

## COLLEGE AND SEMINARY

At noon we were on our way to Holland, Michigan. Dad was aiming to be there before dark. It was a 300-mile trip and it meant that it was going to be a non-stop journey (except service for the water works.) We had lots of food and drink with us for the seven-hour drive. The car was so full that Murray and Jack were sitting on top of the bedding, almost against the ceiling. They must have enjoyed it because “they could see everything!” Dad told us what the “barracks”, College, Seminary, Churches and many other things looked like. When we arrived we found out what these living quarters for students were like; they used to be army barracks from World War 2. There were two small bedrooms. Our bed was in one room and in the other was a double bed and a baby crib. In the small living room there was a couch, armchair and a dresser. In the kitchen there was room for a table and four chairs plus a fridge and cooking stove. All furniture was given by kind people of the First Reformed Church which was hopefully going to be our home church for five years. Only the baby crib we were asked to return when Anne would outgrow it. We also had a small washroom with a shower. I cannot tell you how it felt when I saw our home complete with everything we needed. I was too tired to express myself that evening. We were all more than ready for bed. Dad unloaded the car and made the beds and I took care of our daughter and soon we were all off to dreamland.

The next morning I realized more than ever that this was a brand new experience for all of us; it was a joy to begin this new adventure together again. I was convinced that we had made the right decision. I also knew that a number of years of hard work were ahead of us. For Dad it was the pressure of reaching the best possible grades so that he could go on with his studies. For me it meant going out to work three afternoons a week, plus a Saturday evening with Dad to clean a lumberyard office. It had not been hard to find three families for whom I could do four hours housework; mostly washing floors. During the afternoons I was out Dad would be studying at home since all his courses were in the morning. He would be home for our hot meal at noon. Jack ordinarily took a long nap in the afternoon and Murray was enrolled in kindergarten and when Anne got hungry Dad gave her a bottle. He loved this very much for it gave him an extra chance to cuddle her. Anne and John have seen their father more when they were little than our other children. I left the dishes in the sink and nursed the baby the last half hour I was home. When I came home Dad had eaten a sandwich and was ready to go to the library to

quietly study until about 9:00 pm. This schedule was kept for most of the nine months during the first two years; in the summer months Dad had the opportunity to serve as a Student Pastor.

My working out for 12 hours brought me \$12.00 for groceries. This was to feed the family for the whole week. Every Saturday we bought our supply of food and drink; three pounds of hamburger for \$1.00 was our “rescue” as far as meat was concerned. I cut the three pounds in six parts and froze it in the ice-cream compartment of the refrigerator since we had no freezer. Saturday was our meatless day with fried potatoes and pork and beans plus a salad when I could afford it. Of course, we stayed with basic foods; peanut butter and jam were bought in large containers and bread that was a couple of days old. Whatever kind of fruit was a “quick sale,” was ours when needed. We always had enough to eat. A Deacon of our Church often asked how we were doing and I could honestly say that God was supplying every thing we needed. One day Murray mentioned that he would love to have ketchup or relish; I promised that I would as soon as we could afford it. But when I bought it later, his response was, “is this how it tastes? I don't like it!”

The first Christmas in Holland was very special; our Young Couple's Sunday School class surprised us with a complete Christmas Dinner; a large chicken, potatoes, fresh vegetables, Jell-O, canned fruit and lots of other cans with different foods. It was overwhelming. Also for Murray and Jack a beautiful orange truck was given and for Anne, a doll. It was so amazing how God cared for us. We only asked for what we needed not for what we wanted. But receiving is a learning process; it makes you humble and very thankful. Our Christmas was also special in another way. Dad was home and for a whole week we were all together! The real beauty is of course the celebration of Jesus' birthday and there were many beautiful services in our Church to go to.

After Dad's school year was over our first summer assignment was pastoring a group in Leamington, Ont. It was forty miles east of Windsor. We lived upstairs and had our meals down stairs with the Van der Kwaak family. Our Church Services were held above a big garage and the congregation consisted of recent immigrants. Leamington was a fruit paradise; especially all kinds of melons. I had never tasted such delicious fruit. Dad loved his work, since we were immigrants ourselves. Lots of people came for advice and the three months went very fast. We all enjoyed it. When we returned after our first summer, our home in Holland had been broken down and all our belongings

were put in another barrack. I should mention that these homes all had cardboard walls inside. Often we could hear our neighbors talk in their kitchen. We had only one neighbor (we lived on the end of the row) and they were only home at breakfast and suppertime. Bob was studying at Hope College at the time but not for the ministry. Years later Dad met Bob and his wife in the States and they told him that they listened to our devotions, morning and evening and Dad's prayers and came to know the Lord. Bob Langenberg is a Pastor now.

