

# Origins

## Origins

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*Origins* is designed to publicize and advance the objectives of The Archives. These goals include the gathering, organization, and study of historical materials produced by the day-to-day activities of the Christian Reformed Church, its institutions, communities, and people.

Richard H. Harms  
Editor

Hendrina Van Spronsen  
Circulation Manager

Tracey L. Gebbia  
Designer

Janet Sheeres  
Associate Editor

James C. Schaap  
Robert P. Swierenga  
Contributing Editors

InnerWorkings  
Printer

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From Deep Snow



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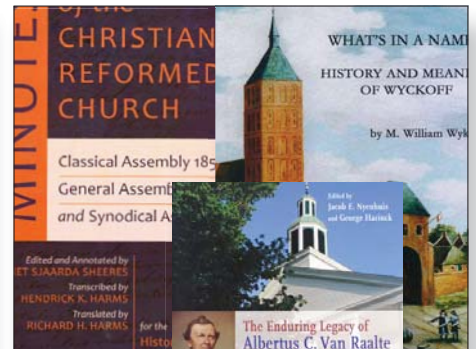


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## This Issue

Our current issue begins with a discussion of the fiction written by Cornelius Kuipers by noted author and emeritus professor of English at Dordt College, James C. Schaap. Before he was ordained as a minister, Kuipers wrote three novels dealing with the tensions faced by Zuni who were being introduced to Christianity. Carolyn Van Ess gave a copy of her memoir, “My Medical Memories,” to Heritage Hall some months ago, and our second article is an extract (about ten percent of the total) from this memoir, which describes her youth and adolescence during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s in Western Michigan. The colorful life of journalist and author Pierre Van Paassen is presented in the article by Gerlof

Homan. Homan traces the development of Van Paassen’s career and his support for Zionism and later pacifism. L. Vogelaar traces the careers of Pieter Court Woerden—preacher, chemist, and charlatan.

## News from the Archives

*Origins* co-published *Minutes of the Christian Reformed Church Classical Assembly, 1857-1870; General Assembly, 1867-1879, and Synodical Assembly, 1880*, extensively annotated by Janet Sjaarda Sheeres, transcribed from the handwritten Dutch by Hendrick K. Harms, and translated by Richard H. Harms. We continue our work on indexing the birthday, obituary, marriage, and anniversary records from the *Banner*. The URL (uniform resource locator) for the data, from 1984 through 2013, is <http://www.calvin.edu/hh/Banner/Banner.htm>.

Since last spring we have processed the papers of analytic philosopher Dr. Alvin Plantinga, John A. O’Brien Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at the University of Notre

Dame, known for his work in the philosophy of religion, epistemology, metaphysics, and Christian apologetics. The teaching and research papers of Dr. Irene Brouwer Konyn-dyk, professor emerita in French at Calvin College, were also opened for research, as were the papers of Dr. Timothy M. Monsma, missionary, scholar, and pastor, from his twelve years working in Nigeria, beginning in 1962. We processed papers from Dr. Janel M. Curry, currently Provost at Gordon College, and previously professor in Geography at Calvin College and holder of the Byker Chair in Christian Perspectives on Political, Social, and Economic Thought. We also organized the records of three discontinued Christian Reformed congregations, First (1867-2013), in Muskegon, Michigan; Immanuel (1887-1974), also in Muskegon, Michigan; and Central Coast (1982-1996), in Arroyo Grande, California.

New collections received include the journals of Dr. Glenn W. Geelhoed, surgeon and educator, who

has led more than two hundred health care missions to the developing world, including Africa, Asia, the South Pacific, and South America. He was named Humanitarian of the Year by *George Magazine* in 2000 and received the American College of Surgeons' Volunteerism Award for International Outreach in 2009. Christian Reformed Home Missions transferred 12.5 cubic feet of files dealing with its outreach work, 1962-1980; and with the change of provost at Calvin College, we received eight cubic feet of records (2005-2012) from that office. Finally, we received records of the Kalamazoo Diaconal Conference, 1985-1989, and of the Christian Reformed Church's Inter-Church Relations Committee, 1988-1989.

### Staff

Richard Harms is the curator of the Archives and editor of *Origins*; Hendrina VanSpronsen is the office coordinator and business manager of *Origins*; Laurie Haan is the department assistant; Robert Bolt is field agent and assistant archivist; and Anna Kathryn Feltes is our student assistant. Our volunteers include Phil Erffmeyer, Ed Gerritsen, Ralph Haan, Helen Meulink, Clarice Newhof, Gerrit W. Sheeres, Janet Sheeres, Jeannette Smith, and Ralph Veenstra. Colleen Alles has joined our staff in a temporary part-time position. 🐦



Richard H. Harms

# C. Kuipers, Mission Novelist—A CRC Story

James Calvin Schaap

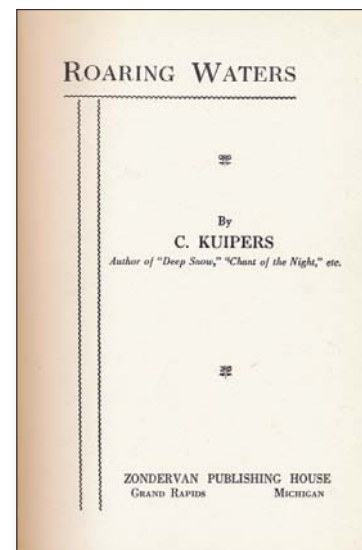
Because I was an English teacher, it was assumed by team leaders I knew something about books. Books there were by the hundreds in Cary Christian Center, Cary, Mississippi, the summer of 1977, because Christian Reformed church libraries from hither and yon had sent the Center the books that no longer moved from their shelves. My job was simple: while the northwest Iowa kids I'd come with put on a Bible school out in the country, while others from the team built latrines or painted walls or strung up chicken wire for a ball field backstop, this Dordt prof would rifle through the library and toss titles I thought should go.

The Center's library, back then, was heavy laden with books Baker, Zondervan, and Eerdmans used to publish, mid-twentieth century—when all three were almost exclusively CRC publishers: anything by Marian Schoolland, church and community histories, *Navajo and Zuni for Christ*, the kind of authentic CRC books that filled my family's library, books no one had checked out any longer at First, Kalamazoo, or Bethel, Sioux Center, rejects, mission barrel books.

Call me prejudiced, but I assumed few African-American residents of Cary's Black community would be interested in, say, *Rooftops Over Strawtown*, the story of Dominie Scholte's high-falutin' spouse and her difficulties adjusting to frontier, windswept Pella. I didn't consult, simply tossed what I thought entirely irrelevant to the Center's mission and clientele.

Well, sort of. Some of the books I judged irrelevant ended up in my suitcase—like *Rooftops*. Just because the good folks of rural Mississippi wouldn't find them interesting didn't mean I wouldn't—or didn't. One of those I saved was a Depression-era novel in a brown cover titled *Roaring Waters*, a book written by someone I'd once met—a C. Kuipers. He was one of several retired New Mexico missionaries who spent retirement years in Arizona, where my wife and I had lived. I remembered a small, thin man with sharp facial features and a ready smile, a wiry, excitable personality still spewing missionary-level energy despite his years.

I stole Cornelius (Casey) Kuipers's *Roaring Waters* (1937) from Cary Christian Center and then promptly



forgot about it. It stayed in my library, along with a collection of similar CRC books, until 2012, when I was culling my shelves. I picked it up, read it, and

James C. Schaap is an emeritus professor of English of Dordt College and an award-winning author of twenty-three books that include novels, short-story collections, nonfiction, and collections of essays. Recently Schaap authored *Rehoboth, A Place for Us*, which tells the stories of twelve families associated with the Rehoboth Mission in New Mexico.

was fascinated by a man who, I then discovered, took it upon himself to write three novels—not just one—in the depths of the Great Depression, “mission novels,” he called them, all of them about the CRC mission efforts in New Mexico.

I would have been better served by starting the Kuipers canon with his first novel, *Deep Snow* (1934), or even his second, *Chant of the Night* (1934). But not until later did I learn he’d written more, including a non-fiction study titled *Zuni Also Prays: Month by Month Observations about the People* (1946). I would have been better served starting elsewhere, because *Roaring Waters* is a sequel to *Deep Snow*—the two novels sharing a protagonist, a young Zuni man named Koshe.

My expectations of *Roaring Waters* weren’t high. I’ve read just about all of Frederick Manfred, much of Peter De Vries, some of the De Jongs<sup>1</sup>—and Edna Ferber’s *So Big*, a shaming indictment of Dutch Reformed farmers just south of Chicago that won the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. *Roaring Waters*, I assumed, couldn’t amount to much more than fund-raising, not a work of art. It simply couldn’t have been written for the Zuni people, so its intended audience had to be a CRC audience enamored with its own fledgling mission enterprise among “our Indian cousins,” as the *Banner* called them so lovingly and condescendingly for so long. I assumed the novel was not going to be literature; instead, it was written to do its part to support mission efforts, less literature than creative marketing.

It is—and it isn’t.

I loved the novel. *Roaring Waters* is not great literature, but in certain wonderful ways, *Roaring Waters* and especially its predecessors, *Deep Snow* and *Chant of the Night*, are profoundly fascinating for what they reveal about the novelist and missionary teacher.

I loved reading all three novels, not because of their art but because I came to respect deeply, even love, the novelist.

### **Mission Fest, circa 1910, Orange City, Iowa**

When Kuipers was still a boy in Orange City, Iowa, his father told him that the family was going to the Mission Fest, an event held every summer in a shaded grove just outside of town, an event more beloved to a rural church community than anything we can imagine today. Kuipers himself doesn’t remember the year exactly, but he was a boy, so a good estimate would be about 1910.

At that year’s Mission Fest, he likely drew his bottle of pop from cold water in a stock tank, ate cake or pie and whatever other goodies the women folk had baked for the occasion, maybe even chased girls. In those days Mission Fests may have included softball and tug-of-war, bag races, a rousing hymn sing—“Far and near the fields are teeming/with the waves of ripened grain”—and then, the evening’s highlight, a call to arms by an honest-to-goodness CRC missionary.

What Kuipers remembers (in a retirement interview by J. Herbert Brinks)<sup>2</sup> is one particular speech delivered by a man he would come to know and respect greatly, Mr. CRC Missions, Dr. Henry Beets. Kuipers doesn’t remember the text or the substance of what Beets said that late afternoon, but his life, he claims, changed at that moment because that Beets speech made him commit to a life of mission work.

To become a missionary meant more education than most northwest Iowa boys took on in those years, and that education he undertook at Northwestern Academy, right there in Orange City.<sup>3</sup> Just when he decided on teaching and not preaching is a

good question, because most boys who were educated as he was back then were determinedly bound toward the ministry. After the Academy he traveled to central Iowa, to Grundy Center, where he attended Grundy Junior College, graduating in 1919.

After graduation there followed a few two-year stints in Christian schools in Dutch-American enclaves (Baldwin, Wisconsin, and Sheldon, Iowa). His children claim that a kind of boredom set in at that time, enough



*Henry Beets (1869-1947) was the denominational advocate for mission work and headed the Christian Reformed Church World Missions office, 1920-1939. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

to make him go west, on his own, into territory where he’d have to look long and hard to find a pair of wooden shoes. What also led him there was a desire for more education. In 1922, summer school drew him to the University of Denver; he returned to Colorado for another summer session, this one at Gunnison’s Western State College in 1923. He stayed in the Rockies in September of 1924, when he became a high school principal at Lazear, a mountain village that is no more.

Lois Lovisa Nelson, Iowa-born, and the oldest child of a pioneer family that homesteaded in northern Colorado, attended high school in

Lazear, where she and the principal discovered a fondness for each other, a fondness both of them must have nurtured, because Ms. Nelson became Mr. Kuipers's bride just six months or so after her graduation in 1924.

Their first child, Calvin Keith, was born in January 1926, in Gunnison, while he completed his degree and studied education at Western State. But Kuipers claims the Mission Fest dedication hadn't disappeared, so in 1927 he signed a teaching contract to teach at the Zuni Christian Mission School, in Zuni, New Mexico. Like most CRC mission personnel at the time, Kuipers had limited—if any—experience with Native people.

### Zuni, 1927

The Zuni Mission of the Christian Reformed Church was thirty years old in 1927, and in the midst of significant change. Rev. Herman Fryling, who had been working at Zuni for two decades, had retired and just returned to Michigan. In his place was Rev. Calvin G. Hayenga, who'd been on the Zuni staff for only two years. In 1927, the Mission School Fryling had created in 1908 had an enrollment of sixty students, a number which required two teachers as well as a matron. "Kuipers," Dr. Henry Beets quotes

Rev. Calvin Hayenga in *Toiling and Trusting*, was hired as ". . . principal and disciplinarian, a difficult task."<sup>4</sup>

Just as significant, the entire mission's physical plant was also new. Gone were the old chapel, the YMCA house, and assorted other mission buildings; in their place stood "the present complex building, of Spanish architecture, but built of stucco with common-place Zuni mud," as Kuipers himself described it,<sup>5</sup> as impressive an edifice as existed in the Zuni Pueblo back then, a structure that would stand just across the Zuni River from the Pueblo for forty-four years, until it burned to the ground on 17 April 1971, in a late-night fire of still undetermined origin. Kuipers was brand new to Zuni, but then so was just about everything. He also found a freshly minted leadership team, including a young missionary preacher and a decorated veteran, Andrew Vander Wagon, well-scarred by a history of non-compliance with the Mission Board a world away in Grand Rapids. The Board had rehired Andrew Vander Wagon, after having parted ways in 1906—not amicably. There were good reasons to rehire the man whose fiery unconventionality created firestorms: the Vander Wagons had put down roots in New

Mexico and so maintained a powerful presence—every last Zuni man and woman knew the Vander Wagons, and they knew every last Zuni. The man had never lost a degree of his memorable zeal.

