn't go as planned and at one point, the cart fell over and Jan ended up under it. So that wasn't fun at all, Jan completely lost it and mother very angry of course.

Since Jan was quite a bit afraid of the dark, his brother always had to go to bed with him. This resulted in many frolics. Once, during the so-called 'buck shooting', he was even accidentally kicked out of bed by his brother. When it finally became quiet at long last, mother came upstairs and turned off the lights.

A peaceful nights rest wasn't always possible. One time Jan was woken up by a cat in the middle of the night, in a not too pleasant way. In those days they still slept in a box bed. Inexplicably, the cat of the house climbed onto the top of the box bed and when he arrived there, the animal thought it was a good idea to do its business on the spot. Unfortunately, Jan was sleeping under it and got wet!! Another time he was awakened by mice, who found it necessary to play in his straw-filled pillow.

When Jan was eleven years old, his mother died, after which the care of the family was taken over by his sister Johanna (Jo).

At the age of thirteen he left school, despite the fact that he was a very good student, and started working in the butcher's shop with his father and brother. He didn't stick it out

there for very long because he and his brother didn't always get along that well. When he was fourteen, he got a job as an errand boy at grocer Hulshoff in Borne. He stayed there for many a year.

He also took dancing lessons in those years, at Rottinck in Borne. He did not have to go into military service as his brother had already done that. Jan didn't look very much like his brother either. They were two different characters. Jan liked to sit at home, he was very creative and also liked to read. In his spare time he was often drawing.

During the time that Jan worked at Hulshoff, he went to night school and managed to get his General Commercial Knowledge diploma. When EPA (Unit Prices Almelo) in Hengelo asked for a chef for the grocery department, Jan applied for it and managed to get the job. During his service at EPA, he also learned the window dressing trade from the window dresser established there. Given his creative talent, he did well. After working in Hengelo for some time, Jan was transferred to the Almelo branch of EPA. It was here that he met his future wife, Wilhelmina Maria Dik. She had been dating an auto mechanic for four years. Jan and Mien did get along, so Mien had to make a choice between the two. Result, Jan and Mien got engaged!

After a few years of courtship, they were married on Friday, June 25, 1943 in Almelo.



Until the end of the war (May 1945) they lived with Wilhelmina's (Mien) parents at Irisstraat 40/42. Their first child, *Johanna Angela Maria* (Joan.) was born there. Not long

after Joans' birth, they were able to rent an upstairs apartment above a business (Ossenkoppele) on the Bornsestraat near the Weth. van Dronkelaarsplein. Here their second child was born in April 1947, *Angela Johanna Wilhelmina*. Not long after this, they were told that there was a grocery store for sale at Bornsestraat 249, near the crossing with the Christoffelstraat. This business belonged to Fikkert (the parents-in-law of Wilhelmina's sister, Lies). After long deliberations, it was decided to take over the business from the Fikkert's on 18 January 1949 for a sum of f4000. He borrowed money from his brother Bernhard, where he had to sign a document to renounce his child's share in the event of the death of his father!

Here their third child was born in April 1949, *Bernardus Wilhelmus Hendrikus (Bill)*. They had the business for about two years. When it turned out that there was little future left in it, they decided to sell it again, in November 1952.

At that time, just after the war, the economic situation in the Netherlands was not too rosy. The government propagandized emigration and many decided to build a new future abroad. So did Jan and Mien. They left for Australia on the 11th of November 1952. After a long boat trip of approximately six weeks on the ms. Johan van Oldenbarneveldt, they arrived in Melbourne on Friday the 13th of December 1952, the capital of the state of Victoria, located on the south coast of Australia.



From the port city, Port Melbourne, they travelled by train to Bonegilla, a bounded rural town in the local government area of the city of Wodonga in northeastern Victoria, Australia, 10 kilometres east of Wodonga and about 300 kilometres northeast of Melbourne. In the 2016 census, Bonegilla and the surrounding area had a population

of 693. The migrant camp there was an old army barracks. The buildings in the camp consisted mainly of nissen huts.

