

Autobiography by Jacob Koenes

I was born on August 2, 1907 at Grootegast (province of Gron). My father was Klaas Koenes; my mother was Gezina Grimmus. My father was a dairy farmer. My parents were sincere Christians. Their parents came from the Reformed Church originally. I had three sisters and one brother. My sisters' names were Jacoba, Aaltje and Geertje; brother's name was Arend.

Our farm was about fifty acres. In those days that was a good sized farm because there were no tractors--horses had to do the work.

On Sundays we went two times to church, morning and afternoon. We always walked because there was no bike riding on Sunday. Except for taking care of the animals, we did not do any work. The potatoes had to be peeled on Saturday, shoes polished the night before. There were many people who walked to church one to three miles, twice a Sunday. The service took at least 1½ to 2 hours. My mother thought that the minister should make it longer yet. The pastoral prayer lasted 15 to 20 minutes. Of course for some people it was hard to stay awake, so in the middle of the sermon we would sing another psalm. Some men stood up for a while to stay alert, but they would not stay away. The elders and deacons would sit in a special pew, near the pulpit, elders on one side, deacons on the other. It was an honor to be an elder or deacon. The minister came for family visiting with an elder during the daytime. There was a sound church life. Catechism and societies were well attended. There was a society for every age. Above twelve years of age you would belong to the Young People's until you were married. The Young People's met every week. The topics were church history and social problems. These were really good educational, interesting meetings for us--good for our future life.

I finished my seven years of school when I was twelve years of age. School in those days was different than today: school five days a week, walking to school, no transportation problems, one summer vacation for about three weeks, and one more week in the Christmas season. We walked in wooden shoes to school. We had regular shoes to go out for evenings and for Sundays. Punishment in the school for the students was mostly writing a certain amount of lines after school hours. The teacher would stay also for about one hour after school hours in special cases. Some teachers would use a wooden stick for punishment. We had all male teachers in school, except in the first grade where there was a lady teacher. Each school room had a great big wood stove approximately in the middle of the room, and about four kerosene lamps hung in each school room. In the year 1920 when I was thirteen years old, the town received electricity, then the kerosene lamps all disappeared.

I want to write a little about our daily living. Our breakfast in the morning was usually at 7 o'clock after the milking of the cows was all done. We ate mostly rye bread with a cup of tea. At 9:30 we all drank coffee. Dinner time at 12 o'clock noon we ate mostly boiled potatoes or kale or cabbage, and soepen brij, sometimes pudding. Supper time at 6 o'clock was mostly fried potatoes. Two warm meals a day with vegetables, always plenty of food.

The Dutch farmers don't work after 6 o'clock in the evening, except in harvest time. Bible devotions were three times daily after each meal. In the evening after 7 o'clock we had our fun, reading a nice book from the school library, and some evenings there were meetings. In the morning at 4 o'clock farmers got out of bed to milk the cows. My two older sisters had to go along every other morning. This was a general rule in the Netherlands at that time. Lots of farmers had a girl for a maid in the house. Those girls had to milk twice a day, plus they did all the housework and washing.

In the year 1914 the first World War broke out. I was by that time seven years old. I remember a lot of men were called to go in the Army; the Germans were crossing the Belgium border. Our neighbor was called also. I can still see his wife crying when he left in the evening. But the Netherlands stayed neutral so we did not go into war, but our land took up a lot of refugees out of France and out of Belgium. A lot of public schools were full of refugees. I remember seeing them lying on straw in the school rooms, with crying babies, poor clothing; they had left everything behind. That big World War lasted four years. The United States entered the war in 1917, that ended the war in 1918. Germany lost that war.

But another enemy entered Europe, called the Spanish Flu. This epidemic took a lot of lives. Almost every family lost some of their dear ones. All our family members got that flu, except my brother and me, we did not have it. Funerals were held every day in our town. The symptoms were high fever combined with pneumonia. My father almost passed away on Sunday, I remember. They all prayed for him in church, and the Lord remembered and heard our prayers. After six months he was restored to health. My father was in his forty's. In those days there was no penicillin or the pills that we have now days. But in time of sickness and adversity, we learn to pray and live closer to our Lord, to whom we owe everything we have.

After I was out of school I started to learn how to smoke, mostly pipe smoking. Sometimes we had a contest in the school with about forty young people. The one who could keep a pipe of tobacco going the longest before the pipe was empty was the winner. The winner then received a new pipe free. Nobody inhaled the smoke; smoking they thought was a wonderful thing. They called a person a "baby" if he did not know how to smoke. The teachers in school all smoked. There was no age limit to start smoking. Later with cigarette smoking you could buy cigarettes at any age.

There was in my school days only one man who had a car and that was the doctor. When that car went past the schoolyard, all the children ran to the road to see that big wonder-thing go.

When I was thirteen years old, I became a member of the brass band. I learned how to play the little drum. Two years later I played the first tuba. For many years this band went to many contests of bands. Up until now, most towns in the Netherlands had mostly two brass bands. The band gave concerts in the church on special evenings. We could draw a lot of people in those evenings. There was no radio yet in that time.

Each town also had a big windmill to get the feed, and bread flour ground up. Those mills were all driven by wind until the electricity came. Then lots of mills changed over to electric motors.

The only transportation was by train, or by boat through the rivers, or on the bike. The roads did not have black top; they were all gravel. Many flat tires happened on these stony roads. Everybody stayed mostly in his own town during the week. People took the train to go to the big city. Most people would see the big city maybe one time in two years. But a farmer had more opportunities than a common man. Farmers had horses and horse and buggy were in style. If a farmer went out with a nice buggy with two nice black horses in front, then he was really a big man, somebody you could look up to.

When time went on when I was 15-16 years old, we started to look for a girlfriend. We were young people, and in the evenings we walked together to the town; we had lots of fun together. When a boy became about 17 or 18 years old, he could take girlfriends out. Parents would let their son go on Sunday evenings after church on the bike to look his girlfriend up.

When a boy had a date he would come to the girl's home around 8 o'clock on Sunday evening. She would invite the boy to come in and show him to her parents and he made the first conversation with her parents. The parents would ask you a lot of questions, you would drink coffee, smoke mostly a big cigar. Cigars were plentiful on the table for a smoker. About 10 o'clock you could go with the girl outside. After a while when the parents went to bed, you could come back into the house with the girl and stay with her for a couple of hours. If you wanted to come back to see the girl, that was a question between both parties. On the other hand, the parents would ask the girl a lot of questions about the boy, where he came from, how big a farm they had, and if that farmer was well-to-do, specially if he would have lots of money. Farmers married farmer's daughters. A common man could not marry a farmer's daughter, that was far below a farmer's dignity. Money would marry someone with money. Farmers were people with possessions (cattle, land) whereas other people were mostly poor, except people with a knowledge of a trade like carpenters, storekeepers or blacksmiths. Parents in the old days had a lot to say about whom their daughters married and they had to be good Christian Reformed people, otherwise they did not fit in.

I was sixteen years old when modern transportation, regular buses, came in existence, so people started to go more often to the big cities for shopping. Modernization started in farming too. We got our first mower machine, pulled with two horses.

When I was eighteen years old, I had a steady girlfriend in town. But we broke up again.