It's also helpful to know something about Kuipers's personality and character. Although his first stay at the Pueblo began in 1927 and ended in 1933, during those five years he created co-curricular opportunities unimagined before him. Suddenly, Zuni had uniformed ball teams—baseball and basketball. Suddenly, Zuni Mission had a school band created by an Iowa-born *Music Man*. There were no music lessons in Kuipers's background, but he was blessed with an ear that granted him the wherewithal to play every instrument the Zuni band would need. He was ambitious and energetic and forward-looking. He blessed Zuni Mission's archives for years to come because he was the first to toy with new technology like tape recorders and motion picture cameras.

What can be known about those first five years is in guarded scraps and memoirs, the largely unwritten history of the Zuni Mission, an enterprise struggling to maintain a presence and a witness among the



The Andrew Vander Wagen farm in 1897, the beginning of the Christian Reformed Church presence at Zuni Pueblo (Shiwinna, in Zuni), New Mexico. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Zuni and in the minds and hearts and coffer of its own denominational constituency.<sup>6</sup> Significant chunks of that history are unwritten in part because some chapters are festooned with quarrels (some petty, some not) between personnel, bickering that occasionally grew from real differences in missiology. And by 1927, Zuni Mission had garnered disparagingly few conversions to Jesus Christ, the deity Native people simply assumed was “the god of the white man.” During its first thirty years at Zuni, the CRC had a disappointing record of only six adult baptisms, and two of those had died within a year.

All of this is interesting if we consider what Kuipers the novelist experienced at Zuni during those five years before he began to write novels. While there were almost certainly prototypes for the mission personnel he creates (teachers, missionaries, matrons, and custodians) in his three novels, what is most interesting is how he would write about a much-beloved mission enterprise for an adoring audience accustomed to effusive sentimental plot lines, readers who want and expect to see pagan savages released from the bondage of sin, when, in point of fact, only a very few had been. How to tell the truth when the truth was not what readers want to hear?

### Telling the story

The protagonist of Kuipers’s first novel, *Deep Snow*, is Koshe, a young Zuni man, who reappears in the novel’s sequel, *Roaring Waters*. Young Koshe had been educated at a boarding school, where he met missionaries of the Gospel, who played a significant role in a national strategy to assimilate indigenous people into the majority white, Euro-American culture. The progressive adage governing Indian education in the late nineteenth century was “Kill the Indian,



Rev. Herman Fryling (far left) and Andrew Vander Wagen (seated to right) during an excursion through the land of the Zuni in 1908. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

save the man,” a phrase attributed to Richard Pratt, superintendent of the prestigious Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, the educational model for Native boarding school education, including the denomination’s own Rehoboth. Upon Koshe’s return to the Pueblo, the forces of his Zuni culture went to war with what he’d been taught at boarding school. The central question of both novels is, not surprisingly, “Will Koshe become a Christian?”

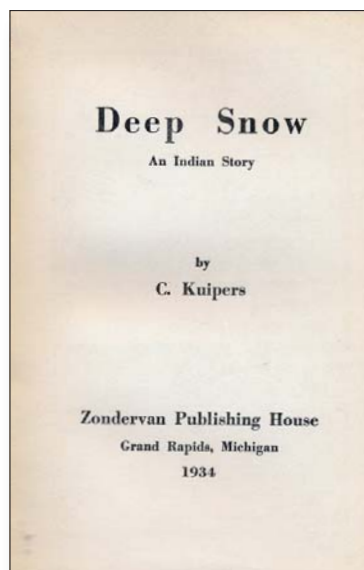
Koshe is a born leader, a young man mission personnel watch closely, hoping for the kind of Christian affirmation that will put him into conflict with the deeply religious character

of the community. But conversions don’t come easily at Zuni, in life or in fiction.

Motivations aren’t always clear in Kuipers’s characters. Plots wander and begin to feel like loosely strung collections of vignettes drawn from mission experience. Still, it is clear that the climax of his first novel takes place in the deep snow a rampaging blizzard had left behind all over the Navajo and Zuni reservations, when Koshe determines, on his own, to become an angel of mercy and deliver both bad news and needed medicine to a family at some distance and in significant trouble.

Earlier, Koshe and three others dare a Christmas blizzard’s danger to rescue Zunis and Navajos stranded while gathering piñon nuts. Kuipers summarizes their bravery in this way: “The four messengers of mercy pressed onward through the deep snow of Nacionales Mesa. Stern duty urged them on through the icy drifts and the biting cold.”

Kuipers likely read moralistic novels; they may well have been his genre of choice. On occasion, in good moralistic fashion, he will, as author, enter into the story when he believes his readers should not miss a thoughtful truth. These four rescuers merit particular praise in just such



a generous aside: “Christian nations observed this crowning day of Yuletide in cozy homes, and Christian worshippers were adoring the Christ-Child in pleasant churches,” he says, editorially. “The four toiling onward over bleak mesas were not worshipping thus, but their devotion was the supreme sacrifice of themselves.”

What is so engaging about Kuipers’s novels is the moral positioning he frequently stakes out, even when, as a novelist, aesthetically at least, he shouldn’t be editorializing. His momentary departure from the stormy plot detracts from the story’s narrative drive; but the moral lesson he notes is something he believes needs to be said. Kuipers cannot claim these courageous Zunis to be baptized Christians, but their selfless (and thus Christ-like) sacrifice needs to be seen in contrast with Christmas Eve in “pleasant churches,” presumably like those his readers attend. He is not particularly shy in asserting the moral superiority of the Zuni rescuers.

These frequent asides create a discourse that suggests Kuipers wanted not only to entertain the Zuni Mission constituency with the novels, but also to educate them, help them to see the Zuni people as human beings, not simply as pagan souls in need of Jesus. That discourse is especially interesting today, given the often horrifying stereotypes assigned to Anglo missionaries who evangelized indigenous nations on this continent.

When *Deep Snow* was published, Kuipers, then a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, was contributing op-eds to the *Albuquerque Journal*, where his readers weren’t mission supporters but a more general reading public. In one of those articles, “Today in New Mexico,” Kuipers defends Navajo reticence to be photographed by putting his Anglo readers in the position of those



One of the illustrations from *Deep Snow* captioned “The gods have spoken” (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1934), 97.

on the other side of their own Kodak Brownies: “Suppose some afternoon you were puttering away happily at some task,” he says in that newspaper column, “and along came an arrogant Indian caravan of two or three swanky cars.” He then describes the Native people who “gaze intently at you and giggle, while one whispers, ‘Gee, ain’t that a cute specimen,’ while another adds, ‘Wonder if that bozo will pose for a picture.’” That paragraph ends abruptly: “About this time, what do you feel like?”<sup>7</sup>

What Kuipers’s occasional editorial asides in his novels and his op-eds in Albuquerque’s most-read newspaper demonstrate is his desire to be sure Anglo readers work at understanding the men and women and children he knows on the reservation and in the Pueblo. In fact, such cultural comparisons suggest that he was facing two required conversions at the heart of *Roaring Waters*, two groups of people—one white and one red—both in need of a radical change of heart. Such asides detract from the novel’s unified plotting, but today, eighty years later, they are a highlight of his work.

### The Climax of *Deep Snow*

Later in *Deep Snow*, Koshe takes on yet another rescue mission, this one alone, to the isolated hogan of a young Navajo girl he very much admires (Kuipers was not adept at romance!). The path, often lost in the heavy snow, is almost impossible, the winter so life-threatening a reader begins to feel a bit of Jack London’s powerful depictions of man and nature battling away in the frozen cold.

Here, life and death square off when, just three miles of seven-foot drifts from the stranded hogan, Koshe’s pony stumbles once more into the deep snow:

The sun lowered and the air became chilly. The snow that had been thawing near the top began to freeze. At first it was like a thin sheet of paper that yielded to the touch. As it grew colder the crust became thicker and began to cut like a knife.

That melting, then freezing snow is crucial. “The cruel glassy crust began to cut into the pony’s body” when the pony and rider go belly deep in a drift. They can go on only if Koshe helps



his pony climb out. When he does try to dig the snow away, his own hands get bloodied. Deeply afraid, Koshe urges his pony on, but the pony is also bleeding. “Icy needles scratched and clawed at her raw and quivering flesh,” Kuipers says. “Crimson tracks marked the white, glistening snow.”

We have arrived at both the dramatic and the technical climax of the novel. Koshe’s daring in the night cold has placed him and his pony at death’s door. “Sharp, icy, merciless fangs bit and gnawed at his hands and arms as he struggled and tugged in his efforts to help her rise. He talked to her as he washed his freezing, bleeding hands in the cold, cold snow.” Once again, Kuipers enters editorially: “Lord, have



Cornelius Kuipers and his second wife, Martha (nee Vos), were married at Zuni in 1947. Some of the Zuni guests reported this was their first Christian wedding ceremony. His first wife, Lois Nelson, had died in 1945. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

mercy!” says the author. “Only two more miles! Wilt thou let them fail now?” The adoption of King James English suggests Kuipers’s own prayer at this fictional moment.

Then comes the most telling line of the novel, a line that belongs to Koshe, the young man the nature of whose faith is the major conflict of

the novel. Suddenly, Kuipers says, Koshe screams a prayer, “‘Jesus of the white man, help me!’ was wrung sobbingly from Koshe’s heart. ‘Jesus, I don’t want them to die.’”

It is difficult to believe Kuipers would not have understood that Koshe’s desperate petition here affirms his faith, even suggests his salvation. Kuipers had to know his Bible, and what he had to have committed to memory somewhere was a definitive line from the book of Romans, chapter 10, from the King James: “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Clearly, Koshe has done exactly that: he has called upon the name of the Lord because in his distress he has come to believe that the God of the white man can be his deliverance. That, in the reckoning of the novel’s writer and its readers, is faith.

But there’s more. The grammar of the sentence conveys clearly that, to Kuipers, salvation is not a human choice, but a matter that belongs to the Lord. He employs the passive voice, the subject, Koshe, being acted upon: “‘Jesus of the white man, help me!’ was wrung sobbingly from Koshe’s heart [emphasis mine]. ‘Jesus, I don’t want them to die.’”

Kuipers the Calvinist deliberately employs a sentence structure unmistakable in intent. Koshe did not himself pose the question that suggests his adoption of the Christian faith; rather, that utterance “was wrung” from Koshe’s heart by someone else. At this pivotal moment in his first novel, Kuipers suggests that only God Almighty could have pulled from Koshe’s heart the confession of faith he utters. In the language of an old hymn Kuipers had to have sung:

*‘Tis not that I did choose thee  
For Lord that could not be;  
This heart wouldst still refuse thee  
Hadst thou not chosen me.*

Casey Kuipers’s use of the passive voice is a theological affirmation but also an answer to the criticism leveled at the Zuni Mission project already by the 1930s, when adult baptisms were so very scarce. Almost from the beginning of the CRC mission in Zuni, significant voices “back East” were concerned about the lack of “success” on the field. As early as 1921, Rev. John Dolfin, of Clasis Muskegon, significant supporter of early CRC mission efforts at Zuni Pueblo, reported on the work in this way in *Bringing the Gospel in Hogan and Pueblo*:<sup>8</sup>

Since 1906 Rev. [Herman] Fryling has been laboring at Zuni, not with a blare of trumpets and the beating of drums, but quietly and carefully thru teaching and preaching laying a solid foundation to build upon when the Lord’s time comes to call the Zuni out of nature’s darkness into the wonderful light of His mercy and grace. Already a couple of young men have accepted the Christ Jesus presented to them in the catechism class by Missionary Fryling. A great number of others would be willing to accept Christian Baptism if the Missionary would only be ready to receive them and thru baptism bring them into the Christian Church.

Fryling, Dolfin baldly suggests, is partially to blame for the meager rate of “success” on the Zuni field because the tally would swell considerably if “the Missionary” would only be more lenient in determining readiness for baptism.

What Kuipers saw when he noted the scarcity of converts in the Zuni Pueblo was a theological principle, that no missionary could wrench (or “wring”) conversions from those in “native darkness,” as Dolfin describes it. Kuipers answers Dolfin’s criticism with a biblical imperative drawn from the Psalms: “Salvation belongs to the Lord.” God Almighty is the only vital

agent for change in those souls he wants as his own and in his time.

The technical climax ends when Koshe prays; the dramatic climax of the novel also ends here, when Koshe escapes death's cold clutches and gets through the storm. But Koshe's crucial confessional prayer no one but God and readers hear. In the novel, God responds. The pony comes up and out of the drift, enabling Koshe to make the delivery. His girlfriend, a Christian Navajo, is delivered from danger, and a relationship begins to flourish. All is well.

