

Chapter 6

Adolescence: Broadening Outlook and Understanding

Both of us were born and raised on a dairy farm. Corrie was born and raised at a place called "Huis ten Dorp". The farm was located 4 kilometers west of Schipluiden. My parent's farm was just outside of the village; we could walk to the heart of our town in 10 minutes. When Schipluiden began to expand to the south our farm was the first to go. It necessitated my youngest brother, Jaap, to find a place elsewhere. When our parents began farming, (my dad and mom on May 1, 1913 and Corrie's parents on April 29, 1914), they started out like practically every farmer in our area, and that was with hired help. Milking about 30 cows the whole year round called for a "bovenknecht" and "onderknecht". The latter was between 13-17 years old and the former above 18 years old, after which age one was ordinarily married. My parents also had a hired girl as this was called. This was because we did not ship our milk to the milk plant in the city but made butter and cheese. As soon as my oldest brother and sister left school, either at the age of 12 or the day they turned 13, they replaced the younger hired help.

All farm work during these days was done by hand, not just the milking part. In the summer all farmers worth their salt rose between 3:30 and 4:00 a.m. I recall that when we went out into the field to fetch our cows home, the farmer to the left of us had already come back with his cows, leading them into the corral for the milking. The neighbor to the right ordinarily was just starting out for his cows when we returned. And if per chance a farmer slept in every neighbor was aware of it and tried to rub it in whenever there was a chance. We always ate a slice of bread before we started our milking. At 6:00 a.m. the milking was finished and the feeding of calves, horses and pigs was also done. Then it was breakfast time, which consisted of oatmeal and home baked 100 % brown bread. After our warm meal everyone who had a chance took a nap. The women always got up between 5:00-5:30 a.m. Once in a while one of our sisters had to help out milking. The few times we happened to get up too late caused them to be the "victim" of this problem. Very few cows were ever tied up for milking during the summer time. They were so used to us milking them twice a day that they stood still immediately when they were approached by us holding a pail in our hand. If a person did not carry a pail they would not stop. We always tied their legs for the milking and so did everyone else. If, at times we happened to get to bed late, i.e., after 9:30 p.m. or very late (after 10:30 p.m.), it was hard to get up early. And dozing temporarily while milking was nothing unusual. If Dad happened to be close by and saw it, he would say, "Andries or Jan, wakker blijven" (stay awake). If it was one of us who saw it we would squirt some milk fresh from the cow in the other's face. I well recall the struggle it often was to get out of bed the first time Dad would stand at the stairway calling to get us up.

The land farmers worked was not always right around the home and farm buildings. Later on my Dad rented some land one and two kilometers away. Dad then would milk at home and Andries and I milked there. I always went by bike and Andries rode the carrier tricycle. When we got back we helped Dad finish off at home. Other farmers before the more modern day I now am describing, used horse and wagon or one of the big Danish dogs and cart. I know some of my uncles did. Others such as a few neighbors and uncles used a boat either rowing or pushing or pulling it by horse or hand. The pushing consisted of a long pole which was stuck in behind a bar in the boat. It was a bit of an art to steer the boat right along the shoulder of the creek but it worked well.

When hoof and mouth disease broke out in the area it was a very trying time and played havoc with the whole dairy herd and all the work that needed to be done. Every farm where it was found immediately had to report it and was given a large sign that read "Mond en Klauw Zeer". This was to be placed right on the gate or whatever stood at the entrance of the lane way leading to the farm. None of this ever helped the cows on other farms and they became infected sooner or later. All farms were separated by a ditch or creek from which all cows on either side freely drank. And if this did not bring it to the neighbors, the wind would. Therefore no amount of washing, avoiding to visit neighbors, selling or buying or otherwise would stop the plague. It was a truly dreadful disease. Cows were infected with large blisters on their tongue, teats became sore and raw, between the hoofs large sores and swellings occurred, making it difficult and next to impossible to rise and eat. Some also died. And of course though we spent three times the length of time trying to milk we came away with next to nothing. Even now I still thank our great God that ways have been found by scientists to eliminate this dreaded disease. Several times since our parents started to farm, the Dutch government sought to immediately kill off the entire herd when the first cow was found to be infected. I recall my Dad talking about it and pointing out the place where they all were buried. It was all without the hoped for effect.