In that time some young people in the Netherlands started immigrating to Canada and to the U.S.A. I was always very interested in going to the U.S.A. I always liked to read books about America, and thought that someday I maybe would see the U.S.A. One of the reasons was I had a older brother, and my father always talked everything over with my brother concerning the farm, so a lot of times I felt left out. I am sure that my father did not do that on purpose to me, but I felt it that way. So I started to think about immigrating to the United States. A man would come on a waiting list and had to wait about two years before he could enter the U.S.A. So I put my name on the list. But three young men whom I knew were going to Canada. I got in contact with those men and I decided also to go to Canada the next spring. If you were a farmer you did not have to wait to go to Canada. My parents tried to talk me out of it, but to no avail. Mother made ready two big suitcases with clothing. But my mother was very much worried. I loved my mother very much. She always talked to me about the Lord. She always talked to me about a lot of things when I came home in the evenings. She never slept till I got safely home. My father was a different man. He always told us in the morning at 4 o'clock milking time to be sure to be home. But to make it short, the four of us boys together left the Netherlands on March 28 in the year of 1925. It was very hard to say goodbye to my dear father and mother. We left in the evening in a small boat, about 1000 tonnage, from Hoek of Holland. We crossed the North Sea.

The next morning we entered the Thames River, near London, England. From the boat they transported us with horse and buggy, a beautiful outfit, to a train station in London. From there we had to cross England to the city of Liverpool, a train ride of about four hours. England is a beautiful land to see--all nice rolling land, up and down, different from the Netherlands where everything is flat.

The next day we took the big ocean steamer, The Mountclair, 18000 tons big. There were three different classes on board--1st, 2nd and 3rd class. We were traveling second class or otherwise called cabin class. That was high class-- nice rooms, a wonderful dining room. Behind every table of four there was a waiter, always eating time. There was a band playing. A different world for us.

What a change for a country lad like me coming at once into the modern world. The saddest thing had to come yet. When dinner time came, we had our devotions. We were the only ones who prayed, the rest started to eat with no devotions. That hit me terribly hard. I was brought up in a Christian home and Christian school. I saw for the first time how poor the world is without the Lord.

We could not read the menu; not one of us could speak English. The food was very good.

We stopped with the boat in Scotland, at Belfast, Ireland, and then at Le Havre in France. We then crossed the Atlantic Ocean. We arrived first in Montreal, down the St. Lawrence River, by train to Toronto, Ontario.

We were then brought to a Farmers Office and from there all four of us were, by train, brought to a little place named Minnesing further north. I landed by an English farmer named Richardson. All of us boys were employed by farmers in the same town. The next morning I started to work with a team of horses and a disc. I also had to milk a couple of cows by hand. The farmer, who was a good man, drove a model T car. We did not work on Sundays. The farmers did have telephones already, so we contacted one another by the telephone. We met together on Sunday in the field by a creek I remember. The water in the creek was so clear that we could drink right out of the creek. We could not speak English so there was no church to begin with. But after all, I began to become homesick. Never before I had been away from home. So on one evening, lying in the field, I really was crying and desperate. All of a sudden there stood the Lord and He said to me, "Jake, what are you crying about? I am with you here in all circumstances. I am the same God who is by your father and mother and I will take care of you here." And I said, "O, Lord, my God, how could I forget You." How rich I became in that hour. In my whole life I will never forget that moment, and I said, "Stay with me, Lord," and from then on, I had great peace of mind. So there in the field in Canada, I found and met my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the richest gift on earth which can not be bought with money. What a wonderful time and wonderful day I had. I was fully satisfied. Take the world—give me Jesus.

One of the four boys, whose name was Henry Visser, became so terribly homesick that he did not eat any more and became skinny. So we all decided to move away to another place further south. We took the train again and we landed in Chatham, Ontario. In the evening we found an empty house on a street. We went in that empty house, put our heads on our suitcases, lying on the floor, we had a good night's sleep. The next morning we saw a lady next door, and she was a Dutch lady. We got some good information from her. When we went to the sugar beet factory, they gave us a job thinning out rows of sugar beets in the field for farmers who raised sugar beets. The factory gave us pots and pans free, and we landed in a old shack in the field. We slept on straw. In the morning we baked pancakes. We worked very hard and were paid a certain amount of money by the acre. In the evening we went swimming in the Thames River.

Sunday was our great day. They gave us a ride to Chatham on Sunday where we had our Christian Reformed Church meeting. Every Sunday a minister from the States came to preach. At noon the church ladies made a meal for us and we ate there. After the second service in the afternoon, we went back to the old shack to work the next day again. The church was not organized at that time. We had our gatherings in the basement of a Presbyterian Church.

In the summer I started to help build a new tobacco factory. It was mostly cement work, mixed cement with a shovel for 35 cents a hour I remember. It

became awful hot in the summer. Some times I worked thirteen hours a day. I paid seven dollars for room and board a week. I boarded by a family named Wierenga at that time. We worked six days a week--a five-day work week was not in existance yet.

I met several more immigrants that summer. I had a close friend, his name was Cor Wagenaar, and he was Fries. Last year I found out he still lives in Chatham. So after 53 years I talked once more to my old friend again. I also met in 1925 in Chatham, Christian Vanden Heuval, who became in later years a Christian Reformed minister in Grand Rapids. At that time he was nineteen years old and worked on the farm. Later I had room and board by a family named Roelof Maathuis. Every Sunday we had a minister preaching for us from U.S.A. I always had to share my bed with a minister. I did not like that too well. Later in the summer I made public profession of faith and became a communicant member of the Christian Reformed Church. Also a girl named Binnie Horlings made confession the same day. In the year 1965 I met her again in Grand Rapids. Mr. Horlings owned a farm by Blenheim, Ontario. We helped him in the fall to get his sugar beets out of the ground.

We also had a choir at church, and we had to come far out of the country to attend. Sometimes we got stuck with the car in the clay roads in Canada. We had a good time that summer.

Every two weeks I wrote a letter to my parents in the Netherlands, and they also wrote me back every two weeks.

When the winter started I helped another Dutch farmer for a while, his name was Jake Hoekstra. I transported sugar beets for him with a team of horses. I loaded them in railroad cars. When it became colder Mrs. Hoekstra and her oldest daughter started working in the tobacco factory in Chatham. So we did our own cooking on the farm. Mr. Hoekstra had an old organ on the farm also, and in the evenings I began to learn how to play the organ.

After New Year's, 1926, there was no work anymore, any place. So I started to work for a farmer in Blenheim for twenty dollars a month with room and board--a real good place. I had a nice room upstairs for myself. I was also reading out of my little Bible every evening of course. A lot of other young boys went to work in lumber camps during the winter months. But lumber camps were not the best. Those camps were dirty. Sometimes people had lice on them. But I had it real nice by that farmer.

On Sundays I had to take the Greyhound bus to church in Chatham. Sunday was still the great day. We enjoyed the service on Sundays, and we met again as immigrants. I really was still yet a stranger in Canada. So in early spring, 1926 on a Sunday morning, the road was all ice and freezing. The bus did not go--this made me very downhearted. I went to my bedroom and I talked to the Lord about my problems, and I came to the solution--to go back to the Netherlands. I had plenty money saved up. So I started packing, bought a ticket, and took the train to St. John, New Brunswick. I boarded the steamship, The Mount Calm, 18000 ton, stopped at France, Ireland, and landed at Liverpool again. This was in early spring, 1926. From Liverpool -- back to London, and again crossed the Northern Sea to Rotterdam.