But as if to make his point even more true-to-life, Kuipers, the mission school teacher, does not allow Lanting, the novel's mission school teacher, to hear Koshe's prayer; and the novel ends with a question, not an exclamation mark. In the *denouement*, Koshe goes back to school and writes his parents, who are neither Christians nor literate, need Lanting's help to read the letters Koshe sends. In the novel's last scene, Lanting reads a note from Koshe to his parents, an ordinary, newsy letter, then thinks about the whole story. This is the final paragraph of *Deep Snow*:

Long after the father had left him, Lanting still pondered. Koshe wrote about tomorrow. Tomorrow's game. After that tomorrow was another tomorrow, then another and another—an endless string of them, for tomorrow never comes. What did these tomorrows hold for Koshe?

Lanting, the missionary/teacher, is left wondering what's happening in the boy's heart and soul. But readers heard Koshe call on the name of the Lord because the novel brought us to a time and a place where some unseen and likely divine force (Kuipers would name that force as God Almighty, I'm sure) had "wrung" Koshe's confessional prayer from him

"sobbingly." We know what Lanting does not because we know what transpired in a seven-foot drift three miles from a snow-bound hogan. Lanting can only wonder, just as Kuipers, the mission school teacher in the Zuni Pueblo, can only wonder at the developing faith of his Zuni students. That truth offers an answer to critics who bemoan dismal baptism numbers at the Zuni Mission: we just don't know, but God does.

Kuipers's subtle ending is fascinating, especially if one considers how his readers—loyal CRC members, many of whom likely had a very traditional moralistic sense about imaginative fiction—might have read the story. They had to be scratching their heads because many would have expected a more triumphant climax, some poor wayward Zuni or Navajo coming blessedly to Jesus. That happens, but there are no exclamation points, and the truth is only suggested, not trumpeted.

Kuipers clearly understood what his intended denominational readers wanted in their stories. That he knew their expectations is illustrated by "Flying Bread," a short story he published in the *Banner* at just about the same time (November 1934) *Deep Snow* was released, another story about deep snow, about suffering on

the reservation, about daring rescues, this one with a much less complex and far more sentimental conclusion.

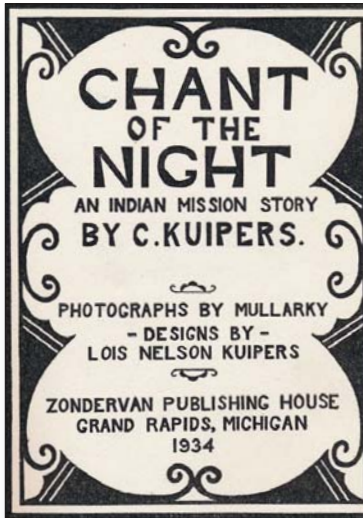
In "Flying Bread," once again the question is the life and death of a stranded family in a cold hogan somewhere out on the Navajo reservation. Another conflict is also obvious, however, just as it is in *Deep Snow*, a conflict between the claims of Christianity and the claims of Native religion.

Kuipers begins with a God-fearing Navajo grandma attempting to impart hope to her suffering family by making claims that the promises of God are good and strong and true and that, even in their dire distress, God will provide. Her son demurs and predicts their death by relying on the principles of his people's traditional faith: "The snow is too deep for us to get help," he says with a laugh Kuipers describes as "bitter." "It is the will of the gods of my people that some of us must die. I am ready."

In a classic *deus ex machina*, deliverance arrives from above exactly at the moment when the family is at death's door. The old grandmother implores the Lord to send relief—and he does, by way of an airplane piloted by men who were "looking for Indians in just such need." Kuipers doesn't run from the obvious: "Indeed



The bridge across the river, dry in summer, which separated Zuni Pueblo from the Christian Reformed Church mission property. The house to the right was occupied by the missionary. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



the heavens were raining help,” he says, when foodstuffs descend from the gray and snowy skies. Grandma insists, “It was the white man’s God who sent the ravens.”

Kuipers clearly knew how to meet the fictional expectations of his audience. But in *Deep Snow*, we can only conclude that he must have deliberately determined not to meet those expectations. Instead, he finishes the novel in a fashion that demanded a level of interpretation at least some of his readers weren’t likely to perceive, a demonstration of what he and all the Zuni missionaries were experiencing with such a dearth of baptisms.

### Dr. Beets, *Deep Snow*, and *Chant of the Night*

We know very little about how the novel was received; denominational publications did little book reviewing, and Zondervan has kept no record of sales. Within the CRC, it’s fair to say people bought books not because the books were estimably reviewed, but simply because they were denominational books, about CRC people, for CRC people, and by CRC people.

What we do know is that Henry Beets, Chairman of the Board of Missions of the CRC, overseer of all denominational mission efforts, Kuipers’s immediate superior, was

not taken with Casey Kuipers’s first attempt at a novel. Beets praised it in *Missionary Monthly*: the novel shows a “keen insight into the heart of the older and younger Zunis,” he wrote; but his praise is muted: “It would have pleased us if the author had also been able to make a real hero of him as to his definite stand as a soldier of the cross.”<sup>9</sup>

Keith Kuipers claims his father loved Beets, the man whose passion had so moved him as a boy in Orange City. It is understandable that the displeasure Beets says he felt upon reading *Deep Snow* affected the design of Kuipers’s second novel, a fact that Kuipers himself admits in a personal letter to Dr. Beets:

As you know, [*Chant of the Night*] is a direct answer to your criticism of *Deep Snow* that no clear-cut acceptance of Jesus Christ is indicated in our former book. In this new story we meet a true convert and see some of his trials. Perhaps the strongest point is that he becomes a convert not because of any one missionary made such a superb approach, but because God himself determined His word should not return void.<sup>10</sup>

It’s clear, at least if we believe him, that Kuipers stayed up late during the darkest nights of the Depression and plotted out a “mission story” that would, if nothing else, satisfy Beets’s displeasure. What Kuipers knew he needed to create in his second novel was a Zuni character who would “stand as a soldier of the cross.” For that, of course, he had few fictional prototypes. But the fierce determination he asserts to Beets, I would argue, meant the novel itself, as a novel, would suffer.

*Chant of the Night* draws its title from what the missionaries attribute to the stubborn appeal of traditional Zuni religion, something deeply disturbing and almost unfathomably

powerful. In a discussion Kuipers creates midway in the novel, the missionaries talk about combating that formidable enemy daily; and DeWitt, the old missionary, explains how every new missionary’s initial zeal is tempered by the difficult experiences of evangelism in the pueblo.

When they talk about finding the best way, they also speak to Rev. Dolfin’s criticisms of Zuni Mission’s lack of success in saving souls. Some assurance of the converts’ deep commitment to Jesus Christ, DeWitt insists, needs to be there before the sacrament can be received. “Just as Jonah’s gourd was swift, pretentious, and a blessing in a weary land,” the old missionary says, “so these [early] converts inspired me with new courage. But the cup of joy had its bitter dregs,” he goes on to explain to the younger missionaries. “The gourd had its deadly worm gnawing at its very vitals. The day of these converts was short.” Then DeWitt delivers the title line: “The chant of the night won out.” In the battle for souls, Native ways seem overwhelmingly powerful. The “Chant of the Night” is the fearsome challenge the mission faces every day.

At the same time, however, *Chant of the Night* is an even more open testimony to Kuipers’s immense regard for the Zuni people. The story begins in ambiguity and paradox. A Zuni man named Laha, frantic, comes to the mission house to cut a lock of hair from the old missionary, De Witt, because Laha is convinced his daughter’s sickness resulted from DeWitt’s earlier visit to their home. Traditional healing ritual insists that his daughter will get better only if her father burns a lock of hair from the offending visitor.

A handyman and general mechanic at the mission, a man named Dirks, hears Laha’s plea and insists that no right-thinking Christian could possibly abide such an obviously pagan

request; giving Laha a lock of hair would be aiding and abetting the enemy and perpetuating the sinful belief that Native rituals have medicinal power.

However, DeWitt allows Laha to cut a few locks and take them home for the purging ritual. Dirks grouches, but DeWitt, who's lived among the Zuni for years, insists that if he hadn't given up a few locks of hair, and if the daughter would die, the viability of the mission and the Gospel it carried would be in jeopardy because the people would believe that everything connected with the mission was bad



*Toa Yallone, the sacred mountain of the Zuni, seen from the village. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

medicine. What begins the novel is a moment when mission personnel make paradoxical decisions that those unpracticed in the world of competing cultures and traditions would simply assume to be erroneous, if not contrary to scripture, as Dirks obviously does.

Kuipers follows that vignette with a story that features unwitting disrespect for Zuni culture. Mission personnel, on a day off, hike up Zuni's sacred mountain to experience the view and better understand tribal history, motivations clearly sympathetic. We are introduced to Ametolan, a young man not unlike Koshe in *Deep Snow*, a Haskell Indian School graduate the missionaries want badly to take hold of Jesus Christ. Ametolan

serves as guide on the hike up *Toa Yallone*.

Of interest to the mission personnel is the story of the warrior Ahayootoh, at the Shrine of the Ancients atop the mountain. When they arrive, one of the teachers who has come along spots an ant hill beside the altar and mocks the gods for allowing a congregation of insects to desecrate such an honored holy place.

Ametolan is incensed: "I want you to know this is holy ground to my people," he says. "You come up here and think you own all. You walk everywhere. You do not think. No, you

are Americans. Listen! Do I make fun of your Jesus?"

Then, Kuipers writes, "There was silence, awkward silence."

The first four chapters of *Chant of the Night* offer two stories meant to document the complexity of mission work in the Zuni Pueblo. From early on, *Chant of the Night* seems as much about mission work as it is about unthinking Anglos who cannot or will not respect Native cultures and beliefs.

Exposition is almost always an enemy of plot movement in fiction. Exposition is time and place and idea; plot is pages turning. *Chant of the Night's* problems as a novel stem from too much exposition, which is, at the same time, its most fascinating attri-

bute. There are moments in the narrative when Kuipers stops everything, picks up a camera with a wide-angle lens, and simply describes, in great detail, what he thinks must be seen, and appreciated, at that moment. When he does, his use of narrative distance (the proximity of the narrative voice to the action itself) gets pushed into god-like omniscience as he looks down from what seems some distant mesa. His motivation is clear and commendable—he wants us to see what he sees and to respect what he does. Here is part of one of those long and descriptive passages, this one describing the Pueblo before one of its most important dance rituals:

Thus the summer solstice was ushered in. Each walked a straight road that would be pleasing to the departed ones who were about to return and heap upon every true believer their blessings of growth, moisture, and fecundity. For four days no one bought, sold, or traded. For four days each guarded his tongue and there were no quarrels. For four days no one looked at the other with desire. For four days after taking their offerings each thus guarded his thoughts so that the sweet savor of his prayers might not be dispelled by an evil heart, a cutting tongue, or a wishful eye.

The final sentence is lovingly decorated, beginning as it does with the chorus-like repetition he'd begun three sentences earlier. That sentence suspends the usual grammatical pattern with an additional prepositional phrase, then and only then offers subject and verb complex ("each thus guarded") and adds a dependent clause including a double negative for emphasis and a series of noun phrases in parallel structure. There's nothing complex or fancy about the sentence, but the care Kuipers took in its construction arises from his respect for the Zuni people, and even their abiding faith. It's a delicate, beautiful sentence

that describes what Kuiper himself must have observed as, in the dance's own way, delicate and beautiful.

That kind of nuanced regard is in every nook and cranny of *Chant of the Night*, taking up so much space that any sustained plot seems almost non-existent. His efforts to answer Beets's specific public criticism isn't the only mission Kuipers seems driven to accomplish in his second novel. He seems even more convinced to teach his readers something substantial he's learned at Zuni, that life there is often good and honest and marked by deep devotion, even if that devotion is pagan.

Still there is this matter of establishing "a soldier of the Cross." Kuipers knew that he needed a conversion, a baptism, because only a baptism would satisfy Beets, who clearly wanted—and presumably other readers might have desired—a soul saved for Jesus.

In *Chant of the Night*, Kuipers obliges in a way that actually adds to the novel's appeal and interest, largely because it comes so unexpectedly. Some novelists claim that great plots are those whose memorable surprises are, oddly enough, both perfectly shocking and completely understandable. Novelists want their readers fuming at plot twists, not because readers don't like them but because they did not see those surprises coming—and they know they should have. Surprise is at the heart of good plotting, and surprise is at the heart of the conversion Kuipers needed in his second novel.

The character he uses to become "a soldier of the Cross" is Nick Tamaka, a character who has an obvious prototype in Nick Tumaka (note the vowel change), a benefactor of the Zuni Mission who sold the denomination its property in the earliest years, a translator who helped both Vander Wagon and Hayenga learn the Zuni language,



Cornelius and Martha Kuipers. The children (with his first wife, Lois) are Eloise, Albert L., C. Keith, in back, and Carol, seated in front. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

and a baptized Christian, who became one just a few days before he died in 1927.

Tamaka's role in the novel is as a benefactor, not unlike his prototype, a man whose friendship binds him to the mission personnel in ways that other Zuni do not. Just exactly how Kuipers uses fiction in his characterization of Tamaka isn't clear; what is obvious is that in many ways Nick Tumaka and Nick Tamaka are the same man.

Kuipers's response to Dr. Beets, we need to remember, has two assertions: first, that his second novel, *Chant of the Night*, is a response to his criticism of *Deep Snow*'s inability to offer readers a true, obvious "soldier of the Cross," a Native man or woman who has accepted the salvation offered by Jesus Christ's death and resurrection.

Kuipers goes on, however, to explain how he determined to do what Beets requested: "In this new story we meet a true convert and see some of his trials," he told Beets. "Perhaps the strongest point is that he becomes a convert not because any one missionary made such a superb approach, but

because God himself determined His word should not return void."