Letting cows and calves out from their long winter confinement in the month of April, ordinarily the 15th of the month, was always a big event for the whole family. The grown up people were happy to get away from all the extra work of feeding, cleaning out manure, brushing, etc., while the smaller ones loved the sight of calves and cows running back and forth like wild animals, all with their tails up in the air. For this reason too, our parents always waited with this until there not only was enough grass to eat but even more so for the land to be good and dry, for otherwise they would trample too much grass in just one hour.

During the years we grew up class distinction was very much a part of life; though as small children we were not aware of it. That is, in the sense that we thought this is how it is, how it always has been and how it must be everywhere in the world. We never questioned it; we never thought it through.

Those in the upper class were addressed as "Den Weledele Heer". People in government were among them. Judges were addressed as "Den Weledele Gestrenge Heer". Middle class people were spoke to as "Den Heer" or "Meneer". Our parents were just addressed by their last name. Of course, we never, ever came in contact with any of the upper class people. Farmers as a whole were looked down upon by city people. We were at times called in a degrading way "boeren". I know that for quite sometime it gave me somewhat of an inferiority complex. There indeed was a wide difference between "stad" and "land", that is, city and country.

We had the same with addressing women. There were three classes of women. Those in the upper class were addressed as "Mevrouw", those in the middle class as "Juffvrouw", and those in the lower class as "Vrouw". The mayor's, the minister's, the doctor's, government official's and lawyers wives as well as the wives of those who were wealthy, were the "mevrouws" of our time. Slowly but surely all that began to change, especially following World War II.

Butter and cheese making was a farmer's art. Only a small percentage of farmers had taken it upon themselves to do this work. It was a lot of extra work compared with farmers who just milked their cows and than shipped the milk to the factories. About an hour after the men got up for the milking my mother and my older sisters would get up and begin the process of making butter. The first job was to take the cream off the milk of the evening before. This cream was added to the cream that was taken off the milk which was brought in the morning of the day before. It all then was made to "sour" and thereafter the churning would begin. Mother would just about be done by the time we finished our milking. Thereupon my dad would put the skimmed off milk in a huge barrel and mix it with remmet in order to thicken it. Following this process we would slowly cut it in small pieces and let it stand for a while. Then the whey was scooped off at various times until there was so little left that it could be poured in a huge cloth and pressed dry. The cheese would then be placed in low barrels that had holes in them for the last remaining whey to be pressed out. We had a special press for this. The next day the cheese would be placed in "pekel", which is very, very salty water. The cheese would be in there for nearly one week.. When taken out something was put on them to make them a little more shiny. They were laid out to dry for about 3 weeks and then were ready for market. Each week my Dad would take a wagon full of butter and cheese to the market in Delft where he would sell it to the highest bidder who came by looking for

good products. These buyers knew, of course, each farmer by name as well as the quality of their products.

During the great depression we were forced to sell off two acres. This land was right in front of our house with the lane way along side of it leading to our farmyard. Looking back and piecing things together I now know that mother fought it with all her might. She opposed it to the very end. However, Dad or Mother had no real choice in the end. For, year upon year the mortgage had to be increased! We all worked as hard and as long each day as was possible, yet financially we just kept falling behind. My deaf sister had much to do with this. Every year my parents had to come up with approximately one thousand guilders to have her learn to speak, read and write. The land was sold to a man who began a brand new business of making bricks from a mixture of wooden shavings and cement. They were used for inside walls. The business really took off, too. He soon had a half dozen men working for him, climbing up to over 10. My Mother always looked at it with sadness in her eyes because to her the buildings and the row upon row of bricks was just a eyesore compared to the otherwise beautiful few acres right in front of our house. And the closer they came to the narrow ditch separating them from us, the harder she took it.