I came into Rotterdam on a Sunday morning. When we came close to Rotterdam through the big canal, I could see from the boat that people, on their bikes, were going to church, all nicely dressed up. I could see that it felt good to me to return to the Netherlands. I took the train from Rotterdam to Groningen, to the northern part of the Netherlands. In the afternoon I stopped on the bike by my brother who was busy writing me a letter. He was surprised to see me home again. I did not inform my parents that I was coming home, and they

sure were happy to see me back home. When people left to Canada in those days, most of them you never saw back again because the cost of travel was too high. But I learned to save my money, and therefore for me to travel was no great problem. That summer in the year 1926, I helped my brother in the dairy business. My dad rented out his farm, having taken an early retirement--he was only 53 years old. I still had a few old girlfriends in the Netherlands so I looked them up.

They notified me from the American Consul of Rotterdam that if I wanted to go to the United States, they would give me the opportunity to enter. So I decided to go back this time to the United States. In early spring 1927 I took a boat from the Holland-American line, The Veendam, and I arrived at South Holland, Illinois in April, 1927. We had some friends living there.

Then I hired myself out to a truck farmer in Munster, Indiana, for the summer season. The farm was located at the corner of Calumet Avenue, near the red light. Mr. Duurt Vander Wall, the farmer, came originally from the same town where I came from, the town of Grootegast. The Vander Wall farm was well known to be a place with plenty of work, and it hardly ever got done by evening. But I did not mind the hard work. I learned more about raising vegetables, all kinds, because I was interested in doing this. I remember I got up at 5 o'clock in the morning. I milked two cows, cleaned the horses, fed them and put the harnesses on the horses.

Mr. Vander Wall, who was about sixty years old, called me about 6:30 to see if I could get the boys out of bed. I called the oldest one in the house first. His name was Sam (Sake), a real nice man. Sam always got right up. But Reinder was a different story. Reinder had a new little car. I think it was an Erskin car. He never came home early and it was terrible to get him out of bed. Not until Mr. Vander Wall himself get really mad would he then come out. After breakfast we all went to the field planting set onions, green onions. In the summer time Sam (mostly) went to the Randolph Street Market with a truckload of stuff. Reinder peddled a load to all kinds of stores in Chicago.

The minister's name from our church was Rev. Monksma. Vander Wall's son, Sam, later married Frida Klooster. Sam had later two sons in the ministry--one is Douglas Vander Wall, minister at Shawnee Park C.R.C. in Grand Rapids. When I worked for Vander Wall, there was another worker with us who Vander Wall's son-in-law, a very nice man named Henk Klooster. In the year 1973 Henk Klooster stood in front of our market stall at Fulton Street Market. I saw right away and knew it was him, and I talked to him. With him was his son, Fred Klooster, professor at the Calvin College Seminary. So after all those years I could meet Henk Klooster again--I think it was wonderful.

In Munster, Indiana, I had a friend named Pieter Vermuelen, who had a new car. We went out together some evenings, especially Sunday evenings. Not too far from the farm was a gravel pit where we went swimming sometimes. On a very warm summer evening there was an accident. Eddy Ooms, a nice boy, showed me his new bathing suit that he had on, and a moment later Eddy was gone. He drowned in that gravel pit. I was the last one on earth whom he talked to--this hit me hard. I thought to myself, how come the Lord takes this nice boy away? It could just as well have been me. It was a reminder to me again that we should really be ready to all times to meet our Lord. The Lord must have had more plans for me yet.

Summer was passing fast. I remember yet that we had a terrible thunderstorm at night. I laid in bed upstairs, and I heard the fire whistle blow close to us, and I heard the fire whistle from Lansing. But I was very tired and did not get up. The next morning Mrs. Vander Wall bawled me out very much because in that terrible weather I stayed in bed. Was she ever mad at me!

She was otherwise such a nice lady. She was a Kuipers; I knew her brothers in the Netherlands. She sure took care of me good when I worked for the Vander Walls. Another time she was mad at me was in the tomato picking time. All clean clothing on in the morning, I came back from the field with dirty clothing from throwing rotting tomatoes. I could understand her very well. Young boys are sometimes hard to handle. Sometimes in the summertime Mrs. Vander Wall brought us some good wine which she made herself. I still have a lot of nice memories of the Vander Wall family.

There was a daughter named Sadie who had a little girl about three years old, a nice little girl. Sadie's husband past away after they were married. He was in the First World War and had some poison gasses in him that he got in chemical warfare, so she was a widow. But I met her future husband over there many times. His name was Fred Van Oyen, a tall man with black hair I remember. This lady was a very hard worker. She did all the washing and a lot of baking in the busy household. There was always plenty of food.

And there also was Lambert, I remember. He had a bread route. We always fed the cows day-old bread and sweet rolls. Lambert was married also, and another older son's name was Piet.

I remember in the fall of that summer I still did not like it too well in America. I was a restless person. Duurt Vander Wall made me a good offer to stay. He said to me, "I will have a garage for you. You can have a car here. You can work for Sam." He always bought calves and also was a fertilizer dealer, so I always would have some work. But I bought another ticket to go back to the Netherlands. I was not planning to work those long days till late in the evening every summer to make myself a living. I took the Greyhound line bus from Chicago to New York. I found the Holland Seamans Home at 3 o'clock in the morning. They let me in, and I started to sleep in a chair. When daytime arrived I looked up a friend of mine in Hoboken, New Jersey, who was a baker there. He said to me, "Why not stay here? I can got you a job in the bakery." So I changed my mind. I did not go back but I stayed at Hoboken, just across the Hudson River from New York.

In the Holland Seamans Home I met Mr. Marius Broekhuizen who was at that time the director of the Holland Seamans Home. Mr. and Mrs. Broekhuizen are now members of the Cascade Christian Reformed Church. So after many years we met again, but now at Cascade.

I went to New York and got my money back for the ticket I had bought to go back to the Netherlands. My relatives in the Netherlands were not informed that I was coming home. First, I took a dishwashers job in New York City, then a bus boy job. Soon I started to work in a bakery, Cooke Bakery. This only went up to Christmas, then I started to work in a Danish Pastry Shop. I learned to roll out dough in the bakery, learned to bake donuts, and lots of things. I worked six days a week, ten hours a day. I earned \$25.00 a week in the year 1928-1929 that was good money. I rented a furnished room for three dollars a week, and ate out.

We also had our Christian Reformed Church in Hoboken, on Hudson Street. Our church was a good sized regular house. The second floor had a great big room which we used for an auditorium. Later I and a friend of mine, whose name was Meindert Beinema, did the janitor work for the church. We lived upstairs above the church. I did all the cooking and also our shopping. We did that for about a year. Later I became a sponge-cake baker in New York City. I worked in a big place, starting at 4 o'clock in the morning till one o'clock in the afternoon with Sundays off. This place was located at 76th Street and 6th Avenue in New York. I had to cross the Hudson River two times a day. I could go on the Hudson Tube, a train underground, to New York, or take the

ferryboat. The cost was five cents each time or a ticket for ten rides which cost thirty cents.

In the afternoons I went to Coney Island and went swimming and received a very bad sunburn. Sometimes I helped out in the Holland Seamans Home. When a lot of immigrants came in by boat from the Netherlands I brought them to different train stations in New York. Those people could not speak English.

I was always very strict in going to church. We had our devotions by the table when we ate. But Friday evenings, I and my friend went to New York mostly, to Broadway, going to the big theatres--nice organs, nice shows, wonderful orchestras. We knew very well what was going on in the great big world. New York was the top in those years as far as entertainment was concerned. Sometimes we thought it was really not for Christian Reformed people to go to those worldly places. It is really sad to confess that the love for our Lord was going down. I started backsliding in my spiritual life in the year 1929. The minister who baptized me, Rev. Elzinga from the Netherlands, visited the U.S.A., and he stayed one week by me. I showed him all the most important things in New York City. That was a wonderful experience for me. He was also the minister who taught me so much in Catechism. I also saw the big grey Zeppelin coming in from Germany in 1929. It was a real big balloon airship which crossed for the first time the Atlantic Ocean. That was the first time that people from Europe came to America through the air.