To accomplish that, Kuipers imports an experience he went through at the Zuni Mission, when Dekman, the young missionary (someone like Rev. Hayenga) proposed bringing in Native missionaries from the Hopi reservation, converts they hoped would find more success with the Zuni people because they too were Native. Think of them as guest pastors, or revival preachers—new and Native voices in the proclamation of the Gospel.

DeWitt, the old missionary, is wary, unsure of what additional baggage the itinerant preachers might carry into the Zuni Pueblo. If DeWitt errs on the side of caution—and I believe that Kuipers would have us think so—then the young idealist Dekman lacks sufficient foresight; the conservative is too conservative and the progressive is too progressive. All have sinned in *Chant of the Night*, not just the heathen Zuni.

The revival is set, the Hopis arrive, and meetings burn with fervor; but disaster results when the Zuni

determine that the Hopi missionaries are frauds, capable of rank deception in order to obtain what they desire from mission personnel. While they're capable of preaching the Gospel, they don't live it. Their escape from Zuni occurs under the cover of darkness, so greatly are they hated.

The whole episode makes up a significant portion of the novel, and it feels for all the world like disaster, the good name of Zuni Mission tragically undercut by the seemingly purposeful hypocrisy of the Hopi revivalists. The Zunis laugh in derision; the missionaries are mortified at their abject failure.

Then in chapter nineteen, Kuipers turns to Nick Tumaka, benefactor and translator, who is on his deathbed, DeWitt visiting him. Tumaka tells the story of an old storekeeper for whom he once worked. Once, unknowingly, he was cleaning out a drawer full of mice when he discovered pages the mice didn't destroy, pages of the Bible. "So I say if the paper on which we wrote God's Word was so very strong, sure God is much stronger," Tumaka says. Then, he delivers the most significant line: "So tonight I come to tell you that I believe God's Word."

While Tumaka has been faithful to the mission and the missionaries, he has never professed his faith with that kind of candor. "Here was an answer to prayer," Kuipers writes. "Nick was finding his Master, not in name only, but in the reality of inner soul experience."

Ironically—and surprisingly—motivation is also more immediate than a childhood memory of a job in a trading post. "I feel like a flower all faded and brown, just ready to throw away. Then I think of what I heard this week that we must work before all gets dark for us," he says, indicating that the very same revival that had dirtied the name of the mission itself and the cause of Christ himself

had, at the same moment, convinced Nick Tumaka that he was a child of God and prompted his wish to be baptized.

Kuipers does not, this time, want his readers to miss the irony. DeWitt is amazed, shocked—as are his readers. He "was no longer following Tumaka's words. He sat up, surprised, startled. Had that Hopi song actually touched one heart?" He is dumbstruck. "Had those words which rang out in every meeting challenged Nick Tumaka? Had everything not been in vain after all?"

And the answer to that entire list of questions is yes. When Kuipers tells Dr. Beets "that the strongest point is that he becomes a convert not because of any one missionary made such a superb approach, but because God himself determined His word should not return void," he is making the case for the deep importance of the work at Zuni, even when supporters back home were finding it difficult to continue to finance an operation with such meager results in terms of souls saved for Jesus, a theological principle he made just as clearly in *Deep Snow*: "Salvation belongs to the Lord."<sup>11</sup>

But *Chant of the Night* is not Nick Tumaka's story. Neither does it belong to Ametolan, who has his own score of troubles in the novel. Nor is it DeWitt's story or Dekman's or Dirks's. The novel's lack of a central character almost guarantees that it will carry no clear central conflict either—and it doesn't. That means to the reader it, quite simply, is a novel less unified and hence less satisfying. *Deep Snow* seems to me to be a better novel simply because it has a more clearly defined protagonist and a more unified plot structure. What I'm arguing is that Beets's completely understandable chagrin with Kuipers's first novel determined that Casey Kuipers's second novel would be less convincing.

### The years away from Zuni

What Kuipers was learning—both in graduate school as well as on the job once he'd left the university—is relevant because it was during those years that all three novels were written. He himself explains his five-year hiatus from Zuni Christian Mission by way of the Great Depression. Simply put, denominational offerings could not pay the salaries of the personnel at the Pueblo: the staff had to be reduced to keep the operation solvent. There were three Kuipers children by 1933: Calvin Keith, born in Colorado in 1926; Albert Lynn, born at his mother's maternal Colorado home in 1928; and Eloise Marie, born in 1930 at Rehoboth Hospital. Times were tough.

Financial hardship was the rule during the Great Depression, in New Mexico and throughout America; it's not particularly surprising that life away from Zuni was hand-to-mouth for a young couple with three kids, the oldest just seven years old. Kuipers describes these years this way in the notes he wrote up to summarize his life for his children: "1933—moved to Albuquerque and survived by doing odd jobs while attending U of NM."

Son Keith, the oldest, remembers living in tiny apartments behind the front desks of motels where Mom and Dad cleaned rooms. Kuipers himself lists his income during his graduate school years \$75 a month while a "Fellow" in the psychology department, and an "assistant instructor" in education, while he wrote his thesis and took his degree.

During these years—and these years only—Casey Kuipers turned to fiction writing, all three titles published by Zondervan between 1934 and 1937. When exactly he wrote each of the novels is not clear; but his son Keith remembers, as a child, waking up late at night in those motel apartments and overhearing Mom

and Dad going over manuscripts line by line, discussing, presumably, form and content. Perhaps Casey Kuipers turned to writing novels in an attempt to make some additional money. That it happened is questionable.

It's worth noting that *Deep Snow* was the first novel Zondervan ever printed with illustrations, pen-and-ink drawings that were done by Lois Nelson Kuipers, making that novel a team effort; *Chant of the Night* was the first novel Zondervan published with photographs, "Designs by Lois Nelson Kuipers," the frontispiece announces.

It's also interesting to note that Kuipers subtitles *Deep Snow*, "an Indian Novel," because later on in his life he calls all three "mission novels." There is a difference, as I've suggested: the plot of *Deep Snow* is more tightly constructed and unified. From a critical point of view, most readers would agree that when he wrote the "Indian novel," he was doing his best work. If his second novel is unified by anything, *Chant of the Night* is more broadly about life at the Zuni mission.

We should mention that *Deep Snow* includes a bibliography, an inclusion Kuipers himself recognizes as uncommon at the end of a novel. Kuipers prefaces that bibliography with a list of acknowledgments to those who helped him, specifically "my Indian friends who have made this story possible." Then he explains himself: "It is questionable whether a bibliography be necessary at all for a work of fiction," he says, and goes on to say that interest in Native culture and identity is rising among his readers. "The listing which follows by no means exhausts the field, rather it is sadly limited by facilities and time at my disposal. The recent increase in outstanding works of research and fiction of the Indian Southwest is indicative of a growing interpretation of racial esteem and helpfulness."



Kuipers, 85, at his desk with a typewriter and a dictionary. He continued to write after the 1930s, but no longer any fiction. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

There's more that could be said about the bibliography; but what is suggested both by its inclusion and its content is that C. Kuipers, novelist, may not have been thinking about a readership that was exclusively CRC. This "Indian novel" may well have been intended for a larger audience, the audience he may have been reaching in the newspaper columns and magazine articles he was writing during this time. Whether a traditional CRC audience would have looked for suggested readings from the pens of cultural anthropologists who were not connected to Christian missionary work and may have even been opposed to Christian missionaries on the reservation is questionable. *Deep Snow* is more of "an Indian novel" than it is "a mission novel."

During his years at the university (he completed his undergraduate degree in 1933 and his master's in 1934), he was writing novels at night and cleaning motel rooms during the day, while Mrs. Kuipers was waitressing and attending classes herself. To understand what is in the novels and their method of their construction, it is helpful to look at what he was studying and what he was reading.

Casey Kuipers's thesis tested an

argument related to intelligence testing, specifically the relationship between the content of the questions and the answers given by Anglo and Native students. In the abstract to that dissertation Kuipers describes the research question this way:

The purpose of this investigation was to construct an intelligence test utilizing more of Indian culture than is commonly found in intelligence tests, and to ascertain whether such an addition materially influences either Indian or white performances.<sup>12</sup>

In short, in 1934, Casey Kuipers, graduate student and novelist, was investigating the effect of cultural bias in intelligence testing, writing materials that factored Native American culture into the content with an eye toward evaluating differences in outcomes based specifically on race. Both the argument and the methodology of his thesis clearly suggest his interest not only in Native history and culture, but also in equality for indigenous people. The nature of that research reinforces the suggestion that the novels are as much about his abiding interest in the Zuni people as they are about missionary work.

During those years, Kuipers remained a Christian believer and missionary, working at a CRC mission project in Cañoncito, New Mexico, about an hour or so west from Albuquerque, where he held Sunday worship services in the Chapter House.

“Depression times made return to Zuni unlikely,” his daughter Emily wrote, in summary, when she described the places her family lived and her father worked, “so after schooling was finished, [he] obtained government positions for five years with the Bureau of Indian Affairs.” He and the family lived in Denver for most of those years, where Carol was born in February 1939.<sup>13</sup>

Just one of the many programs designed by New Deal researchers during the mid-30s was titled “The Indian Reorganization Act,” a program designed to reinvigorate life on American reservations, rather than continue the failed legacy of the Dawes Act (1888), which had privatized land holdings on reservations and failed to accomplish any of its goals, while deeding even more Native land to white homesteaders.

President Franklin Roosevelt, through the work of Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Chairman John Collier, signed what is often referred to today as “the Indian New Deal” in June of 1934, at the time *Deep Snow* was published and Kuipers was finishing his graduate degree. What specifically Kuipers notes about the positions he held from 1934 to 1939—“Statistical assignments” with TC [Technical Cooperation] -BIA Dept of Agri.—requires some historical background to unpack.

Designed to enhance opportunities for Native people on reservations, the “Indian New Deal,” among other things, teamed anthropologists with scientists, agronomists, economists, and others to try to determine how significant change in reservation

environments would alter Native life and culture. It seems clear that what he calls the “statistical assignments” he was doing for the Bureau of Indian Affairs would teach him far more about Native life than he’d known before—and in a variety of locales/reservations.

Why he was led to work for the government at that point isn’t clear, although he admits in his resume that returning to Zuni wasn’t an option in 1935. The motivation could not have been money since he made, as he noted in his resume, forty dollars a month less than he’d made at Zuni when he departed the Pueblo in January of 1932. The research was a job, and unemployment at the time was rampant.

It’s hard not to believe, however, that both his educational and psychological research, as well as his four years of experience at the Zuni Pueblo, made him a desirable candidate for a government position that required experts like him to determine the effects of changes that would occur with new programs in sheep production or water management, for instance.

Clearly, what Kuipers was learning during his years away was much more about the people he served in the Zuni Pueblo.

### ***Roaring Waters, the last novel***

The experience Kuipers had with cultural anthropology and anthropologists during his five years with the Technical Cooperation people within the BIA creates a specific character in his third and final novel, *Roaring Waters* (1937), when, for a few chapters, we meet a man named, oddly enough, Shoshone, a kind of Emersonian transcendentalist, a 1930s hippie, an anthropologist who cares only that the separate cultures sweetly embrace. Shoshone touts a cultural relativism that Kuipers obviously finds feck-

less. He encourages Koshe to take part in Shalako, the most revered of the annual Zuni religious rituals, and thereby triggers the crisis that will determine the direction of Koshe’s faith—will it be Jesus or will it be Zuni?

There is more of Kuipers’s BIA experience in *Roaring Waters*. Koshe takes a job with agriculturalists determined to create a reservoir on the reservation, believing stored water will make Zuni herdsman more efficient and thus more successful at sheep production. White, racist neighbors oppose the dam, fearing the Zuni’s increased power; but even the Zuni traditionalists oppose the project also because a dam was not previously ordained by the gods. His work with the BIA had to have put him in very similar difficult situations on a number of Native reservations.

What I suggest is that the five years Kuipers spent away doing missionary work likely increased his interest in and dedication to Native American history and culture. If the stereotyped missionary of the era is someone dedicated only to saving the souls of the lost, Kuipers isn’t that stereotype.

Two strong characteristics of his three novels work together to make them less than stellar. The first is his abiding interest in the culture he almost had to oppose as a Christian missionary; that interest alone made it difficult for him to create a Native character who would, as his evangelical readers might have expected, abandon his cultural identity and become a kind of Christian Kuipers may well have himself found difficult to imagine, or even to stomach.

The other imperative that made it difficult for him to write a good novel was his commitment to satisfy Beets—and presumably others like him—who wanted Kuipers’s novels to end with the formation of a “soldier



of the Cross.” Kuipers didn’t do that exactly with *Chant of the Night*. It had to be important to him to accomplish what Beets wanted in *Roaring Waters*, so he did it. Or tried.

Perhaps the first piece of advice I ever received from a fiction writer was to put a sticky note up on the top of my computer screen with just three words, “Tell the story.” Avoid too many words, too much exposition, too much angst about style, too much elaboration of character—“just tell the story,” he insisted.

C. Kuipers, novelist, found it increasingly difficult to “tell the story,” so much so that his eventual move away from fiction is not surprising. *Zuni Also Prays* (1947), ten years later, is not a novel.