Something else they did to keep their heads above the ever rising mortgage was to rent out some space on our farm yard to a man with a "bodedienst". This parcel delivery man built his own garage for his truck but his daily presence just took some of our privacy away. I do not know how much rent he paid each month; it could not be much, but every little bit helped.

This man always left with his carrier service truck just when we set out for walking to school each day. Also, he always stopped in the middle of our hamlet to drop off things at his parent's place who operated a small grocery store. One day I persuaded my younger brother and sister, Jaap and Nel, to join me and hang on the tailgate and hitch a ride to the place where he always stopped. It would be fun and save us time as well as get us to school early. What actually happened that particular morning though, was that for one reason or another he did not stop at the small grocery store of his parents. He went right on full speed. We all panicked, somehow thinking that we would end up in Delft or The Hague! What happened was that we just were not thinking clearly, because a few blocks further he would have had to really slow down at the narrow bridge that was coming up. That would have been a very good place to let go of the tailgate, but we did not wait that long. We let ourselves go right after we discovered that he wasn't stopping where he always stopped. My younger brother and sister just let themselves go and fell on the street while I being a little taller somehow was smart enough to keep on running as fast as I could and then let go. My sister Nel, especially, hurt herself pretty badly. She

had headaches, threw up in school, and was brought or sent home early, I do not remember. All I can remember very well is my shame and the severe reprimand I received when coming home. For the next few days I went to school all by myself and it was about two weeks before my sister could walk again. For a long time people reminded me of my foolishness. I well remember what my mother said when I came home: "en jij was the aanvoerder; jullie hadden wel voor je leven ongelukkig kunnen zijn". ("and you were the leader; you all could have been crippled").

Sundays always were special and this was the same at the Van Leeuwen family, as you will be reading elsewhere. On Saturday everything was to be made ready for this special day. This applied all the way from polishing shoes to making ready for the feeding of our cows during wintertime. Whatever could be made ready for the next day was indeed done. I even picked extra feed for my rabbits so they would have plenty for Sunday. An elderly pastor from The Hague once said in our church, "Een goede Zondag begint op Saturdag", meaning "A good Sunday begins on Saturday". We all would get up a little earlier than normal in order to be finished by the time we had to dress for church. It was especially hectic when we made cheese and butter. Other farmers just brought the milk to the road and a milk truck came by to pick it up. We were not the only ones though, who made such Sunday preparations. All farmers did so, for all farmers faithfully attended church each Sunday. When we walked to church the entire street was crowded with folks going to church; some to the Christian Reformed, some to the Reformed and still others to the Roman Catholic Church. Very few people in our town stayed home. I believe there may have been at the most a half a dozen of these families. Country people came with horse and buggy and the younger folks by bike. We always walked. I still have picture walking to church with *my* Dad.



John Moerman,
age 12, walking
to church with
his father.

The afternoon service was not too well attended in our church. And the few farmers who did attend often had trouble to keep awake. Very understandably so especially after eating a big warm meal prior to the winter afternoon service. From my fourth to my twenty first year we had the same minister. I can still picture him so well. If the sleeping of one person lasted too long he would just stop preaching and wait until the person woke up. Or, someone sitting close enough to reach the person gave him "the elbow". At one time though a young man, the age of 25, just kept on sleeping and even snoring. And no one was sitting close enough to touch him, so the minister just said out loud, "Kees, wordt wakker", "Kees, wake up". He had to say it a few times until he actually did wake up.

During the summer time when the second service was held at 7:00 p.m., the attendance was a little higher. The second service's sermon was always a catechism message. The morning service always lasted longer; this especially so as the message was longer. After preaching for 25 minutes the minister would call for an intermission and have the

congregation sing a psalm or a hymn. The minister never sang along; he always took a “nientol” for his throat and read through the remainder of his sermon. The whole sermon was always 45 minutes.