I planned to make a trip to the Netherlands, so in the month of April I left New York. At this time the "great depression" had started already in the U.S.A. But they promised me that my job would be waiting for me when I came back. I arrived in Rotterdam in the first part of May. It was another surprise for my parents because I did not notify them that I was coming over. It was all happiness, and they told me that now I had to stay home in the Netherlands. I helped my brother during haying time again. My parents did everything to make me happy at home. I looked up an old girlfriend who lived in Friesland. Most of my old girlfriends were married already. The one on Friesland was very fond of me. She tried everything to convince me to marry her, but I was not planning to go that far with her. In the month of August I started to think about going back to America.

But I think the Lord had a different plan for me. On the 31st of August, 1930, there was a great picnic festival in a town of Leek in the province of Groningen. I saw a row of girls walking and one of those girls was Sally. I took Sally home that evening. She also was riding a bike. She lived at Siegerswoude (Friesland). She made a terrific impact on me. She was nice looking, friendly, and I noticed that she liked me. I was 23 years old and she was not even 19 years old. When my parents found out that I had a steady girlfriend, they were very happy. They thought that this was a good way to keep this man in the Netherlands instead of going back to the United States. My dad said to me, "If you stay here, I will go back in the dairy business, and you can help me." And so it went--America was all over.

Sally was always happy to see me every Sunday evening. We were going steady. Sally's family lived ten miles away from us, about one hour on the bike. But it sure was worth it I thought. Sally was the third girl from a family of eleven children. Her dad kept the family in good order; he was very strict I think. But her father always liked me. He was a tremendous talker. I came usually around 8 o'clock in the evening and talked to her parents till 10 o'clock, smoking a big cigar. Cigars were plentiful on the table. Parents went to bed about 10 o'clock. I stayed with Sally till around 12 o'clock, so I got home at 1 o'clock. At 4 o'clock in the morning it was time for milking the cows again. Lots of boys stayed with the girls until 2 o'clock on Sunday nights,



but I like to have a little sleep also. William Smeda, who now lives in Hudsonville, had also a girlfriend nearby where I was, and he stopped by usually around 11:30 so we had company together. By the time I had met Sally I was calm. I had come through much of life experiences already. But thanks to the Lord, the Lord was not done with me. The Lord brought me back on my knees after a long time—this took some months. Finally, He gave me peace of mind again. I learned again that when we have the Lord we have Everything—without the Lord, there is only darkness. I experience again all the blessings we had, and I could see also, that the great world, even New York City, gives us no peace for our souls. The world promises much but gives only bitterness. I had to learn that again the hard way. The people in Friesland who were content had it much better than the people who live in a restless city like New York.

Sally and I had a happy time together. I was farming for my dad. I became a member of the Brass band again. I played the first tuba again. I became the president of the large choir, 80 voices. I was very busy with the band, going to several musical contests. In the year 1932 my future father-in-law rented a different farm and asked us if we wanted to rent his farm. So we made our plans to get married and were going to live in Friesland the following spring. In February, 1933, I worked on that farm already, and on May 4, 1933 I and Sally were married. We got married in the afternoon and in the evening we had a great party for a lot of people. Also the Brass band of Grootegast came over in a large bus and gave a concert. The next morning Sally and I were milking cows together in the field, or course milking by hand. That was a different honeymoon than people have today. But we were happy to be together. We started farming in the middle of the depression years with one hired man. It was very hard to make ends meet.

In the month of March, 1934, our oldest son was born and was named Klaas Koenes after my father. So we had a complete family already. In the summer of 1935 on a Sunday morning while I was in church, the whole farm burnt down. The cause was an electrical short. The cows were outdoors in the pasture. All the machinery burned, all the wagons, everything. We lived in a mobile home until the farm was rebuilt.

In the year 1936 on June 5 the Lord gave us a daughter named Ynske after Sally's mother. Sally had much work with all the washing. She hired a girl to help her with some housework. By the year 1937 the depression years came to an end. The prices we e getting better for the milk.

Adolf Hitler started to come in power in Germany. In 1938 Hitler started making war in Eastern Europe. He always promised peace with the Netherlands. On September one, 1939 our son, Mike, was born. That same day we had to go with the horses to a show where they took the horses for the Dutch army. By that time we had two hired men working for us. Clarence was going to school already.

So we entered the year 1940, the year when the terrible great Second World War came upon us. May 1, 1940, I woke up in the night and heard now and then some war planes, and by daybreak I saw German war planes flying over our house. We turned on our radio and heard that the Germans had crossed the Dutch borders. There were war actions going on, even in Rotterdam, with paratroopers. That same morning I ran into about fifty German soldiers on the road, all sitting on horses. They did me no harm. A lot of German soldiers lost their lives in the Netherlands. Germans who were killed in action were loaded in army trucks. Just like building a brick wall, they piled them one on top each other and shipped them back to Germany where the bodies were burned. The fighting lasted five days in the Netherlands. Then they bombed the city of Rotterdam, and in that way they brought the Dutch to their knees. So from now on we had to obey the German government. All the warehouses in the Netherlands were full of food.

A lot of it was shipped in from Indonesia. But they shipped all that food to Germany by ship and rail. There still was no food shortage the first three years of the war. The Germans were also real nice to the Dutch people because the Germans thought that we would cooperate with them. But it did not work out that way. The Dutch people obeyed the Dutch government and the Queen who resided in England at this time. A lot of Dutch people were forced to work in Germany behind the frontlines. The Germans were fighting two wars--one war with weapons; and second, the food war.

We were farmers and farmers did not have to go to Germany. Farmers had to raise the food for the army. Later they held what they called "rassias." The German soliers would block off certain parts of the town and then inspected the private homes for people to be shipped to Germany to work in the bombed cities. A lot of those people did not want to work for the enemy, and they began to hide. They were called "underground people." A lot of them hid on farms. We always had some underground people. Sometimes we were with eleven people around the table. Those underground people slept under hay stacks in a hole dug in the ground with some airpipes running underneath, or in potato pits outside in the field. Sometimes the Germans came at night to inspect the houses to find these people. Many farmers were put in concentration camps that way or were shot to death on their farms. I had to sleep lots of times away from home outdoors on the neighbor's straw stack. We also had a hiding place in the attic of the house and a hiding place in one of the closets. But the Lord saved me from being taken by the Germans, but Sally was alone many nights with the children in the house. We prayed together on those nights that the Lord would save our lives again. A lot of terror was going on. A little ways away from us they took thirteen farmers, including a boy thirteen years old with his father, for doing nothing and shot them all to death. People we knew to be very good citizens were shot to death sitting around the table eating, or the husband was shot in the midst of the family.

A lot of people who worked in Germany never came back. The Germans knew that we had underground organizations; they did not have any mercy. If we killed one German, which had to be done sometimes, they would take 40 or 50 innocent people, kill them, and they would lay them next to the sidewalk so that everybody could see it. This stopped the killing of German soldiers. We also were not suppose to have a radio. We hid a radio in the middle of a bale of straw so that we could hear the news from England concerning the war. One time there came an American bomber down in a field close to us. I went over there to see and I saw four American soldiers lying in the cockpit without arms and legs, and heads off. I saw in a cap a man's hair and brains. I went home and told Sally no dinner for me today. I was thinking about the families in America who had their sons and husbands lying in that field there.