In *Roaring Waters* Kuipers brings Koshe back, but it’s not the Koshe who selflessly braved the deep snow to bring life, but a boy, an almost juvenile Koshe, who throws a tantrum when he totally misreads the relationship between She With the Mellow Voice, the girl he adores, and a Navajo bully and bigot named Naswood, someone no one, even fellow Navajos, can stomach. Koshe’s childishness is engineered and unconvincing.

Kuipers wants to get Koshe baptized, so he carries a preordained agenda into the story that creates critical problems: characters flatten into objects when they’re meant to stand for ideas; plots disentangle and don’t surprise if they carry a fated design; settings thin into theater flats. It’s hard to sing when you preach. Koshe’s witless rejection of She with the Mellow Voice suggests that Kuipers has other designs in mind than being true to a character who has already undergone a life-changing experience; he wants to be true to an act this novel is going to map out—a happy ending, a baptism.

After Shoshone, the anthropologist/villain, urges him to participate

in Shalako, Koshe and his friend Narcisco are determined to play the esteemed roles they’re assigned by tribal elders. Once again, Kuipers offers lengthy explanations of Shalako that are interesting anthropologically, but they soon become the windy exposition most readers scan, searching madly for plot.



Rev. Kuipers in New Mexico, 1970. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Narcisco is one of the dancers whose office it is to demonstrate how swallowing a sword—something of a wooden stake—will testify to the power of the healers and gain blessings from the gods, who will, in turn, fill the reservoirs with rain for the growing season. But problems arise. “There was a sudden movement, frantic alarm at one end of the line,” Kuipers writes. “The old men did not see it; their heads were thrust back. But Koshe saw it. Narcisco, his friend Narcisco, was reeling, a stream of bright, red blood gurgling from his mouth.”

Koshe worries about his friend’s significant injury, with good reason. The next day, Narcisco’s condition appears to have worsened. One day an Anglo trader drops by and has a look. “He has quinsy, I’m telling you,” the trader says. “He will choke to death if you don’t call a doctor.”

Kuipers has placed Koshe in

exactly the kind difficult position he wants him in: “Koshe, torn between the white man’s way and the Native way, saw no way out, no middle road. ‘They [Narcisco’s parents] don’t want the doctor,’ explained he. ‘They’ve got good medicine, they say.’”

Koshe then takes the responsibility attributed to healers upon himself: “Suddenly, an inspiration struck him. Yes, he would hurry home for his sacred pouch, and he would pray for Narcisco. Surely, he was now a Hlewekwe [medicine man] himself. . . . He himself would make Narcisco well!”

It’s hard to imagine a reader who wouldn’t guess at that point that Narcisco is going to die. Koshe tries to secure a traditional cure, Kuipers showing the reader how in lavish description. But Koshe is going to fail and does. Narcisco dies, Koshe’s name plaintively on his lips.

Lanting, the missionary, conveniently happens by and, in the silence death creates, reads Psalm 90, and “it seemed that the sobbing ceased.”

At a moment in which Koshe was most confident of Zuni tradition, his good friend Narcisco died at his hands. The whole incident is manufactured in a fashion that carries no surprise.

Koshe realizes—after saying it before thinking it—that he’d return to school in Albuquerque rather than prepare for an esteemed place in the tribe. But his dilemma isn’t over. Alone in the sand dunes, he experiences his epiphany amidst a dust storm that he compares with the storm-tossed Sea of Galilee and at that moment remembers an old hymn—“Oh, Jesus is a Rock in a weary land/A shelter in the time of storm.”

“Early that afternoon the sun broke through,” Kuipers writes. “The sandstorm eased, and with it went the tempest in Koshe’s heart.”

The major conflict is resolved; Koshe is home. Casey Kuipers has delivered what his friend Dr. Beets had determined he should, “a soldier of the Cross.”

In all likelihood, the trajectory of Koshe’s story in *Roaring Waters* met with many readers’ approval. Still, just as in *Chant of the Night*, the missionary is not the agent of Koshe’s conversion to the Christian faith.

Judged on the strength of its story, *Roaring Waters* seems, of the three novels, least successful. Koshe’s coming to Jesus plays itself out predictably.

### Kuipers the novelist

Kuipers’s three mission post novels weren’t must-reads in the 1930s, and this reappraisal, eighty years later, will not send anyone to rare-book websites in hopes of buying the set. The novels he and his wife churned out in those late night sessions in tiny motel-office apartments, the kids asleep behind them, are not remarkable for their imaginative plotting or sparkling rendition of character. On the other hand, they are, I’m sure, what Casey and Lois Kuipers wanted. . . . at least to a point.

I am asserting that the novels become less accomplished—less nuanced, less character-driven—as Kuipers asks them to carry more implacable “Christian” agendas. He had to have understood Henry Beets’s critique, probably heard it elsewhere as well, especially after *Deep Snow* was released. His readers, supporters of the Zuni mission, expected something other than an indeterminate end, just as they anticipated many more baptisms than the mission was registering.

*Chant of the Night* acknowledges that criticism and retells an actual story from the history of the mission,

the baptism of a professing Zuni, Nick Tamaka, who, sadly, dies very soon after the sacrament is administered. C. Kuipers’s last novel, *Roaring Waters*, even more directly answers Beets’s criticism and returns to the young man whose heroic actions served as the climax of *Deep Snow*, follows him back into the centuries-old attraction of the tribe’s native religion, and then, when tradition fails to heal his friend, pushes Koshe to accept “the God of the white man” and become “the soldier of the cross” Dr. Beets wanted Kuipers to create.

Two significant characteristics mar the literary achievement of Cornelius Kuipers. One of them is the need to create a story in which there is a baptism. The other, perhaps just as significant, is Kuipers’s own fascination with and love for the Zuni people and the culture that is, at once, the enemy of Christian evangelism but also wonderfully fascinating to a man who took a great deal of interest in the nature of that culture.

In the centennial anniversary book celebrating the history of Zuni Mission, Carol Kuipers DeVries, Casey and Lois’s daughter, tells a story about Shalako, the most significant religious event of the Zuni calendar. Her parents, she says, generally forbade her from attending the ritual dancing; it was, after all, a powerful pagan show, the public event that almost of necessity had to be opposed by the missionaries.<sup>14</sup>

In this case, however, one of Carol’s friends, also a missionary’s daughter, is given permission to attend. Carol begs her parents to allow her to go as well. Denying her the opportunity, she says, wasn’t easy for her father “because he was himself very interested in the Zuni culture and religion, and had studied it until he became quite an expert.” That quote is parentheti-

cal; interestingly, what follows is not: “He [Casey] had a very hard time staying away from the various ceremonies himself.”

His daughter’s memories summarize what the novels reveal—C. Kuipers, novelist and missionary, found Zuni culture interesting, absorbing, and very rich. Even though as a devoted Christian missionary he found himself in a position of having to oppose the elaborate masks and kachina dancers as boldly pagan, he found himself deeply attracted to the old way, the Native way. Because he was, and because he nurtured that attachment in his education and in the jobs he took in the years when he wasn’t at Zuni, the years in which he became a novelist, those novels carry a heavy load of exposition as he tries—as he does clearly and with less difficulty in *Zuni Also Prays*—to be sure that his novels artfully and compassionately display a way of life he had to oppose but couldn’t help loving.

When Casey Kuipers, who by then had become Rev. Casey Kuipers, left Zuni for the second (and final) time, he wrote the news story in *The Christian Indian* himself (December, 1954) and summarized his work: “Truly, life on a mission field such as Zuni is not easily explained or described in words,” he wrote, despite his contribution of four books and innumerable articles. “It does not require, first of all, the bravery of a moment; rather, it takes the patience of waiting year after year in spite of unfulfilled hopes and dreams.”

That, I think Casey Kuipers would say—and did—is the truth about Zuni and the Zuni Mission. 🐾

## Endnotes

1. Brothers David Cornel De Jong and Meindert De Jong, ed.
2. A transcript of the interview is in the Cornelius Kuipers Collection (#159), Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan, box 1 folder 19, ed.
3. When I did a search for *Zuni Also Prays*, Kuipers's last book, the closest copy I could find belonged to the library of his own alma mater, Northwestern College. Written inside the cover is "C. Kuipers, Class of '17," obviously a donation by the author.
4. Henry Beets, *Toiling and Trusting: Fifty Years of Mission Work of the Christian Reformed Church among Indians and Chinese* (Grand Rapids: Grand Rapids Printing Co., 1940), 208. When reviewing Kuipers's second novel, *Chant of the Night*, Beets twice misspells the author's name as Kuyppers; "Book Review," *Missionary Monthly* (February 1935), 45, 46.
5. See: John C. DeKorne, *Navajo and Zuni for Christ* (Grand Rapids: Christian Reformed Board of Missions, 1947).
6. See Cornelius Kuipers Collection (#159), Heritage Hall, Calvin College,

- Grand Rapids, Michigan.
7. "Today in New Mexico," *Albuquerque Journal*, 17 December 1933, 6.
8. Grand Rapids: Van Noord Publishing, 1921.
9. Henry Beets, "Book Review," *Missionary Monthly* (February 1934), 45.
10. Kuipers to Henry Beets, 12 November 1934; Henry Beets Papers, Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids Michigan.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Cornelius Kuipers, "Preliminary Results of an Intelligence Test Based on Indian Culture," University of New Mexico Press, 1934 [Reprint of master's thesis], 3.
13. Kuipers's children have copies of materials presented to them by him and then compiled in an unpublished personal history titled "The Family of Cornelius Kuipers, 1898-1989: Pictures and information from old family files." At the bottom of the page, it reads, "Compiled November 1992 by Eloise Vanderbilt [a daughter]."
14. Carol DeVries-Carlson, "Carol's Shalako Adventure," a typed paper in possession of the author.

# Simple Farm Life—Graafschap, Michigan<sup>1</sup>

Carolyn Van Ess



*The Brink farm on Graafschap Road. Image courtesy of the author.*

*As the memoir notes, author Carolyn Van Ess grew up in rural Allegan County, south of Holland, Michigan. After school, she worked as a hospital nurse, geriatric nurse, private duty nurse, and hospice nurse. She and her husband, Richard, have four children, twelve grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.*

Our family lived far out in God’s country where wild flowers and thick green grass lined the gravel lane behind our home. Our family’s farm was located five miles south of Holland and five miles northeast of Saugatuck—as the crow flies—on Graafschap Road. We knew who was in every car, truck, horse, wagon, or tractor that passed our house.

John and Grace Bouws lived directly across the road; they were like our grandparents. Because Dr. Thomas didn’t always make it on time, Grace

attended and welcomed a number of the children born to Bert E. and Mary Brink. After each birth, Mama had to remain in bed for ten days. During that time Grace bathed the newborn and helped with all the other chores and needs of a growing family. My oldest sister, Ann Lucille, also helped Mama with us “young-uns,” doing housework at a young age. She recalled she missed many days of school in order to help with the work. I am sure we had at least two babies in diapers constantly. Ann Lucille longed



*Bert and Mary Brink and their thirteen children. Image courtesy of the author.*

for a sister but had four brothers before a sister was born.

During their first eight years of marriage, Mama had four children, and then six more between March 1931 and November 1936; all ten were born at home. Then “three little girls,” as we called them, were born in the maternity home on 17th Street in Holland, between 1939 and 1942. The thirteenth and last, Pearl, was named because Mama was pregnant during the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>2</sup>

I was born in 1935, ninth in order of birth. Many years later I needed my birth certificate in order to obtain a passport because we were flying to Mexico. We went to the Allegan County Courthouse, where my certificate read “Baby Girl Brink.” The clerk said, “By law, I can’t issue one unless you are registered in Lansing.” I told her that I had a driver’s license and nursing license issued by the state, but it didn’t matter to her. We waited about forty-five minutes for her to change “Baby Girl” to “Carolyn.” The person at the desk said, “Wow, this is the first time I’ve ever heard of that.”

I replied, “I’m number nine; maybe they forgot.” She responded “Oh, ouch.” My husband found humor in this.

All of us learned to work at an early age. After breakfast, chores included feeding the animals, milking the cows, cleaning the stables, and then later in the day planting crops or harvesting them, depending on the season. Everyone worked and enjoyed learning at the same time. Papa, by example, taught us how to do every task. Before he was married Papa planted gladiolus bulbs. Now, with all the kids, he had the “manpower” to increase his yield. This kept us busy all year. In the spring we planted the bulbs and bulblets. All summer we weeded the plants. In August we cut the blossoms, packed the car full, and sold them for fifty cents a dozen on two different corners in Muskegon. In the fall we dug up the bulbs and sorted them in the basement according to size, and my brothers packaged them for shipping.

Our home was a typical two-story farm house. About 15 to 20 feet from

the back porch stood the tall, stately windmill that pumped water to the 30-gallon water tank on the kitchen counter. The overflow was used to feed the barn animals. The back door led into the kitchen, whose large wood-burning range stovepipe carried the smoke up the chimney. This stove wore many hats. When it heated our kitchen during the cold months, we loved it. We had to tolerate its heat during the hot “dog days” of summer. The large grey teakettle whistled non-stop as long as the firewood was red hot, and the stove’s reservoir heated our water. On Mondays, laundry day, pots and kettles heated the extra hot water needed for the wringer washer and rinse tubs in the wash room.

For many years this wonder range cooked, baked, or heated every meal three times a day for the entire family. We hung all the laundry outside and, when necessary, finished drying it above or near the range on a wooden clothes rack. In order to iron the clothes, we heated the flat iron on top of the stove. Before church on Sundays, the wave iron was heated on the stove, too, so that my sisters and I could curl and wave our hair.