The next summer we served the same congregation in Leamington again. This time we lived in Rutven, a small village at a corner of a busy highway where all the traffic had to stop. It was a very hot summer and the fumes were unbearable at times. Even at night we had to have our windows closed for the noise and the fumes. Sleep was scarce. Sometimes when the wind was in our favor we would sit outside for a little fresh air. What a blessing! I do have many pleasant memories of the love and care for all of us and the congregation doubled during the two years we served there.

After this second summer we found that our house was gone again. Now Hope College wanted to get rid of all barracks to make room for a new dorm. We knew that this would happen sometime but had no idea when. This time they had rented a big house for us nearby to store our furniture. The address was 180 street and College Avenue. We were thankful to our friends Albert and Michelle Kleis, John and Marge Van Tatenhoven and the two Raak families who looked after it while we were away for our summer charge. (After Dad passed away I received a letter of a widow Raak; she read in the Church Herald about Dad's Home going.) These couples have helped us in many ways. In this house we had two large bedrooms upstairs. One was rented out to two "roomers" and the other was occupied by two students who had room and board with us. They were John Drost and Henk Van Essen who later became Pastors in Ontario. They both paid eleven dollar per week and asked me "to polish their shoes and keep the buttons on their shirts" for 50 cents per week. This way I could stay home all week and that meant a lot to us. I was also baby sitting in our home for a few families in the mornings.

Murray's school was right across the street. He would much sooner have stayed home and would have been one for home schooling. Often I saw him standing alone at recess time. When asked why, he said that all the kids talked about was TV. shows and he did not know anything about them. We felt sorry for him but

he was right; we had no TV. One time he came home very upset because his “teacher was mad at him.” There had been a fire drill that afternoon and all the kids were told to run for the exit. Apparently, he had walked out slowly with his hands in his pockets and the teacher had scolded him for this. Murray had said, “but there was no real fire!” I guess that must have put a smile on her face but for Murray it was no laughing matter. It was hard to get him back to school the next day.

In this large house we had a big cooking stove with an oven which I never had seen before. Having a bigger family this oven was a welcome thing. One afternoon I decided to bake my first cake. I had waited until John Drost was home in case something went wrong. I was told that an applesauce cake was the easiest to make. I knew that the oven had to be pre-heated but I saw that the oven light went off several times. I thought it was not working right so I turned the temperature higher and higher. Then I went to John upstairs telling him that something must be wrong with the oven and he came to investigate and said, “You are the one who is not working it right; just leave the oven at 350 degrees and we'll have cake tonight.” I was teased about this for a long time until he found something new to tease me with. For example, one evening it was my turn to read the devotions, which I did not mind doing before the boarders came. Now I felt nervous and inferior. That day I pronounced the word “cathedral” wrong. It sounded like “kattedrol,” which in Dutch means, “cat poop.” We all laughed for a while but that evening I also learned how to pronounce the word correctly. I could take it all from John because he was like a big brother to me.

By Christmas, 1955 we were sure that our fourth baby was on the way; against the advice and wisdom of the President of our seminary! Not that we asked for his opinion but it was well meant and were very happy with the thought of having another baby. We looked forward to the arrival. In May we heard that the assignment for our summer charge would be Exeter, Ont. This would be a 400-mile drive. The vacant manse was furnished with only beds, tables and chairs so we had to bring bedding, dishes, etc. Dad had bought an old utility trailer and that made our travel more comfortable. It was amazing how much we could take along that way. It was a longer trip but we enjoyed seeing the new scenery. Exeter is not far from Huron Lake. After we had settled in it was soon time to go to Toronto to pick up my sister Cathy, who was going to stay with us until October. The plane was several hours late and the children were

sound asleep on the benches by time she arrived. It was very nice to see her after eight years. It was a wonderful time to hear details from home and she was a great help indeed. With her watching the children and the hospital just a couple blocks away, we were all set to welcome our new baby. On July 25 Dad was ready to visit some people in the evening. He asked, as he did many times the last days, "Are you still okay Mom or do you want me to stay home?" I said, "You can go. I can even walk to the Hospital if need be and Cathy is here to care for the children." Dad looked at me with a look of unbelief this time and put the car back in the garage. It was midnight before we went to the Hospital. It was a long night of much prayer and hard work. At 7:00 am July 26, 1956, our son John was born. All glory and thanksgiving to God who protected us and blessed us with a healthy baby! I could shout for joy just like all mothers when deliverance is completed. Since children were not allowed to visit new babies, Dad walked with them in the afternoon to the hospital "to wave at Mom" through the window. I could not show them the baby as he was not in my room but it was good to see them waving at me. When I came home they were all thrilled with their new baby brother. Johnny was a very content baby from the start.