This minister, whose name was Ds. J.J. De Vries, was of an aristocratic background and his wife even more so. He was stately man. Every church of our type always provided for a special place for the minister's family to sit. Also sitting in this specially encased area were those who held office. This, with the exception of the elders and deacons, who were sitting in special places right around the pulpit. The office these other people held were of a strictly financial nature. They were called "Kerkvoogden". They were the financial church overseers. Our minister always smoked big and expensive cigars, even during the occupation years when no one had anything to smoke. His cigars came from Indonesia where 6 of their 7 children lived. Some of them were in charge of big tobacco plantations.

He was always very generous with offering cigars to others such as colleagues, consistory members, financial trustees and youth leaders, etc. In fact, when I was in his communion class with 3 others of my age, toward the close of the session he came around with his box of cigars as well. I always declined. He tried for a month or so and when I told him one evening that I never smoked nor ever would, he said, "Jan, het is geen man die niet roken kan." ("Jan, you're not a man if you don't smoke".) I am sorry to say that he died of a massive heart attack at the age of 70 years. Since during the years of the occupation tobacco was extremely scarce and cigars were just impossible to obtain so some people just went over to his place for an excuse to get "a good cigar". They would smoke a bit every evening, making the thing last for a week.

Each Sunday morning the Ten Commandments were read right after the first psalm that was sung. The congregation was then asked to sing another psalm in response. This reading of the Law was always done by a paid "voorlezer", who also read the scripture passages for the day. For many years this "reader" was one of the farmers. His wife bore him 17 children. One of their sons was a friend of mine and I visited there often. My friend later on, at the age of 20, drowned while swimming with my cousins who lived at "De Vergulde Hand", the farm where my Dad was born. He worked there that year for one of their neighbors. I was always impressed as a young child how well this "reader" could pronounce difficult Biblical names of people and towns. He had developed quite a droning voice though and this was especially prevalent when he read the Ten Commandments.

Just 10 feet away from where my Dad normally sat, hung on the wall about 20 feet up, a large stone replica of the two tablets of the law. It had four of the commandments written

on the left side and the next six written on the right side. The face of a biblical figure with a long beard was pictured above it. I presume it was to draw attention to Moses. All of this (at the time of this writing, 1995) is still there; the only difference is that it now hangs at another location in the building. This took place when the church was renovated. In our house we have a picture of the interior of the church. The church building dated back to 1492. A list of all the ministers that served this church hangs somewhere on the wall. At one time wealthy barons were buried within its walls. Names and dates are still clearly visible. This is also the church where we were baptized, made confession of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and were married.

The pews were rented out each year and so were the chairs in the center of the building. For an additional small fee the caretaker would provide, in the wintertime, a pot with glowing coals placed in a small wooden box with holes on top. These coals came from the huge potbelly stove standing at the entrance of the church building. Whenever a church member died and none of the family members took over the vacant seat, the spot would then be rented out to someone else. I know this is how my Dad obtained a third place for us boys to sit. Our family had only one chair rented in the middle of the building. All our other places were in one of the encased benches. Underneath the pipe organ, the places were free. As a result often noisy and somewhat rowdy people sat there. It wasn't unusual for the minister to interrupt his preaching and just rivet his eyes on the noisy one out there. There were paid organists who took turns playing. Each organist had a helper who pumped the air into the organ. I have done it a few times as well.

The congregation also owned several farms. The rent of these farms or farmland helped to financially support the church. Such land was held by the deaconate of the church. Help given to the poor came from this rent before all and everything. Some churches had more land though than poor people. And this is where the saying originated, "De doden hebben zo lang voor de levende gezorgd zo dat de levende nu ook dood zijn." ("The dead have cared so long for the living that now even the living are dead") The meaning being in regard to current neglect of tithing and giving sacrificially.