Last but not least, Saturday evening was bath and shampoo time. My older sisters would haul out the large metal laundry tub, place it in the corner near the range, stoke the fire to heat up the kettles and pots of water needed, and then, one by one, we would shed our dirty outer shell. But, as soon as the weather was warm, our older brothers drove us to Goshorn Lake<sup>3</sup> after supper for our shampoos and baths. On one occasion, while standing between Nathan and Andy on the dock, they shoved me into the deep part of the lake. Down, down, down, I plunged, thinking I was drowning. When I surfaced, they said, “Now you know how to swim,” and that was true!

There were tough times starting

29 October 1929, and they went on for many years. Our parents had many mouths to feed! We grew all our vegetables, had an apple orchard, two pear trees, and a plum tree, and the chickens supplied eggs and meat. The guys milked cows and butchered steers, pigs, goats, and cows for meat. Andrew reminded me that he and Nathan had to milk the goats every day. At times we'd have a pair of baby goats. They were so darling with their cries of "bah-bah-bah," but, like baby chicks, piglets, puppies, calves, and kittens, though so cute when they are new, they all grow up. Nathan or Andy would milk Mama's goats using a Karo syrup can for a pail and then bring it in for Mama. She could drink it as is—warm, frothy, and smelly. We were told that Herb and Nathan were slow to gain weight as babies and grew better on goat's milk.

Farmers were unable to pay their mortgages, money was tight, prices fell, even renters were told to move out unless they could pay their rent, and few could find work. Papa was blessed; although for three years he was unable to make a payment on the forty-acre farm, his creditors remained patient. We all learned to live frugally: "waste not, want not." Our parents taught us by example—if there is a will, there is a way. We were taught to never give up; defeat was not an option, and we all had to work together in order to survive. During the desolate years of the Great Depression, everyone was poor, and we all wore hand-me-down clothes and shoes.

We learned to respect our teachers, pastors, and elders. Our parents felt that those in authority were always right. If the school board members came to tell Papa about one of my brothers' deeds, they knew that they would receive their punishment as soon as the men left our yard.

The first bedroom upstairs was for the girls—three of us slept in each of



*By the time the author began attending Graafschap Christian Reformed Church, the front entrance had been enlarged from that pictured here in 1935, but the remainder of the structure was the same. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

the two beds. Ann Lucille was married by the time Pearl outgrew the crib. On the way to the boys' room was a small foyer with the "pot," if needed during the night. In the boys' room were two regular-sized beds plus one smaller one that perfectly fit under the window. Andy had the daily chore of emptying the "pot" in the outhouse—a small stand-alone building in the back, open day or night, summer or winter, known as the "two-seater," the "privy," or . . . We used the Sears Roebuck catalog in place of toilet paper. After stacking all of the dishes after supper, Berdella and I would sit in the outhouse and chat, hoping that someone else would do the dishes. Our mama had lots of patience and knew that we would eventually get them done.

For all three meals, the family sat around our extra-large oblong table, with the younger kids sitting on the bench on the far side. Papa always opened with prayer before breakfast, lunch, and supper. After meals he

would read one chapter from the King James Version of the Bible and would also close breakfast and lunch with prayer. Mama said the prayer after supper. I remember her voice often broke with emotion while she talked with God about any serious problems concerning us or others. There were two unspoken rules in our home—clean your plate, and you don't leave the table before devotions were over.

Every Sunday morning we piled into the car to go to church. There was no nursery at church, so Mama stayed home with the little ones and the newest baby. She didn't go out until several weeks later, when the baby was to be baptized. The "mama-to-be" stopped going out in public when her next pregnancy began to show.

Every Sunday morning at 9:00 and again at 9:30, our janitor would pull down on the heavy rope making the cast-iron bell ring and echo through the countryside. The large bell sat in the belfry encased in a stately steeple pointing heavenward. On Sunday morning Graafschap Church would fill to capacity, and the long pew up front near the pulpit seemed to be waiting for the Brink family. We never heard anyone say it, but as we filed in at the last minute, many thought, "Now we can start." The services were somber and stiff. Reverend Harry Blystra led all three services on Sunday: the morning and evening services were in English; the afternoon service was in Dutch. While the organist played, the elders marched in and sat together. We sang from the *Psalter Hymnal*. There was no choir. During church we would each get a white peppermint. We all attended Sunday school and catechism classes with our own age group. Life was simple; we knew God was real. He was present in our church, home, and even in our school. In Westview School, grades 1-8, our teacher began the day with a prayer, and then we would sing

hymns. The teacher would also close the day with prayer.

We would usually walk to and from school and then change our clothes to work. Depending on the season, we canned fruits, vegetables, pork, or beef, our only way of preserving food for the long winter months. Our



*Rev. Harry Blystra (1891-1974) was the pastor of Graafschap Christian Reformed Church for fifteen years, 1932-1947. Image courtesy of Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

brothers would go outside and prepare the fields for cultivating, planting, or the harvest; plus they cared for all the animals. We always had horses, cows, pigs, goats, and chickens. We had a team of big heavy-duty work horses; we called them “plugs.” Our very first brand new orange Model B Allis Chalmers tractor was purchased in 1939; everyone was thrilled with its power.

In my large family there were many accidents, sores, boils, and almost all the childhood diseases. To treat many symptoms, the folks used old home remedies like Vicks VapoRub, Watkins liniment and salve, bag balm, Epsom salt soaks, and rest, and a warm flannel diaper made swollen cheeks from the mumps feel better. Dr. Thomas was seldom called—we usually played the waiting game. We relied

on prayers to our Great Physician for healing. If one child happened to escape a disease such as scarlet fever, my brother Willard said that it would come back and strike our family two times. Public Health Nurse Miss Westveer visited our family frequently, giving Mama some good advice. With the second round of scarlet fever she posted a sign in our window “Under Quarantine,” so the ten older ones moved to our rented house down the gravel road where Ervin and Ann Lucille were in charge. We heard about all the fun they had, but by bedtime Andy and I got homesick and went back to get scarlet fever. Many years later I met Miss Westveer visiting her relatives at our church, and I asked her if she remembered the Brink family. “Oh, my, yes, I surely do. I loved your big family. Your mama always gave me beautiful flowers.”

My siblings and I always walked the mile to Westview School, but the family drove the three miles along Graafschap Road to church. I don’t recall how old I was when one morning the family drove off without me after the church service! I started walking to the comer and then down the hill. In those days, everyone’s dog was free to roam and watch over their land. I was a stranger to them. Suddenly, a huge brown barking dog

began running straight at me down the driveway of a farm! I was shaking, petrified, and began running. Finally, one mile from our home, I saw Willard looking for me at Westview School. When Willard saw me he said, “You are too quiet. That’s why we didn’t miss you.” As we turned the comer near home, my siblings were playing ball without me. I am not sure which hurt more, the mad dog or the fact that no one had missed me.

With a few exceptions, everyone in the family worked hard all the time. One of the exceptions was when our aunts and uncles came over with their kids on Friday evenings. We would play kick-the-can or hide-and-seek. Later, after eating snacks, we would play hide-the-thimble, Rook, or Old Maid. Uncle John and Aunt Dena Genzink had ten kids, and she made ground bologna sandwiches and chocolate cake. Their house was our favorite place to visit. We could go to visit only if we had a cousin near our age; this limited how many went in the one car. Sunday was the only day of the week that we played. On Sunday afternoons we played bat and ball in our neighbor’s pasture. We didn’t have any gloves and just one bat and one ball. We played by our own rules and had fun choosing sides; fieldstones were used for the bases.



*An Allis Chalmers Model B tractor like the first tractor owned by the Brink family. Public domain image.*

We had some exciting, down-home, tough games.

Mama baked white bread two times per week. I am ashamed to say that when Mr. Jacobs, our bread man, stopped to see if the Bouws and Brink families wanted some baked goods, the packaged loaf bread looked so yummy. Occasionally we could buy two-day-old sweets. Papa shopped for groceries each week to get staples, like twenty-five pounds of flour, oatmeal, raisins, crackers, rusks, sugar, Karo syrup, honey, and nuts. We baked corn bread in a large heavy-duty fry pan on top of the stove. We would fetch as much kernel corn from the granary as we needed, grind it fine, and add eggs, milk, and a little baking soda. Bake, and serve warm, adding milk as desired. Berdella started cooking around age ten. The brothers said, ‘We never had such good cooking!’ She made the best soups and sauces, delicious cookies, and frosted cakes for Sunday afternoon coffee time.

All the rest of our food was organically grown. Our brothers milked the cows and brought the milk to the kitchen; we had no refrigeration or freezer. The milk we didn’t use was added to a huge 30-gallon milk tank kept in the coolest corner of the barn. Our milkman would pick it up every other day, but never on Sunday. We gathered eggs daily from the chicken coops. The chickens could roam inside or outside, which means the eggs and the meat were organic. Mama cleaned each egg and packed the fresh eggs daily, and then Papa would bring them to Hamilton (Michigan) Farm Bureau for cash and purchase extra animals or farm equipment. Every Saturday evening Papa would chop the heads off one or two chickens, let them flop in the grass, heat the water to boiling, pour this over the chickens, and then pluck their feathers. We’d remove their innards and then soak them in water until Sunday

morning in preparation for soup for dinner. We grew our own vegetables, even enough for the winter and spring months. Root vegetables—carrots, potatoes, and turnips—were kept covered with soil in bushel baskets that were stored in the basement. This kept them nice and fresh.

When Papa and my brothers butchered either a pig or a cow, after the guts were removed, the carcass was halved and hung up in the barn to age. The first evening supper meal after slaughter meant fried liver; we all liked this tender meat. After the carcass aged a bit, the brothers would carry each half of the animal to be processed to the kitchen table. They would cut it up like stew meat; the sisters would then pack it in two-quart glass jars, add one teaspoon of table salt, apply the red rubber seals around the mouths of the jars, tightly screw on Mason lids, stoke up the ol’ range, fill the copper boiler half full of water, add thirteen jars of meat, cover, and then boil them for three to three and a half hours.

This canned meat was delicious; it required only a warm-up, and the thickened juice made the best gravy.

We would dig some potatoes, pull a bunch of carrots, make coleslaw, add fresh tomatoes, and our meal was ready for a group. Years later, Willard and Jerry ground meat into hamburger with a large handmade grinder, and then Berdella prepared some good, new dishes like chili and spaghetti.

Mama made headcheese;<sup>4</sup> she cooked it while we were at school. She put it in loaf pans after thickening it with wheat flour and adding diced liver, salt, and pepper. We had it for breakfast, fried on both sides, and it tasted pretty good. We also sliced side pork, fried it well, and then dipped a slice of bread into the grease and added Karo syrup or honey. The pails that contained syrup became our lunch pails: remember “waste not, want not.” Our usual breakfast was cooked oatmeal with brown sugar and fresh milk.

Ann Lucille, being the oldest daughter, helped raise all of the younger children. I doubt if Ervin, just eleven months older and a strong-willed child, was any help to her. I think all twelve of us younger than him would agree. Ann Lucille knew how to do everything. Marjorie said, “She taught me how to sew and mend clothes at an early age.” Berdella and I wore the nice dresses she made to high school. My very first new coat was bright blue and all mine at age fifteen, as a senior in high school.

After Aunt Kate passed away, Mama watched over Uncle John



Sisters, Gloria (left) and the author, on the hood of their brother’s 1949 Lincoln. Behind is the gravel lane mentioned by the author. Image courtesy of the author.



(Hesselink). I went with her to clean house for him. He once gave her a \$20 bill, which was generous, coming from him. When we arrived home she cleaned out her apron pockets, losing the \$20 bill in the flames of the cooking stove. Mama or Ann Lucille would allow us to skip school in order to help houseclean in the spring. We didn't have a vacuum cleaner. We would drag rugs outside and hang them on the clothesline and, with a hand beater, beat the dirt out of them. When we cleaned the boys' room, their third mattress, being three-fourths of a regular-sized bed, required fresh straw from the straw mound once per year. Afterwards it looked softer and smelled better.

Father was a hard-working businessman; he gave the Lord our first fruits, never leftovers. One Thanksgiving worship service he handed each of us a \$5 bill to put in the offering plate. I remember thinking, are we going to have enough for dinner? Shame on me! Of course, we always had a huge stuffed turkey with all the trimmings. When the brothers and Papa butchered an animal, a portion was taken to Rev. Blystra's family, along with fresh vegetables. We were all taught to live frugally, to make do with what we had.

I think every one of us enjoyed getting a good deal. Papa went often to car, cattle, and farm auctions; he sure knew how to bid with the nod of his head. Herb talks of driving the truck to Grand Rapids, as Papa would buy fresh fruit at the early-morning market to sell again back in Saugatuck. They would leave by four in the morning. When Papa got sleepy, he'd say to Herb, "I am going to take a nap, so you drive now." This was before Herb turned fifteen. He remembers he could barely see over the steering wheel and work the floor pedals at the same time. Years later, Andrew went with Papa to the



Miss Schevink's 1949 class in Westview School. The author (back row, third from the right) and her siblings Nathan, Berdella, and George comprised one-fourth of the class. Image courtesy of the author.

Chicago stockyards to buy beef cattle. The truck was at Tucker's Garage to get the brakes fixed, but Papa was determined to drive the following day even though the mechanic was not yet finished with the brakes. Andrew, at sixteen, drove in the heavy downtown rush-hour traffic. Even riding the brakes with all his might, he couldn't come to a complete stop entering an intersection.