In the year 1942 the Germans bombed England's cities in a terrible way. Those bombers traveled above our heads in the night, but in 1943, the picture changed. The bombers came from England to bomb Germany. Every night bombers, up to a thousand, sometimes three thousand, went over our house to bomb Germany. The windows would rattle. It always took about two hours for the bombers to come back unloaded. It sounded sometimes like music in our ears when the bombers came over us because we wanted to be liberated at any price. We also saw a few bombers get hit by German jet planes. In no time they were a big ball of fire and slammed to the ground. War is an awful thing--you have to live through it to know how terrible a war is.

I want to write a few lines about the Jewish people. In the year 1941, every Jew had to wear a star of David on his breast so that everybody could see

that he or she was Jewish. The next step was to close all the businesses of the Jewish people and boarded the windows up. They took the furniture from the Jews, loaded it in ships to Germany and put a sign outside on the ships with the words, "Gifts for the German people from the people of the Netherlands." The next step for the Jews, who could keep their valuable things in a suitcase, was to put them in concentration camps. When the Jews arrived in the camp, the Germans took the suitcases away from them. So the Germans had everything and the Jews were poor.

My father-in-law lived on a farm in the province of Drente, close to a Jewish concentration camp. My brother-in-law, Sietse Spriensma, who lives now in Coopersville, picked up the potato peelings which were fed to the dairy cattle. So he came now and then in the Jewish camp. The name of the town where the camp was located was called Westerbork. From there the Jews were later shipped in cattle freight cars by rail to Poland--to the gas chambers. When the Jews arrived in Poland the Germans loaded these people in dumptrucks. That was the way they were dumped into the gas chambers. We can see, through this, that when Satan has taken over the heart of man he can become like a beast. Those innocent people had not done anything to the Nazis (to Hitler).

The winter of 1944-1945 was a very severe winter. The Germans were especially after the underground people. They also found out that in the night sometimes American war planes would drop weapons in secret parts of the Netherlands. Those weapons could, in due time, be used for the underground people who were trained by military advisors as to how to use and handle the weapons. The people who were caught doing this had no pardon any more. The punishment was absolute--to be shot. First they took these people and tried to get more information from them about those activities. One man, whose name was Pannekoek, was thought by the Germans to know more about underground organizations. So they pulled all his nails from his fingers first, then they hung the man by his hair. All kinds of punishment were used to force the man to talk so that he would tell them more names of people who were involved. Another way of making people to talk was to give a person nothing to eat and drink for some time, and then put food and drink in front of him and then say to him, "You may eat and drink but first you have to give us information."

The Three Northern provinces of Netherlands had many farms. So the people in those provinces always found something to eat. Each person also received some kind of coupons and with these coupons you could get a certain kind of food, but to live a normal life you needed more food than the coupons would supply. But the farmers all worked along well. But the middle part and in the big cities of Netherlands the people were almost starving. Lots of people who were not too healthy died. Another problem in the winter was to keep the house warm. On the farms people had some wood to burn. We burned peat moss which we had in our land. But people in the cities were cutting trees down at night just to get a little heat in the house. So that last year, 1944, there was much suffering going on.

My brother-in-law, Reinder Spriensma, also a dairy farmer in Friesland, hid a Jewish doctor and his wife for a long time. These Jewish people asked my brother-in-law if they could take a little walk on a nice evening. They did so and in doing that somebody gave information to the German headquarters. So the Germans came with a truck full of soldiers, also with a police dog. They found the Jews. The Germans took them and also took Reinder along. The next day my father-in-law and I had permission to see him in jail in Groningen. This was the last time that we would see Reinder on this earth. The Germans shipped Reinder to a concentration camp in Germany. The name of the camp was Oranienburg, a well-known camp. We were later notified through the Red Cross

that Reinder died in January of 1945. Reinder gave his life for helping another person and died for the cause of freedom. But we all know that the Lord gave him a better place, a place the Lord promised Reinder.

A long time before this happened, in the month of May, 1945, another prisoner with Reinder in the camp gave us some more details concerning how things went on in the concentration camp. There also was a concentration camp in the Netherlands which also had a very bad name. The name of this camp was Vugt. We had a hired man who was in that camp for six months. I asked him how they treated him there and he told me that I had to promise him to tell nobody anything, then he would tell me something. He said that when he entered the camp he had to put his right hand finger on the ground and go around and around until he became dizzy or fainting. Then he was slapped or hit, and then start all over again till he became unconscious. This meant for him that he was now prisoner and this is the beginning of your punishment. Sometimes he told me that they were slapping a prisoner so long that he died, and all other prisoners had to witness that. Their food or menu was only one scoop of cabbage soup a day. He said that if they could get a hold of a little grass and chopped it up with a razor blade, then they were happy to have that. Some of the prisoners were helping farmers to dig up potatoes. If they only could get hold of one raw potato, then they were very happy, he said. Sometimes they were so thirsty that their tongue was twice as big in the mouth than normal he told me. People don't know how precious water becomes when you are in a concentration camp.

In the spring of the year 1945, the underground people wanted me to hide a big amount of weapons under the straw in the barn. I told them no because I knew if they found the weapons they would kill also Sally and the children. Two days later they found the same weapons by another farmer, and the Germans killed the whole family. The hunger became terrible in the large cities of the Netherlands in the last winter of the war, 1944-1945. It was a very cold winter with much snow also. So many people died in Amsterdam and in other big cities. The ground was all frozen hard in winter so that they piled and stacked the dead bodies up in warehouses and in some churches. Some older people became too weak to get out of bed. The worship services in the church were very well attended in that time. You could notice that in hard times people started calling and praying to the Lord. We all needed the Lord in those days. When prosperity comes back we will forget the Lord so easily.

Sietse Spriensma, who now lives in Coopersville, was also underground and hid on our farm. He slept every night outdoors in the potato pit.

In the month of April, 1945, the Canadian Army liberated the northern part of the Netherlands. A few days before that, we were notified that the next day we would have 80 German soldiers on our farm for some time. So the next morning early the Germans came, most of them on the bike. The commander took the front room for himself right away. They put automatic guns on the table, and machine guns were brought in action ready to shoot out of the upstairs windows. The rest of the soldiers found places to sleep in the straw, some slept next to the cows to keep warm. When we milked the cows they all had to have milk to drink. Some soldiers were on patrol day and night. Now and then, American war planes came over, then they stayed inside. They did not like the American planes. In the evening they all started to drink Vodka and other strong drink. Eight o'clock was always curfew time. Nobody was suppose to come outside after that time. If you would come outside, they would shoot to kill. So I asked around 9 o'clock the commander if Sally and the three children could go to a neighbor's farm to stay overnight because there was a possibility for military action during the night. The commander said to me,

"Are you a Nazi?" I said, "No." Then he replied, "Then you better die with us if it comes to action." The Canadians were not far away from us any more. That same evening the Germans wanted hot water several times. The next morning when they were all gone, we found out that they killed and cleaned our 25 chickens with that hot water and ate them. By daylight the next morning they had left, and the windows in the barn were still full of hand grenades and shells which were laying all over the place. We threw the whole works in a water pond nearby. Two days later the Canadians came, all with more modern weaponry. It was nice to see that. The Canadians told us by radio not to attack any German soldiers, but they they would clean the Germans up.