Upon arrival at the camp, Bill came down with whooping cough and had to be admitted to the hospital there. Apparently he contracted it on board of the ship! His two sisters followed not long after. Jan and Mien were only allowed to visit their children once a week, on Sunday evenings.

While his wife stayed there with the children, Jan, left for Melbourne on 17th of February in search of work. He hitchhiked down with another Dutch immigrant. He succeeded in finding employment, getting a job in Olinda, a village in the Dandenongs (a mountain range about 40km east of the city of Melbourne). Strangely enough, this was with a compatriot who owned a small company in leather goods. He could also get a house there, but it was in the middle of "the bush" where the access was via a sandy footpath. Because of a minimum salary, he had to look for another job because he wanted to have the family reunited. Eventually, he was able to get a well-paid job in a factory, on the night shift. After three months alone in Melbourne, he was able to bring his family over. They left Bonegilla on the 11th of March 1953, at 6.30am to go to Holmesglen (about 18km east of the city). Here they could get temporary accommodation, again in a migrant hostel there. In response to an advertisement in a newspaper, three months later, on a Sunday afternoon they boarded a bus, to look for a house that was for rent in Moorabbin. This was half of a house in 5 Small Road that was inhabited by Jewish immigrants from Hungary. They were had two rooms to their disposal, a living bedroom and a regular bedroom for the children. In the meantime, Jan had gotten another job in a factory (J.J.Davies & Sons Pty. Ltd.) where Daynide (plastic coated fabric) was manufactured.

During their stay in Moorabbin, Jan was struck by an accident at work, in which he seriously injured his back. It would later turn out that he had suffered a hernia. He had to wait three months before his Workers compensation benefit was approved. At that time, it was of course impossible to pay rent. But when Jan finally received his benefits, his landlord refused to receive overdue rent.



After a rehabilitation period, in 1954 the family moved to Oakleigh, a suburb in Melbourne, 14 km south-east of Melbourne's Central Business District, located within the City of Monash local government area.

Here they were able to rent an old mansion (about 100 years old) from an old bachelor, Percy Gordon Anderson by profession "case maker", in Oakleigh Street. They were able to rent this through friends they had made, Mr. & Mrs. Fitzsimmons. Mr. Fitz was a hairdresser in Oakleigh where Bill went for a much needed haircut. The Fitz family were so-called "true blue Aussies". They were more than willing to help immigrants! They remained friends of the Nijhuis family until the sixties!



During this period, Jan started working for a large lemonade manufacturer, Cottees. He had to provide all the shops where the brand of lemonade in question was sold with all kinds of advertising posters. He also had to design certain posters himself, so he could make use of his experience as a window dresser. In 1958, not long after the birth of his fourth child,

Hendrikus Bernardus Johannes, the family moved again, this time to Clayton. This suburb was 5km away. They had to move out of their house in Oakleigh after their landlord started causing problems about rent that he said had not been paid. He was an old man, drunk and not susceptible to reason, so Jan had no choice but to move.

In the meantime, Jan had started his own company, making all kinds of pouffes and other soft furnishings.



Given the relationships he had retained during his period at Davies Pty. Ltd., he was able to buy acquire the needed materials at reasonable prices.



Business went well and in a short time he had saved up enough money to buy his own piece of land and have a house built.



In 1960 the house was ready and the family moved for the seventh time, now it was Mooroolbark where they settled, 4 Cameron Road. The business flourished like never before, in the meantime Jan had also come up with a name for his company: - "Hackelis Plastic Products". Of course, the name was hardly pronounceable for the real Australian, but that didn't bother Jan.



The following years were the so-called golden years for Jan and his family. But as often happens with small private companies, the workload turned out to be too heavy for one person and Jan was struck by a nervous breakdown.