The country was slowly recovering from the Great Depression when

on 7 December 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. We joined the Allies in a dangerous, widespread global war that caused life to change. Factories had to make things for the war effort; silk and later nylon was needed to make parachutes. Women began to work the evening shifts. This was necessary to feed their families, as the men were inducted to serve our country. Car sales to civilians were put on hold from 1943 through 1945. Gas, sugar, coffee, processed foods, and



The Westview School was the only school building in the former Allegan County School District 19 and stands on the east side of Graafschap Road, north of 140th Avenue in Allegan County. It was also known as Klomparens School and Becksvoort School. Image courtesy of the author.

meats were some of the items rationed with stamps. Mama would give some neighbors stamps when we didn't need all those issued to us.

These were tough, serious years. Many of our young men died.<sup>5</sup> If they served overseas, they might be gone for three years. Surface mail was the only form of communicating with family and friends. Many women waited years to marry their “man in the military.” This war was vicious, rightly named World War II. Loved ones often didn't hear from those in service for long periods of time. Some were notified that a loved one was “missing in action,” like our cousin Jim Genzink. This war cost more than the federal government had spent since 1776.

Ervin loved airplanes and wanted to become a pilot, so he volunteered to serve in the Army Air Corps (later Air Force). Herb was deferred from service until 1944, when Uncle Sam knew there were two other brothers, Willard and Jerry, to help on the farm. Mama prayed every day after supper for the safety of Ervin serving in the Air Force and Herb in the Army, while her voice broke, fighting back the tears. Then, after prayer, she would read their letters to us. While Herb was sailing to Japan, the peace treaty was formally signed on 2 September

1945. We all celebrated at Graafschap Church in the evening; as the bells tolled, we gathered in praise to God for PEACE!!! This event marked the only time we rode to church on our flat-bed work truck, and Nathan recalls we even went to downtown Holland to cruise down 8th Street honking the horn. What fun! That was known as V-J Day—Victory over Japan Day. Families with sons serving in the military were given red, white, and blue banners about 10 by 12 inches to hang in the window, with a star for each person serving their country. We proudly hung our banner in the front window with two blue stars hanging from a gold-braid cord. Each week on the way to church we passed by a family who had lost a son, and his blue star was replaced by a gold star. Afterwards, many of our servicemen would not discuss what they had heard or seen in battle.

During the war our government promised farmers that if they would increase their production and buy twenty more milk cows to help provide food for our people, their sons would be deferred from the military. This led to our family working a new farm. The new farm we called “the plains” or “the bulb field,” and Mama called it “the sand farm.” The farm consisted of 240 acres, but only

sixty acres were being cultivated. Our brothers cleared more of the woods in order to cultivate more for planting crops. Our first expedition, new to all of us including the cattle, I think, was driving the twenty head of cattle from our home on Graafschap Road the four miles south and then another mile west along the Old Allegan Road (now 136th Avenue)<sup>6</sup> in the spring to the hip-roof barn and the endless pasture land. Every once in a while a few cattle sneaked into a nearby corn field. The neighbors did not appreciate one bit the stray cattle helping themselves to their harvest. In the fall we drove them back to our own farm.

For years before this, Papa rented land for growing gladiolus bulbs, as our soil was clay and they needed sandy soil. This rented land was perfect—our business grew, and we all enjoyed the landscape, the acres of woods, and lots of places to explore.

At the new farm, our work routine changed. After we fixed our lunch for the day—usually cooked rice with raisins and our drink, a mix of ginger, sugar, and vinegar—Papa and the brothers would hitch up our team of horses to the wagon. Papa would sit on a 30-gallon barrel while driving the horses, and our needed supplies for a big day of work were on the wagon. We all sat on the wagon's edges with our legs hanging down. In working the gladioli, the older brothers would plant and drive the horses (later tractors). The work was varied, but there was enough for everyone.

During our lunch breaks we explored the gully, finding springs trickling slowly down the hillside, the water finding its way to the shallow creek, flowing over the stones and making the water crystal clear. We waded into the creek to cool off and then cupped our hands to drink the cool water until our thirst was quenched. Looking up, we could see a variety of beautiful trees towering

*The Union Stock Yards in Chicago during the 1940s, once the largest meat-processing area in the world; the yards closed in 1971. Public domain image.*



over the wildflowers and tall grasses. We had found an enchanted forest—what fun! The brothers checked if the cattle were inside their fences. We girls found large areas of clean beach sand, just like at Saugatuck Oval.<sup>7</sup> This was great for bare feet; I think all summer we all walked without shoes. Wandering farther north, we found a wild blackberry patch; the berries were juicy and big. We picked them and decided to bring containers in order to take them home for meals and canning. Sometime later we found that winds had drifted the sand and covered the berry patch, killing the entire patch. But, walking to the east we found a smaller area had sprung up, giving us their tasty big blackberries.

Willard told me that our government gave us 10,000 red pine seedlings to plant; in time, as they grew taller, they stopped the shifting sands. Many years later, those twigs grew to be fifty to sixty feet tall; some are still standing to this day. Andrew remembers that when his older brothers were spreading manure with pitchforks, he begged for Nathan's three-tined fork in order to try it himself. With all of his might behind the fork, he pitched the fork right through his great toe, and was unable to pull it out. Nathan was able to pull it out on the same slant it went in. Herb had the motorcycle there, so he was ready to bring the injured one home. As Herb revved up the motor and began to move, Andrew flipped over backward to the ground.

Once, when riding home from the bulb field after a usual good day's work, Papa was driving the horses while sitting on his barrel; he was unaware of our plans. We had each picked up a stone to throw at a large metal sign placed near the intersection of Highway US 31 and Graafschap Road. It was a sign advertising chicks from some hatchery near

Zeeland. All at once, bang, boom, bang, boom; we all must have hit the sign. The horses were spooked and reared up on their hind legs. Lucky for us Papa got them calmed down, or we would all have had to walk home. Andrew received the punishment because his older brothers fled the scene. We girls hit the chicken sign as well, but I don't recall ever getting punished like he did.



*A Michigan gladioli field, like those cultivated by the Brink family. Public Domain image.*

At a young age our brothers learned to drive all of our machinery—tractors, trucks, and cars—sometimes stretching in order to see over the hood and reach the floor pedals at the same time. We girls didn't learn how to drive as early as the boys. But one afternoon at the bulb field, Papa said to me, "We have too many vehicles here, so you have to drive the car home, but watch for the highway." Scared was not the right word to describe me; petrified, yes! I don't think we had our horses any longer, or they would have beat me home.

Father was an excellent farmer and businessman; the gladioli were in demand as bulbs, and as flowers for weddings and funerals, both during and after the war. We had a large

work force, and the business expanded. Our brothers learned all the ins and outs of farming, and many years later five of them became successful farmers.

In 1944 Ann Lucille married Jack Kraal; he had been discharged from the service due to suffering a sunstroke while in California. After Herb had completed his tour of duty in 1946, he convinced Papa that we

needed indoor plumbing and a full bathroom, and that we needed to have the kitchen remodeled. Wow! No more heating water, an automatic shower, and a flush toilet. We even replaced the Sears catalog with nice soft toilet paper. When Ervin returned, he went to Calvin College on the GI Bill; he married Laura Briggs in Graafschap Church. At the reception, I can't recall what was served but remember that Laura played her violin and sang "The Love of God" beautifully. Laura graduated from King's College in New York State. In 1949, Ervin also graduated from King's College as a minister of the Methodist Church.

Papa was a good steward of his success. He gave back to the Lord as he was blessed; his favored giving was to the *Back to God Hour*,

Oval Beach in Saugatuck is located near the former outlet of the Kalamazoo River into Lake Michigan.



Graafschap Church, and Holland Christian Schools. In 1949 Nathan and I were the last to graduate from the eighth grade at Westview School. Papa helped our church buy a school bus for students bound for Christian High, including Berdella, Nathan, and me. The rest, Andrew, Gloria, June, and Pearl, went to different elementary schools but rode the bus. When I was a high school senior, our eldest niece, Anita, daughter of Ann Lucille and Jack, rode the bus to kindergarten since they lived near us.

In May of 1953, after graduating from Holland Christian High School, my sister-in-law Laura told me about a full-year course in practical nursing at Grand Rapids Junior College. Upon investigation, I learned that the tuition was \$165, in addition to the cost of textbooks, which was \$10, and the cost of my nursing uniforms. I had always worked on the family farm, along with my siblings, and we did so without pay. It was hard to imagine saving enough money for this, but I applied anyway. In June 1953 I received my acceptance letter

from the junior college, which fueled my dream and spurred me on to find a way to save the tuition and enroll as a nursing student.

Mr. Bransburger, a local farmer in Saugatuck, hired me for the summer. I worked twelve-hour days at fifty cents an hour picking fruits and vegetables and then selling them at his roadside stand. By the end of the summer, I had earned enough for tuition as well as room and board to live in the city. All my life I had lived near Holland, rarely venturing past the boundaries of our farm except to attend church and school. I had been to downtown Grand Rapids only a few times in my life, and the prospect of actually living in a large city seemed overwhelming to me.

My fears were dispelled by my dear sister-in-law, Mary Brink, who lived in the Grand Rapids area and knew the city well. Together we searched the “rooms for rent” ads in the *Grand Rapids Press* and drove around town to find an appropriate and affordable place for me to call home. My first living arrangement was a room on the

second floor of an elderly woman’s home on College NE, just north of Highland Park. She charged me \$8 per week for the bedroom, and I shared the family bathroom downstairs. I lived on tomatoes and pears until she told me I could store milk or whatever in their refrigerator.

I did have reservations regarding the bachelor son who also called this place home. The long walk to classes in the fall was lovely. My boyfriend drove me home each Friday night for the weekend; the evenings were spent studying. After I had moved in, the lady’s married son came back home. He was strange, weird-looking, bearded, a curious type of person. After sharing with my sister Marge my dilemma of the scary guy living downstairs, she asked her sister-in-law, Ann Vannette, if I could live with her until I found a better place. Ann lived close to the junior college in a beautiful apartment on the tenth floor in Park Place overlooking the big city. Ann was generous enough to share her beautiful home with me at no cost.

Next I lived with the Obermans, a Jewish family who resided in a suburban two-story home on Alger SE. In exchange for babysitting services for their two little daughters, I received room and board. Mr. Oberman worked in Grand Rapids and drove me to junior college each day. After class I rode the public bus back to their home. In addition to my babysitting, Mrs. Oberman offered to pay me \$5 to clean her house on Saturdays, which I gladly did. I used this money for my daily bus fare as well as for an occasional trip to Holland on the train.

I spent the first four months at junior college taking classes, and the remainder of the year working directly with the patients at St. Mary’s Hospital, full time for \$8 per day. The hospital’s main entrance was on Cherry Street; just inside the front

hallway stood a statue of Jesus with flickering candles at his feet. In the dark hallway this appeared a bit eerie to us, not being familiar with the Catholic tradition. We learned that a mass card could be purchased from the priest, who in turn would light a candle and pray for a departed loved one. I learned so much that year and also developed friendships that would last a lifetime.

One of my classmates, Joan Remmelts, invited me to live with her family during our hospital internship and to this day remains a dear friend. They lived in a large home on Burr Oak NE. Years later she admitted never even asking her parents, just knowing it would be a fine arrangement. The rent was \$11 per week, which was a small price to pay in exchange for the security of a wonderful home, her generous parents, Jay and Kate, the company of her brothers, the companionship of my friend, my own room, and good meals shared together. As if this weren't enough, their neighbor, who worked in Grand Rapids, gave us a ride each

morning to the Cherry Street entrance of the hospital. After work, Joan and I rode the bus home, talking, laughing, and retelling the events of the day as nursing students. These were busy months, full of surprises for us.

In September 1954, we both graduated at the age of seventeen. We were not eligible to take the State Board exams until our eighteenth birthdays (mine was in November and Joan's was in December). We could take them the next January. Finally our birthdays came, and we made plans to go to Detroit to take our exams. At the hospital we met a girl named Estelle, who knew the area well. She had failed her boards the year before. The three of us boarded the train for Detroit. She was instrumental in making the arrangements for us to stay at a hotel, and she recommended a restaurant. This was my first experience staying at a hotel. I passed the exams and returned to Grand Rapids, nearly broke, and ready to begin my nursing career. I was hired by Sr. Charlene, to work on the orthopedic floor at St. Mary's Hospital. 🐣

### Endnotes

1. This article is excerpted from the author's much larger memoir, titled "My Medical Memories"; a copy is available in Heritage Hall, Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan.

2. Bert Brink and Mary Beld were married in 1921 and had thirteen children: Ervin (1922), Ann Lucille (1923), Herb (1925), Willard (1928), Jerry (1931), Marjorie (1932), Berdella (1933), Nathan (1934), Carolyn (1935), Andrew (1936), Gloria (1939), June (1941), and Pearl (1942).

3. The lake is just north of Saugatuck, Michigan, and was a few miles west of the family's second farm.

4. With the addition of flour to the mixture this dish was scrapple, which is often also called headcheese, but true headcheese does not contain flour. [ed.]

5. Due to a variety of circumstances, no accurate death numbers during WW II are possible, but US military deaths were about 407,000 of the 22-30 million military deaths worldwide; another 38-55 million civilians died during the war.