We saw Germans walking through the fields. In the nearest town called Ureterp the Canadians put some prisoners in a big barn guarded by underground people. But in the night a big wagon full of German soldiers came through the town. So the underground people started shooting at those German soldiers, but those soldiers know how to fight. Soon they killed a few Dutchmen. One Dutchman went fast per motor bike to the Canadian headquarters. The Canadians were coming when I heard about it. I went to the town and I saw some houses were damaged. On the side of the road I saw small piles covered with a canvas. I lifted a canvas up and I saw some dead German soldiers. I saw the holes in their heads. I thought to myself that is war again--innocent people get killed in the war always. One boy in that town who hid in the field faraway was spotted by the soldiers and machine gun fire also killed this innocent child. That is war.

The following week all kinds of festivities were going on all over the land to celebrate the liberation of the country, parties and music all over. The great Second World War was all over now, and our lives were spared. May 5 became the special day in the Netherlands as remembrance day, every year. Instead of German soldiers, we got some Canadian soldiers in our house. I still could speak some English after fifteen years in the Netherlands. I told the Canadians that when they threw atomic bombs on Japan, they should have thrown atomic bombs also on Moscow. But they joked about that. They said that Russia can do nothing, the U.S.A. had to ship food to Russia and gave them weapons to win the war in Germany. I told them that we will see in ten years from now. The Canadians and the Americans were short-sighted I think. We can see today how strong militarily Russia is today. Lots of food and clothing were shipped in to the Netherlands, and later the Marshal Plan came from America. The United States shipped a lot of their surplus to Europe, and the European countries could use that very much because there was a shortage of almost everything. When the Canadians left the Netherlands, it was amazing to see all the supplies and weapons they had. There came almost no end to see all that--that gives a person a little understanding and idea of what a modern army all needs.

We captured a lot of Dutch war criminals called Nazis, people who killed a lot of Dutch people, and also gave the Germans important information always. They put those war criminals in special camps. The treatment was way too good for them in these camps, they should have put them in regular concentration camps--that's what they really deserved. Farmers who had some extra work could pick up some of those prisoners to work for them. We also had some of those criminals for two days, to weed out potato fields. There were special armed guards with them. At noon time they came to the farm where we furnished them with green pea soup. One of those criminals was a commander in the wartime in Grootegast, my birth place, and he murdered several people in that place. When he was lying in our potato field, he asked me for a little tobacco so he could have something to chew on. I got a little fun out of that, the big

commander was now pulling out weeds in a potato field for a farmer. Things were turned around a little by then. A lot of people in the Netherlands were very much disgusted by the way they treated the war criminals, because all those criminals were free again in about three years. The people felt that the criminals should have paid with their lives because that is what they did to our innocent people. Later this was one of the big reasons a lot of the Dutch people started to immigrate to other countries, especially those people who fought so hard with risk of their own lives behind the front lines, just to see the enemy go free.

After all this we were still dairy farming in Friesland. We raised our own tobacco during the war time but now there was plenty of everything again. We kept two hired men working for us. In the year 1946 a big new farm came for rent near the city of Groningen. There was a very great shortage of farms for rent in the Netherlands at that time. Only this farm could you apply for. About 260 farmers from all over the land applied for that farm. So we also put an application in. The owners of that farm, some millionaires, came to visit us in Friesland. To make things short, they visited five farmers. But they granted us that nice farm.

So in the spring of 1947, after we farmed fourteen years in Friesland, we moved to Groningen. The cattle were all moved by truck, and I took two wagons full of all kinds of stuff, with two horses in front, to Groningen. This was about a distance of twenty miles. This farm was about 100 acres, no crop land, all pasture and hay fields, except I had a nice garden. This was the most beautiful place. But too bad. Something went wrong with myself.

After the war ended, I talked several times with the Canadians. Politically things were not going very good, I was not happy and what you could call the American Fever came back to me. I still don't think this was right for me to put my family through all that. We had everything we wanted or wished for, a nice farm, two hired men, I did not have to work hard, a good living,—how could I be so stupid to think about America again. On top of that Sally, my dear wife, was really scared to go to a new country, one she didn't know anything about. We were also so richly blessed with three healthy children. Everybody else said to us, "Are you out of your mind, Koenes?"

To make things short, we decided to immigrate to the United States. You needed a sponsor to go to the States. An old friend of mine, whom I met when I was in New York before I was married, was a dairy farmer in El Cajon which is close to San Diego in California. We could not take much money along with us in those years after the war. Don't forget, when a person left the Netherlands, you burned up, by way of speaking, all the ships behind you. There was really no way back. An adult could only take 90 dollars in American money along, children could only take 45 dollars along. That was not very much because from that money a ticket had to be bought for the train trip from New York to San Diego, California. At that time the American dollar had a high value against Dutch money—3.85 guilders for one dollar. Now it is only about 2.00 guilders for one dollar. I bought some American dollars on the black market in the Netherlands. Those dollars I sent by mail to my sponsor in California. So in the month of February, 1948, we had a auction sale in the Netherlands. We sold all the cattle and hay machinery. We bought a lot of new furniture. This stuff was all packed in a big van (box) which weighed about two ton and was shipped by a freight boat through the Panama Canal to California. The freight was payable in Dutch money so we would have all our furniture paid for in America. We spent about 13000 guilders for furniture in the Netherlands, plus all the freight.

We left the Netherlands from Rotterdam on March 24, 1948, on the big ocean

liner, The New Amsterdam, belonging to the Holland-America line. We met more immigrants on the ship, including Mr. and Mrs. Fred Dykstra who became a farmer later on Pettis Road, near Knapp Street. On April 3, 1948, we arrived in Hoboken, New Jersey. We stayed the first night in the Holland Seaman's Home in Hoboken. The people there knew me right away, from years back when I lived in Hoboken. The next day we took the train for California.

When we came in California, everything looked good, a lot of nice flowers in blossom in April. My friend picked us up at the depot. We stayed with them for a while in their house. I started to work for a carpenter for one dollar a hour. Later, I became a milker on a dairy farm. There were three of us milking 185 cows, starting 12:30 in the morning and again at 12:30 in the afternoon. I had to sleep two times a day, and I had one day off in two weeks time. In the Netherlands we employed two hired men, but now I became, myself, a hired man at forty years of age. We joined the Christian Reformed Church at San Diego, a Sunday's drive of about fifteen miles from where I worked. We bought a 1937 Chevrolet automobile. We spent about five dollars a week for gasoline, had a free house to live in, and also had a nice garden. It took a while yet before our furniture came at Los Angeles. The man, for whom I worked, was originally from England and was a very nice man. It became very hot in the summertime in California, sometimes up to 110 degrees in the barn. In southern California it never rains in the summertime. We were used to green pastures and, now and then, some rain.

We had another friend living in Michigan whose name was Offringa. He knew of a farmer who I could work for. So around Halloween time we packed a big box full of furniture again. We sold the kitchen set because we were not able to get all of it in again. The box was sent by train to Michigan, and we took the Greyhound bus from San Diego to Owosso in Michigan. I began to work for a German farmer who was a Catholic. Our children went to the Catholic school. That was something, to see the priest every day. We, ourselves, joined the Lutheran Church in Owosso. This place is located about 80 miles from Grand Rapids. So one day I took the bus to Grand Rapids. I landed downtown on Oak Street. I looked in the telephone book for a Christian Reformed Church, but did not find one. A certain friendly man helped me and told me that he knew of a place where they could help me out. He brought me to the Salvation Army in downtown. The man from the Salvation Army knew a man who was an elder in the Christian Reformed Church. His name was Abe Stroo. Mr. Stroo picked me up and took me home for lunch. Mr. Stroo was manager for the Hooker Paint Company in Grand Rapids. He showed me also a little more of the city of Grand Rapids. His brother-in-law was a minister in Graafschap which is near Holland, Michigan. The brother-in-law's name was Rev. Theo. Verhulst.