The pulpit in our church as well as in all other old church buildings stood high above the people. All the people were sitting on level ground and this was a good way for everyone to see the preacher and hear him as well. The acoustics within the huge building with high brick walls was far from adequate. Therefore right above the place where the minister stood was a large sounding board, held up by iron bars fastened on the wall behind and above. On it were written the words, "Zalig zijn degene die het Woord van God hooren en het bewaren"; "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and

obey it” (Luke 11:28). I must have read these words hundreds of times as a small boy. I know it has helped me to ponder the real meaning of it.

It was a centuries old tradition that every confessing member who entered the house of the Lord would bow his/her head and offer a prayer. The men would stand and have this prayer prior to their sitting down for the service. And again during the (long) congregational prayer all the men who had made confession of their faith in Jesus Christ would rise for this prayer. I well recall how "grown up" and somehow more "spiritually important" I felt when at last I too could stand for prayer when entering church and also when the minister began his congregational prayer. No doubt generations of our forefathers stood up in their churches as well for these prayers.

During the summer time Dad and Mom would always have a cup of tea following the evening service and discuss things that had expired during the day and then start making ready for bed. Mother always made some preparation for the washing of laundry that was always done on Mondays. In the wintertime we always arrived home at 3:30 p.m. from church. It took only 8 minutes to walk. Then we all immediately changed our clothes, drank a cup of tea and the men folk were off feeding pigs and cows and would do the milking. When that was done, ordinarily at 6:30 pm, Mom was ready with several thick slices of homemade bread, all buttered with homemade butter and a thick layer of homemade cheese and the eating began. They were real good times sitting with the whole family around the table. Family devotion times consisted of prayer before and after meals. In the morning Dad or Mom read a meditation from our daily calendar with 365 pages on it. On the back side of it there was either a continuing story or a poem. I always enjoyed reading them. The prayer at the beginning of the meal consisted of "The Lord's Prayer". Adults in our home prayed silently, while us children up to the age of 11 or 12, at the beginning of our meal prayed, "Heere, zegen deze spijze, Amen" while after the meal we said, "Heere, dank U vor deze spijze, Amen".

Dad always read a chapter from Psalms. During haying time he often resorted to reading one of the shorter psalms. Again, the closing prayer was one of the old, memorized prayers:

"Menslievend God, Uw Naam zij geloofd en gedankt, dat U ons met deze Uwe liefdegave hebt gevoed. Voed ook onze ziele met het brood des levens. En versterk onze harten door Uwe genade, opdat wij onze krachten mogen besteden in Uwe dienst en tot de eer en verheerlijking van Uwe heilige Naam mogen leven. Amen"

“God who loves us, thy name be praised and thanked, that you have fed us with Thy love this gift of food. Also nourish our soul with the bread of life. And strengthen our hearts by Your grace, that we may devote our energies in thy service and to the honor and glory of thy holy name may live. Amen.”

Occasionally Mom read from the Bible. She really was a better reader, tone wise, than Dad. He just did not have a reading voice. And as far as his singing, I am sorry to say, it was really the worst I have ever heard of anyone trying to sing. Sitting next to him in church, (I should not have done so), but I often felt ashamed when I heard him "singing". One thing I am absolutely sure of though, his heart was all in it. My Father was always a very quiet and serious man. He could laugh a little bit sometimes, but I have never heard him tell a joke. The evening prayer for us small children was the one even the oldest of our own children were taught:

*"Ik ga slapen, ik ben zo moe,
Ik sluit mijn beide oogjes toe,
Heere, houdt ook deze nacht,
Over mij getrouw de wacht.
Het kwade dat ik heb gedaan,
Heere, zie dat toch niet aan.
(Of)schoon mijn zonde vele zijn,
Maak om Jezus wil mij rein. Amen."*

Editor's note: The Dutch rhymes and the following translation is not literal but attempts to capture the "sense" of the original:

"Now I lay me down to sleep, I'm so weary,
I close both my eyes to rest,
Lord, keep me safe this night,
As over me You keep faithful watch.
The evil that I have done,
Lord, hold it no longer against me.
Though my sins are many,
Through Jesus make me clean. Amen. "

When I became 13 or so, I asked my mother one day whether she had a prayer for bigger people. This is the prayer she wrote for me on a piece of paper:

"Goedertieren en genadige God en Vader, het is Uw goedheid dat Gij ons in deze dag hebt bewaard en gespaard; bewaar ons ook in deze nacht opdat wij in den

dood niet ontslapen, maar in gezondheid mogen ontwaken. En U vroeg mogen leren zoeken, met dankzegging. Amen".

Translated it reads as follows:

"Gracious and merciful God and Father, it is by Your goodness that this day You have kept and protected us. Protect us also this night so that we shall not pass away in death, but rise in health and well being and early be seeking You with thanksgiving. Amen."

I am sure my parents at times also prayed with other words, pouring out their hearts to God Almighty. Prior to going to bed we have often seen Dad on his knees before a chair and the length of time he spent there was more than the time it took to say the above prayer.

I do not remember for how many years I used the prayer my mother gave me but I do know that the war made me pray differently prior to going to bed than before.

In the "standing prayer" (prior to the Sunday worship service), from the outset I always used my own words. Nearly 50 years later I found out that there also was a memorized prayer which was used for this occasion. I received it from my sister Pietje. The handwriting looks very much like my Mothers! This is how it goes:

"Goedertieren en genadig God en Vader, ik ben door Uw godertierenheid beden weder in Uw buis gekomen. Geef dat Uw dienstknecht niet allen U Woord zuiver mogen voorstellen, maar een iegelijk zijn bescheiden deel geven, betzelve zij van overtuiging als tot troost, en dat en moet wij niet Hoorders maar ook daders van U Woord mogen zijn. Geef dat wij met aandacht en oplettendheid zoude mogen luisteren naar de woorden die Gij ons te zeggen, dat vragen wij niet amdat wij het waardig zijn maar om de verdienste van ti lieve zoons wil allen Heere. Amen."

The above prayer is in very old fashioned Dutch. My guess is that it dates back to the 18th century. Translated it reads as follows:

"Gracious and merciful God and Father, again today by Your mercy I have entered into your house. Grant that not only your servant (i.e. the pastor) shall purely represent Your Word, but also give everyone (i.e. those who hear) his modest share, whether it be of conviction, comfort, or courage, in order to not just be hearers but doers of Your Word. Grant that we shall be listening with the fullest possible attention to the words You shall be speaking to us. We are asking

You this not because we are worthy, rather only through the merits of Your dear Son. Amen."

I am very grateful to my sister who during our correspondence about various things of our past has sent us the above old, old prayer. I can imagine our forefathers standing up in the house of the Lord, praying these words and God answering them for His praise and glory by way of lives that were changed.

Outside of feeding animals and milking cows no work was done on Sundays and not only as far as farmers were concerned but this was the case everywhere, whatever the occupation, trade, or profession might be. As far as the ordinary laborer was concerned, he was happy to have a day of rest. On Saturday he might work 8 hours but otherwise all the other days he would work 10 hours. Even city people would always put in 48 hours per week. Also, a very large portion of the entire labor force worked with their hands. So Sunday indeed was a day of rest for all. During our childhood and years of adolescence Holland was not an urbanized nation. Rural people were all very faithful church people, with the exception of the most northern provinces, North Holland and Groningen. No farmer, for example, would ever hay on Sunday, no matter how much rain there may have fallen during the week and how sunny it was on Sunday. Sunday was the Day of the Lord and that was it.