After a long recovery period, Jan continued with his business, this time assisted by a partner. Unfortunately, the chosen solution turned out not to be the right one and Jan had to sell his company - it was 1968.

In November 1968 his eldest son, Bill and his daughter, Angela, left for the Netherlands. They intended going on a working holiday and would probably stay there for a year. Life is full of surprises, and that's how it happened that Angela met her future husband. As was customary at the time, the opinion of the family was asked. They did not agree (her choice did not meet to their requirements). Jan was very worried, he couldn't stomach the fact that the family was at odds with each other because of this. So Jan and his wife decided to follow their two children and go back to their homeland.

He sold his house in Mooroolbark and left for the Netherlands with his family, including his mother-in-law, *Maria Angela Pragt-Klöne* on the m.s. *Ellinis*.



They arrived there on the 17th of May 1969, and of course they went back to Almelo. They were assigned a house in Gagelstraat, number 39. Jan got a job as a janitor at “Soweco”. Given his education and experience gained in Australia, this was a bitter pill for him. Still, he was happy to be back in the Netherlands, and the dilemma was great when his daughter Angela married and returned to Australia. What now? His wife Mien was very unhappy, she could not adapt to Dutch life again.

It was 1972. His son Bill got married in September and went to live in the Schoolstraat 85. After much hesitation and deliberation, it was decided to return to Australia.

On Saturday, December 23, 1972 the family & Oma Almelo for Rotterdam to board the m.s. Ellinis bound for Melbourne.

Once there, the family went back to live in Mooroolbark. Jan was able to get a job again, this time with his son-in-law *Benny Lubbers* (Angela's husband). He stayed there for a while until his hernia bothered him so much again that he had to quit.



In that period Jan and his family moved again, this time to 10 Felix Grove in Mooroolbark. He was able to buy this house from his son-in-law Frank's brother, Roy.

Jan was allowed to enjoy his retirement for a few more years before suddenly passing away, a month before his sixty-fifth birthday. It was the 7th of April 1981. The exact cause of death has never been determined, but it is suspected that it was either a heart attack or a brain hemorrhage.



Jan is buried in the general cemetery in Templestowe, a quiet village about half an hour's drive from Mooroolbark. His grave is on a hill, close to the entrance in the so-called "lawn" part, grave no. H10.

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Jan's wife Wilhelmina (Mien) first continued to live in the house at Felix Grove after his death. In the meantime, the house had been purchased by *Hendrikus Bernardus Johannes (Harry)*. Wilhelmina allowed Harry his own privacy, so she decided to have a so-called "Granny Flat" (a fully furnished independent living unit) placed in the backyard of 10 Felix Grove. So they both had their own house and yet Harry could help his mother where necessary in this, her old age.

During the years 1981-1990 Wilhelmina had been to Holland three more times where she stayed with her son Bernardus (Bill) in the Schoolstraat in Almelo. She usually stayed for a period of about six weeks. These were happy times for her, visiting her son.

Harry got married in 1989 and moved to Lilydale. The house at Felix Grove became vacant and was purchased by *Benny Lubbers*, Angelas' husband. As a result, Wilhelmina's Granny Flat could remain there for the time being.

Unfortunately, Angela and Benny divorced in 1991 and Angela temporarily moved into the house at Felix Grove until she could find a suitable home for her and her two sons, Benjamin and Daniel. After a very difficult period for Angela, she was finally able to find a home in Montrose. After she had moved, it turned out that Wilhelmina also had to move, as *Benny Lubbers* wanted to sell the house in Felix Grove. It turned out to be possible to have the flat moved to 4 Greenslopes Drive where Wilhelmina's eldest daughter Johanna (Joan) lived with her husband Frank and son Tim.

She continued to live there in reasonable health until she was informed that she was suffering from pancreatic cancer. It was May 1994. She underwent an operation, but to no avail. She died in February 1995 at the age of 79. According to her wishes, she was cremated. Her ashes are buried on Churchill Island, under a tea tree looking out over the sea.

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