I went back to Owosso that evening, happy that we had some contact with church people. Rev. Verhulst put a note in the bulletin of the church saying that a Dutch family needed a house and also work. He wrote us the following week that a house was available in Graafschap, right across from the Christian Reformed Church. It was in the month of January, 1949, it was not cold. We moved in one truck with furniture and ourselves to Graafschap near Holland. I want to mention that while we lived in Owosso, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Dykstra visited us there. We were together on the New Amsterdam boat, but they took off to the state of Missouri. They did have back luck over there. They worked for a farmer and both had to milk cows, morning and evening, for 20 dollars a week. This was terrible. The farmers in Missouri sponsored Dutch farmers (families) and thought that when they got them there, they would make slaves out of them. So in one year's time we met together in the Grand Rapids area again.

When we arrived in Graafschap, there was no work for me. Later I started to work in a furniture factory for 85 cents a hour for about two months. But

because we were dairy farmers, I did not like to work in the factory. We got in contact with the mayor of Grand Rapids whose name was George Welsh. He owned two farms on Michigan Street near Grand Rapids, close to Piet Versluys. So we went in business with George Welsh, each half and half, 50-50 basis, plus free house, free electric, telephone, fuel, and a third part of the young stock. We started on March 6 on that farm. We milked about 40 cows, and we stayed there for about two years. Clarence helped me to do the farm work. He was fourteen years old. The Mayor said that Clarence didn't have to go to school any more; he did not like school anyway. Our daughter, Ina, helped out also sometimes. She also helped sometimes with milking the cows. Of course Clarence was suppose to go to school until he was sixteen years of age, but he did not. The Mayor also got him a driver's license at fourteen years old which was possible on the farm.

The second year on that farm, Sally made a trip back to the Netherlands. This was in the month of May, 1950. Sally's youngest brother, Thomas Spriensma and his wife, Jessie, (just married from the Netherlands) came in the year 1949 in the month of June. He helped us that first year on the farm. Later I got him a job at the Keeler Brass Company. When Sally returned to the Netherlands in 1950, my father had past away with a stroke, so none of us saw our dear father again. This was very sad. But our dear Lord had a better place for my father, still it did hit me very hard. While Sally was in the Netherlands, the Korean War broke out. And Sally started to get worried about being in the Netherlands far away from her dear family in the U.S.A. So Sally stayed for a short while in the Netherlands. She sure was happy to be back in the U.S.A. and she said to me, "I never will go back alone to the Netherlands." So really her trip paid off, because after that, she began to like it much better here in the U.S.A. Our children went to the Baldwin Christian School, and we joined Ada Christian Reformed Church for two years. Sally also started to learn to drive a car.

We always went on Sunday afternoons to the Dutch service, those days at Dennis Ave. Church. Dennis Ave. Church was sold in later years and it became the present Mayfair Christian Reformed Church.

In the fall of that year Sally and I started picking apples for 15 cents a bushel, that was the price they paid in 1951. When Sally and I came home tired in the evening, Clarence and Ina had done all the milking already.

After about two years we bought a muck farm with twelve acres of land with a good house and a good barn, near Byron Center on Burlingame Road near 100 Street, for the price of 7,850. So we settled up with Mr. George Welsh. We also kept 500 chickens on that farm; we delivered the eggs to customers in Grand Rapids. So we took those chickens along to Byron Center. I delivered the eggs on Saturday to my customers. Eggs in those days cost about 75¢ a dozen which was a very good price. I got myself a job at the Keeler Brass Company. I became a steel polisher, sitting behind a wheel. All piece work, I could make the highest wages they paid in those days, \$1.90 a hour, 45 hours a week, 5 hours overtime which they paid time and a half for. On Saturday eggs delivery also.

We had a very nice Christian Reformed neighbor whose name was Ralph Niedema. This man raised all kinds of vegetables on his farm. He told me to do the same thing with my land. So, that spring we put in a crop of sweet corn; lettuce, onions, pickels, all kinds of vegetables. And we started to go to the retail market in Grand Rapids, 4 days a week, with Sally and Clarence going three days, and Saturdays it was my turn. Later on, Sally, who was the hardest worker of all, said to me, "If you don't help us in August, we will never get that crop out of the field to the market." So I stayed home from the factory and we finished the crop that fall. After that, Sally and I picked apples again for Boss orchard



on 84th Street.

That year, 1951, in the beginning of November, we had our first big snow storm. So Thanksgiving Day we could not get out of our road. It was slow in town; there was no work in Grand Rapids. We started making plans to drive by car to California that winter. On Christmas Day another big snow storm came. We received altogether approximately 80 inches of snow by that time between Christmas and New Year's. We took off for California by way of the southern route, Memphis, El Paso. We stopped by our former dairy man by San Diego, and we landed in Artesia, close to Bellflower, California. We did have car trouble in El Paso, and we stayed there a few days in motels. Out of six cylinders in our car, there were only 4 cylinders working and we needed a new motor in our Dodge car. Our cousin in Artesia had a dairy farm. Clarence started to milk cows there and that paid \$400 a month for him. I started to work for a man, taking milk samples for milk-testing. I sampled everyday from 150 to 400 cows. I worked six days a week, Sundays off. Of course the cows were milked at one o'clock in the morning, and I had to be there always, also. Every day was a different farm--I liked that very well. We rented a new home in Artesia. In that winter California got a lot of rain. In the night when I had to look my dairy farm up, sometimes the road was just like a river. Sometimes when I came to a dairy farm, the milkers were not there yet. They got stuck in a deep dip in the road. The water sometimes would run into the back seat of the car, and lots of times the brakes did not work. So we came through all kinds of experiences in California that winter: first, 80 inches of snow in Michigan, then later 30 inches of water in California. In Artesia the water was running into the stores, a lot of water damage. By the month of April, we asked our children if they would like to stay in California, then we would stay there. But they all wanted to go back to Michigan. By that time the water also started to disappear in California. The cows in the corrals on the dairy farms were lying in the middle of the water. Some farmers dumped some loads of sawdust in the corrals so that the cattle could lay dry on that. By now California has more dry rivers so the water can disappear faster, but in those days the water was running through the lowest streets, running off to the Pacific Ocean.

So, in the middle of April in the year 1952, we drove on Route 66 in four days back to Michigan. We found everything well in order back here. Our neighbor, Mr. Miedema, kept an eye on our house while we were in California. In those days not much stealing was going on. Clarence did all the driving from California to Michigan. The car had a new motor in so we had no trouble at all.

Around April 20, 1952, the weather was warm and mild, the whole spring and summer was warm that year. Clarence started to work for Her Horst and Renzema, building schools for \$1.40 an hour, I remember. I planted all the land again with sweet corn and vegetables. In the time being, we bought the eggs, so we kept the egg route going. We also had a one ton panel truck; the gasoline price was 28¢ a gallon.