And now, speaking of haying, this indeed was an "all hands on deck" time. The whole family was engaged to help out, young and old, from morning until evening. When our parents began farming everything was done by hand, all the way from cutting the grass with the scythe to the pitching of the hay on and off the wagon. In fact, during our childhood years it was still often done this way; the only exception being the appearance of the rake. I believe I was about 10 years old when my dad obtained a grass machine. But before that he always hired one or two men who during the summer months did nothing but cut grass by hand. They came around to be hired by the farmers all the way from the province of Brabant. They were extremely good at it, cutting the grass shorter than any machine later on. Sharpening their scythe was done with a special hammer which had an edge on each side that was about a centimeter thick. With it they would gently tap the edge of the scythe until it was as thin as possible. Then they would use their sharpening stone and set out cutting the grass. Every five minutes or so they would use their sharpening tool to keep the scythe as sharp as a razor.

Depending on the amount of sunshine but as soon as possible, my Dad and his helpers would turn over the swaths. The tool we used for this was called "rijf". It consisted of a long handle with a flat wooden bar at the end. Wooden pegs were fastened in this bar sticking out on either side about 4 inches. Then over the bar with pegs were three

rounded bamboo rods. These were fastened on to each side of the wooden bar, then would go through the handle and on into the other side of the wooden bar. These bamboo rods enabled us to hold the hay of the entire swath that the pegs grabbed. It was hard work yet the worker went at it at a good pace. I well remember how as little children we were always nearby to catch whatever was hiding under these swaths that been laying there for several days. There were mice and frogs and at times also small hares. Dogs loved to be around too and they ordinarily caught the mice and hares before we had a chance.

When these swaths had been turned over two or three times, depending on the thickness of the crop, the hay was pitched into small piles to dry further. Two or so days later, these smaller piles were made into big piles of hay to cure further. We had hay forks that had wide, large prongs that were about 15 inches apart. Workers could carry quite a load of hay with these forks. Often they were so heavy that they would first place the other end of the fork on the ground in order to get under it before they could lift it high enough to carry it to the big pile. Later on when the pile became higher, smaller fork loads were in order; for the topping of the pile had to be done very skillfully and carefully.

After leaving the hay in the field for another 2-7 days in these big piles it was time to get the hay wagon and bring it home. These hay wagons could be entirely taken apart after the haying was done. This way it did not require as much storage place. These huge loads of hay required a lot of "give and take", as to balancing, when riding home. I can still bear the various parts of the wagon move and "moan" and "groan" under the heavy load. As little children we would always ask to ride along on top of the hay. This, however, was not always without danger for there was always a lot of swaying from one side to the other.

There was a certain way to hold this large amount of hay on the wagon. This is how it went: the person on the wagon would take hold of the first big fork full that was pitched on there and made an open ended roll out of it. The round part itself was laid on the edge either first on the right or the left, depending on which side the hay was pitched on first. (The round part facing the horse pulling the wagon). Then a large fork full was placed half way on the open end of this roll to hold it in place. This was repeated on the other side. Following this, two or three forks of hay were placed in the middle of each of the outside rolls to hold them from sliding outward. The same was done on the back of the wagon. When that was done the middle was filled in and trampled down. We ordinarily did five of such layers on top of one another. Six would make an extra ordinarily high load. At times, when with a couple of such high loads, we could save an extra trip to the field we did so. But even with fourth layer, the load already began to rock back and forth somewhat.

When we had finished loading, a large round pole would be handed to the person on top who would place this pole on the hay lengthwise. A thick rope would be thrown over the front end of the pole first. There were two wooden pegs there to hold the rope in place. The rope there would be pulled so tight that the pole on the other end would be way up in the air. Then a rope would be thrown over that end also and held in place by wooden pegs. When that was done the pulling began. The man on top would slide down the rope and help in the tightening of the pole. Thereafter the rope was securely fastened and the ride home would begin. At times we would stop half way and tighten the rope some more. We always had to look ahead to make sure there were no deep holes in the wagon ruts, for that could mean a toppling over of the load. When that took place it was a big loss of time. And not only that but all the neighbors around would have it as a topic of their discussion for a few days, for obviously some mistake was made here or there.