During that time, Anne developed a language of her own. She called Murray "Tatty" and Jack "Tetty." A pencil was an "eoi" and when Mom was upstairs, she was up "topsy." One day she became very scared of any kind of bug. It took a while before we found out what happened.

An older girl from a seminary student whom I was baby-sitting had been scaring her with bugs while playing in the sandbox. She clung to us day and night. The Doctor I did housework for, on Saturdays, advised me to have Dad play around with bugs while I would hold her at a distance watching it. We found out how necessary it was (busy or not) to pay very close attention to our children even while playing "nicely" with others. Fear can be so real in their lives; actually we learned a lesson ourselves.

All during the five years in Holland, First Reformed Church had been our home Church. Our Pastor, Rev. Raymond Van Heukelom baptized Johnny soon after we came home from Exeter. (Just a few days ago we received a letter from him and his wife in reply to our 1997 Christmas letter we had sent. We were touched by his last sentence that read: "Heaven is not far away, either in our hearts or in time.") Every Wednesday evening we had "family night" in our Church. As a requirement for a course he was taking Dad taught a class for

several winters. It was a large congregation. One of the last Sunday evenings we were there someone asked me if I was new in the church. This can only happen in a church with more than 500 families in attendance.

Dad was loaded down with assignments but as his English improved he could do his work much faster. No more going back and forth from Greek and Hebrew to Dutch and back again to English. It was God's doing that he could study so well in Seminary; his grades went up from C's, to B's. We were so thankful that he could continue his study.

December, 1956 was a difficult month for us. Anne broke her wrist by falling off the couch. The Doctor said her little bones were like toothpicks. Being just 3 years old she needed lots of attention. Soon thereafter I was sick with an infection which resulted in a miscarriage which was a blessing. I did not feel well after John's birth and I was glad that the answer was found. As a result of this, I was very weak for sometime and was not able to care for Murray and Jack when they came down with a bad cold; almost like pneumonia. Dr. Winter told us that they should be hospitalized so I would also have a better chance to recuperate. I do not know if the Doctor would have allowed me to give him a hug but I sure felt like doing so! The last week of the year we were all together again and with Dad home from school it was a special time for our family to regain our strength. Just before Christmas, Dad was scheduled to preach in a Church some where in Michigan. The whole family had been invited to come along; also for a dinner. None of us were able, so Dad went alone. Three days later we received the whole evening's offering of that Church which took care of the Hospital bill of December, almost to the cent!! This was clearly God's care for us (I had been in the Hospital for two days as well). We were speechless at first for such a personal touch of the Lord, which we shall never forget. In all these years God provided for our needs in many different ways.

Summer, 1957 brought us to Guelph, Ont. where we lived for six weeks in the manse of Rev. and Mrs. John Ter Louw who were on a trip overseas. When they returned we moved to the Van Oostveen farm in Paris, Ontario serving the Galt congregation for six weeks as well. We lived upstairs at the Van Oostveen family and had our meals in the large kitchen with the whole family. John, one of their sons, was with Dad in the same class at Seminary. His wife Esther, had become a close friend of mine. She taught school in Holland while I looked after their first child. These weeks were very meaningful and pleasant in the Galt (now Cambridge congregation). The children enjoyed it very much on

the farm and the whole family spoiled Anne to the core. I am sure that our oldest sons remember their adventures on the raft in the mud pond very well. They had me quite concerned, while they had all the fun in the world!

When we returned for the last school year, our two boarders had graduated; we only had one this last winter. His name was Sam Van Der Schaaf who was also preparing for his last school year. It seemed as if the time went faster than ever. Spring arrived before we knew it and with it, Dad's graduation. I was so proud of him and so thankful for the ability God gave him to finish these five years of hard work. How true, as Jesus said, "Without Me you can do nothing". It was a very impressive evening to see all these men receiving their rewards and ready to go to their fields of work with all the responsibilities. When we came home that evening I gave Dad a red rose to show him how proud I was of him. Later that evening I felt as if a heavy load was put on my shoulders as well; now that the new work was before us. I burst out in tears and said to Dad, "What can I do without any education?!" Dad's wise answer was, "Mom, just keep on loving the people like you always have." And you know what?! It has worked by the grace of God.