In the month of June, Sally's parents came over from the Netherlands by boat to New York. Thomas Spriensma drove to New York and brought them to Michigan. I remember that it was in the 90's when they were here, but they liked it very much in America. Jake (Grandfather) kept the field clean from weeds. Sometimes, he liked to work with Ina and Mike, I remember. Together we had a wonderful time. Sally also drove to the market with her parents in the truck also. But by the Eastern Avenue and Hall Streets, at the stop light, the truck ran out of the brake fluid needed for the brakes,--another bad experience for Sally. I think Sally did a great work. She was always the most helpful and loving wife and mother a man and children could wish for. Sally's parents

stayed for three months. Sally and I drove to New York with them. We drove through Canada and visited several cousins of Sally's, people who also were immigrants to Canada. We took plenty of time so we all together had a wonderful time. Mike also went along with us to New York. We brought them to the boat which left New York about 3:30 in the afternoon. They stood still waving to us, in the back of the ship, till they were in the middle of the Hudson River. The name of the boat was the Statendam, a large ship of 35,000 ton, a beautiful passenger ship. From New York we traveled a different route. We took the Pennsylvania Turnpike. It was beautiful in the Appalachian Mountains, also the big tunnels.

In the fall of 1952 I started to work for the Keeler Brass Company. Clarence also worked for the Keeler Brass Company. Ina and Mike were going to Byron Center Christian School. Sally did not like it to be home alone, so she also took a job at Keeler Brass Company. So in the winter at 6:15 every morning we left for the factory.

But we were originally dairy farmers. We did not like to work in the summertime on the farm, and in the wintertime in the factory. We wanted to get ourselves a "highland" farm with dairy cattle again, so we could work year around at home like we did in the Netherlands.

When we lived on the first farm, the one from George Welsh, we bought the feed always from Mr. John Kleinheksel who had a feed mill at McCords. So later when we lived in Byron Center, our chicken feed came also from Kleinheksel's. Peter Buys, Jack Buys' dad always delivered the feed to us. Mr. and Mrs. Buys came to us on a Sunday and said that there is a dairy farm for sale on 52nd Street near McCords, and they just started a new Christian Reformed Church in Cascade and needed more members. So we looked over that farm in the winter time. It had two houses on 150 acres of land and many buildings, but they wanted \$24,000.00 for that farm. It was an estate sale. The owner, Mr. Rockefeller, had past away at 96 years of age. The farm had to be sold. Don't forget, in that time \$25,000 was a really big amount of money. The banks would not give much credit. If I had \$5000 the bank would loan me only another \$5000. But we put our own little farm in Byron Center for sale and sold that for \$10,500.00. That was a good price. In two years we made a profit on that farm of \$1,750.00. We went back to the Rockefeller farm and made a bid for the farm, and we bought that farm. In the month of March, 1953 we moved to the farm at 8650 52nd Street. Miedema, our neighbor, moved us with his big truck, and we were the 27th family who joined the Cascade Christian Reformed Church.

The congregation was still having the meetings in the Cascade Public School. That summer of 1953 we built our first church building with much donated labor. I think that the price of the building came altogether to \$25,000.00. Mr. George Linton farmed the land on a share basis. We kept for ourselves one field for sweet corn and vegetables. In the summer of 1953, I stayed home from working in Grand Rapids. I worked that summer till July. I worked for TerHorst, Henry TerHorst's father. My last job was putting in the basement for the present Mayfair Church in Grand Rapids. From July on, we went to the Fruit Market in Grand Rapids, and also we raised 1000 young chickens. So from then on we became full-time farmers again.

Another brother-in-law, who married my youngest sister, came to the States that year in September. So we drove again to New York to pick him up with his family in Hoboken.

On Christmas Day, 1953, the Lord gave us the biggest Christmas present we ever had. On Christmas Day our youngest son, Arthur Raymond, was born. Thanks

to the Lord for that great present. By that time Sally was 42 years young. The age difference between Mike and Arthur was fourteen years.

In the year 1955, we were milking grade A milk again and started out with twenty-five milk cows. In the fall of 1956, Sally and I and Arthur, who was three years old, went to the Netherlands. This was the first time I went back after eight years. We took this time the big boat called the United States, a fast boat, 55,000 ton. It took only four days to France. This boat brought us to Bremerhaven in Germany. From there we took the train to the Netherlands. When we were half-way on the ocean, we got a telegram from the Netherlands that Pake, my father-in-law, had past away. The Lord had a better place for Pake. He was looking forward to seeing our youngest son. He had bought a nice little bed for Art upstairs in his house, but the Lord brought him home before we got to the Netherlands. So our first day there was a funeral. Art said later that he still remembers seeing Pake, and he went along also to the cemetery in Friesland. We took our youngest son three times with us to the Netherlands: first time, he was three years old; then when he was eight years old; the last time he was twelve years old. The last time was the first time that we went by airplane. So Art crossed the ocean four times with the boat. The boat trip was always lots of fun, much nicer than with the plane.

Our second son, Mike, became an auto-body man in Cascade, and Clarence stayed full-time in farming. In the year 1959, Clarence thought that it would be nicer to work in Grand Rapids. So Sally and I sold all our cattle and we held an auction sale. We only kept about 2000 chickens and also raised a vegetable crop, plus sweet corn. But in about one year after Clarence worked in Grand Rapids, he decided that he still would like to go into farming. So we bought dairy cows again, put a new addition on the cow barn, and slowly on, we milked sixty dairy cows. In January, 1973, our son Arthur bought my share of the dairy farm. But Sally and I still raised a lot of sweet corn. But I was 65 years old, so we took our pension by January 1, 1973.

In the meantime, Arthur met a nice girl who was studying at Calvin College. Her name was Muriel Dyk, from Manhattan, State of Montana. Art and Muriel got married on August 31, 1974, and they lived in the farm house. In the year 1975, Art and Muriel moved to Manhattan, Montana. Art started grain farming with Mr. Wilbur Dyk, Art's father-in-law, who owned a 7,000 acre farm.

I'd like to mention that in the year 1953 we all became naturalized American citizens of the United States. In that same year a brother of Sally, with his family, came here also to live. His name is Sietse Spriensma and is at the moment a dairy farmer in Coopersville, Michigan. Thom Spriensma owns a dairy farm at Jamestown, Michigan. Every two or three years Sally and I are going to the Netherlands to see our relatives again. Most of our relatives visited us here in the U.S.A. already.

Sally went back to the Netherlands one month before her mother past away. Sally's mother went to be with the Lord on December 26, 1963; she was almost 82 years old. We were that time in the Netherlands when she passed away. My dear mother, who thought of me all of her life, taught me to live close to the Lord. To her son who left the home so early in his life to go to a far country, she always wrote me a letter every two weeks, first when I lived in Canada, later when I lived in the U.S.A., and later after we left the Netherlands in 1948. A letter from my mother would come every two weeks. My mother and I knew that our strength was in the Lord regardless of what would happen to us.

Sally's father name was Icenius Immo Spriensma; her mother's name was Inske Broodsma. My father's name was Klaas Voenes; my mother's name was Gezina Grimmius. Sally has five sisters in the Netherlands, and two brothers. Most of them

are retired farmers. I have only two sisters in the Netherlands.

Now I would like to close this long letter. To everyone who will ever read this long letter, I will give the only good advice: stay with the Lord, without the Lord our soul will wither. Sally and I always worked hard, but it became a blessing. Even in war times we were kept safe, and we hope with the help of the Lord to go to the end that way. We also love the Lord's people, and we hope that we still may do a little work in His Kingdom.

"The beginning of greatness is to be little, the increase of greatness is to be less, and the perfection of greatness is to be nothing."

Jacob and Sally Koenes