Arriving at home the work of piling up in the "hooiberg" began. As long as the layer of hay there was lower than the wagon load it did not require too much effort. The walking back and forth in the loose hay wasn't all that easy. But once the hay had to be pitched higher and higher, additional help was called for. The person pitching the hay off the wagon could only pitch it to a certain level. This meant that a "hoekgat" was to be built there. The square hole there enabled that person to pitch it to the next one up higher. He in turn needed someone there to pile it evenly all around. By the time it reached the very top 4 people, at a minimum, were needed. This always was the time that we little kids and my sisters too were called upon to help. Ordinarily the morning hours when the dew was still on the hay, my Dad and his helpers would either grease the wagon wheels or raise the thickly matted roof over the hay so we could go on piling hay higher and higher.

Add picture

There were 5 long poles that you could compare to today's electrical poles that held up the matted roof. At each side of the pole a large heavy frame fit loosely into these corners. This was to give each corner room to move when the one side was lifted higher than the other. The holes in these poles were about 6 inches apart. We never lifted one of the sides higher than two holes. The raising of the roof was done by way of a pole just as long but not as heavy which was placed on an outfit especially made for this purpose. The pole itself had nailed on its side a long 2x4. In fact, several ones right on top of each other, covering the entire length of the pole. Every 10 inches or so had a carving into which an iron bar hung, that was bent around holding a piece of wood. This piece of wood had the dimensions of 8 x 8 inches on top and 2 x 8 inches on the bottom. The iron bar holding this "klos" as we called it fit right into the carvings of the 2x4s nailed on the side of this pole. With every round we made of raising the roof the bar with the "klos"

needed to be hung one or two carvings higher on the pole. This 8 x 8 piece of wood fit right under the corner where the lifting was to be done. The higher we went the more dangerous it all became. The roof was hardly ever let done entirely. Ordinarily it did not go lower than 10 feet off the ground. By time the hay was piled up 20 feet we always fastened a rope on the long pole. With the block of wood being raised higher and higher it became quite a balancing act.

The high humidity made it necessary to have most of the haying done in the afternoon and early evening. This necessitated, at times, that Dad, Andrew, and my two older sisters keep on haying during milking time. Whenever this was the case, I had to start milking our 29-30 cows at 2:45p.m. and would be finished by 7:15p.m. I just loved the challenge.

Since with a little effort I perhaps could even now make the contraption we used to wind the hay roof higher and higher, I will endeavor to describe it the best I can. We called the thing "Het Heeft". No doubt it is a very old name. The name tells us something about lifting and/or raising. The whole thing was about 8 feet long and six feet wide. The height on the back side was 4 or 5 feet. The front side was open for a person to walk and stand in, for we needed to carry it all the way around the "hooiberg". For this purpose the frame on each side had a wooden bar about two feet off the ground. On the back a 6 x 6 block of wood fit in the frame. Right above it a 5 inch in diameter round pole was also fastened in the frame. On the right it stuck out far enough to have room for 4 wooden spokes to be fastened into it. In the block on the bottom a bit of a rounded out place was made for the tall pole to be held in place. On either side to the far left and right, there was a hole through which a big rope was fastened. A knot in the end held it from coming out. The other end on each side was connected to the 5 inch in diameter pole above and again was held in place with a knot. The turning of the wooden spokes to the right caused the block to be lifted up and this in turn raised the big pole with the "klos" that fit under each of the 5 corners of the roof.

So, after the milking in the morning and breakfast and while the dew was still out in the field this is what we did: winding the roof somewhat higher in order to make room for the hay to be piled up higher. Often we worked right under and even inside of the roof piling hay away, with no fresh air available except what came in on the one side where the hay was pitched in. A lot of sweating took place there. And with the hay seeds falling in our neck all along it could be quite itchy. It was a good thing we had never heard of showering at the end of the day!