6. The farm was located where the Ravines Golf Course is today.

7. The municipal beach on Lake Michigan in Saugatuck, Michigan.

# Journalist, Author, and Zionist —Pierre Van Paassen

Gerlof D. Homan

In the 1930s and 1940s Pierre Van Paassen was well known as a journalist and author, and as probably the most outspoken and prominent gentile Zionist of his time. He was born in Gorinchem (also Gorkum, about twenty-five miles east of Rotterdam), the Netherlands, in 1895, as



*Pierre Van Paassen's publicity photograph. Image courtesy of the author.*

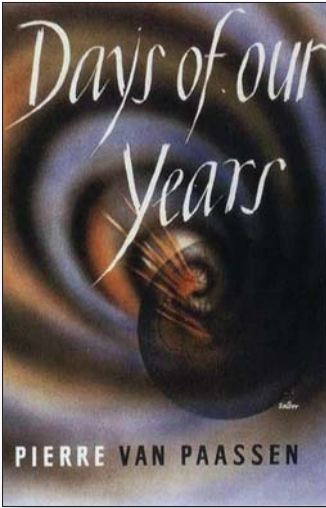
Pieter Antonie Laurusse van Paassen. His father, Adriaan van Paassen, was of Flemish descent, and his mother, Antonia Sizoo, of Italian Waldensian descent. They owned a small pottery store. His given name was Pieter, and he referred to himself as both Pieter and Pierre, but he used the latter when writing.<sup>1</sup> He grew up in a very strict Calvinist home where much was forbidden; almost everything was considered “sin, sin, sin,” he lamented. In fact, his life was overshadowed by a “cloud of gloom,” and man was considered a miserable sinner “doomed to hellfire under the curse of original sin.”<sup>2</sup> But Van Paassen also claimed

he was exposed at an early age to the ideas of the Enlightenment by his “Uncle Kees.” Although he made numerous references in his writings to “Uncle Kees,” he had no such uncle. Most likely he was exposed to the world of the Enlightenment when he was in his twenties.

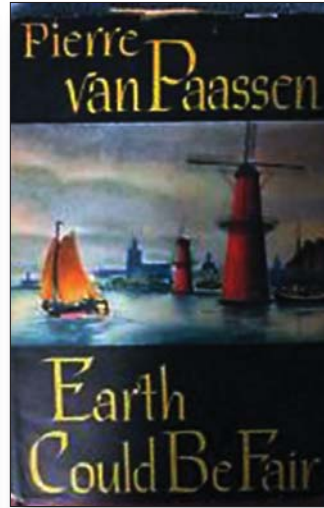
He attended a Christian elementary school, a local gymnasium, and for four years a secondary school that emphasized classical studies. He later made misleading claims about formal training. He did not attend the famous Erasmiaans Gymnasium in Rotterdam, and he may have taken some courses at the *Faculté libre de théologie Protestant de Paris*. He did not, as is reported in the *New York Times* obituary (9 January 1968), graduate from the *École pratique des hautes études*. Van Paassen was well-read but mostly self-taught.

In 1911 the Van Paassen family immigrated to Toronto, Canada, most likely for economic reasons. In Toronto he may have attended Victoria College, a Methodist institution, but there is no evidence he did. He did have contact with local Methodists and decided to become a lay pastor under the auspices of the Methodist church. First he went to Edmonton, Alberta, and later to Porcupine and Timmins, Ontario.<sup>3</sup> But after a few years he left the ministry and in 1914 married Ethel Ann Russell. Not much later he was the father of Antonia (Molly). At that time he was employed as a munitions worker. But in July 1919, casting aside his previously-held beliefs of Christian pacifism, he enlisted in the Canadian army.<sup>4</sup> He served in France on the western

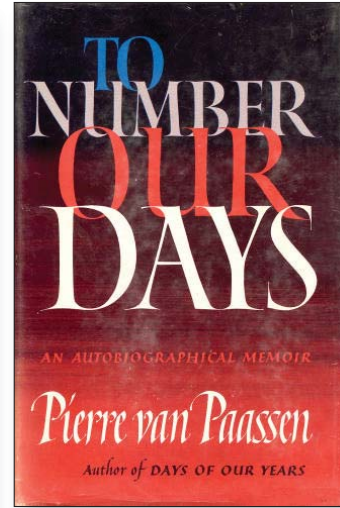
*Gerlof D. Homan has previously published in, among other periodicals, Origins, Pro Rege, and DIS Magazine. He is an emeritus professor of history at Illinois State University, where he taught European History, Contemporary History, and the History of Peace. He continues his research into Dutch and Dutch-American history topics.*



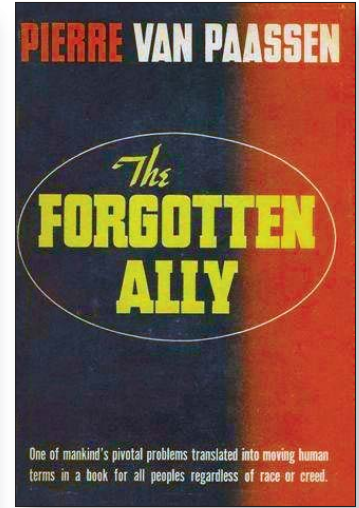
Van Paassen's first book, *Days of Our Years* (1939).



Van Paassen's account of the coming of anti-Semitism to Germany between the two world wars, published in 1946.



*To Number Our Days*, published in 1964, details Van Paassen's life as a journalist during the 1930s.



Published in 1943, *The Forgotten Ally*, detailing the contribution of Jews to the war effort, became a best seller.

front with the so-called Foresters doing mostly railroad construction. He did not fracture his left arm during the collapse of a tunnel, as he later alleged, but fractured it during boot camp.<sup>5</sup> It is quite possible he enlisted in order to escape an unhappy marriage, since he and Ethel later separated and still later he married his first cousin, Cornelia (Coralie) Machelina Sizoo, also born in Gorinchem.<sup>6</sup>

### Journalist

Upon his return in 1919, he decided to embark on a career in journalism, a task for which he was well-suited as he had considerable linguistic and writing skills. He worked for various newspapers such as the *Toronto Globe*, the *Atlanta Constitution*, the *New York World*, and the *Toronto Star*. The liberal *Star* seemed to be the right fit for him. In the course of his journalistic career, Van Paassen traveled to various parts of Europe, the Middle East, Russia, and Africa and became well known in the journalistic world. In fact, staff at the *Star* welcomed him with a party and were dazzled by stories of his journalistic exploits.<sup>7</sup>

Soon after the Nazi assumption of

power in January 1933 Van Paassen warned against the dangers of National Socialism. The Nazis, he wrote, reminded him of the racist KKK in the United States. Their weapons were terror, intimidation, and deception, and he warned that Hitler, a man without a program save "hatred, ignorance, and vulgarity," was driving a great and disillusioned nation to perdition. Furthermore, he warned against the Hitler ideology that numbed the critical faculties of the German masses, taught them hatred, and drove them into "tantrums of fury against other nations."<sup>8</sup> While reporting for the *Star*, he often detailed Nazi brutalities in Germany, making that paper one of the few to do so. Because of his reporting, Van Paassen claimed, he was one day attacked by some storm troopers and spent a night in a Munich jail. But he also claimed with "supporting evidence" that he spent eleven days in March 1933 in the Nazi concentration camp Dachau. Van Paassen also tried to predict Nazi foreign policy, which he believed was aimed at establishing German world domination.<sup>9</sup>

In 1936 Van Paassen was suddenly

dismissed by the *Star*. He was accused of reporting on the Spanish Civil War while staying in his apartment in Paris and of anti-Catholic bias in his dispatches. Most likely it was the latter charge that was the more important; the *Star* did not want to alienate its large number of Catholic readers.<sup>10</sup> Van Paassen, with a left-wing political persuasion, was very critical of Catholic support of the Spanish right-wing conservative insurgents, led by General Francisco Franco, against the democratic, republican government in Spain.

### Zionist

His dismissal meant more or less the end of his journalistic career. Subsequently, he devoted much time to the Zionist cause and to writing several books. His first book, *Days of Our Years* (1939), is partly autobiographical and decried the unstable post-War European world. It was an instant bestseller and went through twenty-two printings by 1943.<sup>11</sup> It made Van Paassen a well-known public figure and much-sought-after speaker. His next book, *That Day Alone*,<sup>12</sup> was mostly about life in Gorinchem.

Much of it is fictitious, however, as is the case with *Earth Could Be Fair: A Chronicle* (1946),<sup>13</sup> and *To Number Our Days* (1964). *Earth Could Be Fair* purportedly tells the story of Gorinchem's war-time experiences and was based, Van Paassen claimed, on many letters from relatives and others in the Netherlands, but the account is totally fictitious.

Much of his time and energy in the late 1930s was devoted to the Zionist cause. Zionism was the international movement for the reestablishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>14</sup> The Dreyfus affair particularly stimulated the growth of the Zionist movement. Alfred Dreyfus was a Jewish captain in the French army who was falsely accused of espionage in 1894 and sentenced to life imprisonment on Devil's Island, French Guiana. When further evidence proved Dreyfus's innocence, the French army and government initially were unwilling to reopen the case: protecting the honor of the French army was more important than establishing justice, it was argued. Well-known author Émile Zola was among those who tried to obtain justice for Dreyfus. Later the case was finally reopened and Dreyfus was exonerated.<sup>15</sup> During this entire episode, France, a democracy, witnessed an outburst of virulent anti-Semitism. A solution seemed to be the creation of an independent Jewish state.

In 1897 Theodor Herzl and others founded the World Zionist Organization, which advocated for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, in an area about as large as Massachusetts. The 1914 population of this area totaled about 800,000, of whom 650,000 were Muslim Arabs, 80,000 Christians, and 60,000 Jews. Many of the latter had recently come from Russia and Eastern Europe.<sup>16</sup> In the United States, which by 1900 had a fairly large Jewish population, various Zionist organiza-



*Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), the French artillery officer of Jewish background whose trial and conviction in 1894 on charges of treason influenced Van Paassen's move toward Zionism. Public domain image.*

tions, such as the Zionist Federation of America, were founded in support of the creation of this state. A number of Christians and statesmen, such as British Prime Minister Lloyd George and US President Woodrow Wilson, also advocated in favor of this.

The cause received considerable impetus in 1917 when the British government issued the so-called Balfour Declaration, which expressed the British government's support for establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, at the time when the British army was approaching Jerusalem.<sup>17</sup> After World War I, Palestine became a mandate of the League of Nations to be administered by Great Britain. During the years between the two world wars, a large number of Jews settled in Palestine, significantly spurred as the Nazi persecution of the Jews began. Conflicts arose between Arabs and Jews as a result. In order to appease the Arab nations, Britain decided in 1939 to limit Jewish emigration to 75,000 and to create a bi-national state by 1944, decisions that did not please Zionists.<sup>18</sup>

As a boy growing up in Gorinchem,

Van Paassen had come to appreciate the trials and triumphs of the ancient Israelites. Although he resented the many restrictions of his Calvinist faith, he considered Calvinism to be the heir of Judaism. "As the son of a Bible people," he looked forward "with lively anticipation towards the fulfillment of the age-old dream of the Jewish people." He also considered Palestine his spiritual home. Both Judaism and Calvinism, he asserted, had contributed significantly to Christian civilization.<sup>19</sup> Visits to Palestine in the 1920s also influenced his thinking. He described the Jewish economic improvement he saw as one of the "wonders of his age." At the same time he felt the Jews had contributed to the emancipation of the native Palestinian peasants.<sup>20</sup>

Van Paassen also claims he was influenced by the Dreyfus affair after having seen a movie on these dramatic events four times. Van Paassen also had some contact with the local Jewish community because of his mother's and other Calvinists' efforts to convert them to Christianity. Van Paassen's credibility in the matter is further compromised by his subsequent description of the local Jewish community's destruction during the Holocaust, when about one-half of the Gorinchem Jewish community perished, supposedly based on letters from the Netherlands, as pure fiction.<sup>21</sup>

Instead, Van Paassen seems to have embraced Zionism because of his humanitarian impulses, as others did during the 1930s who organized a number of committees in the United States, some of which were supported by Christian Zionists. He had great sympathy for the persecuted Jews, who, he felt, needed a homeland where they would be free. To him, Zionism was the "Social Gospel of Judaism."<sup>22</sup>

In the 1920s and 1930s Van

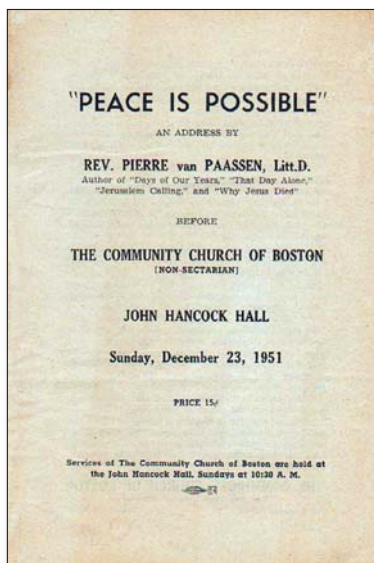


Paassen spoke to various Christian and Jewish congregations about Zionism and joined the short-lived Pro-Palestinian Federation of the United States.<sup>23</sup> In 1941 he joined the Committee for a Jewish Army for Stateless and Palestinian Jews. He made a few public appearance on behalf of that committee; and in December of that year was chosen to serve as its chairman.<sup>24</sup> Many American Zionists supported the idea of a Jewish army to fight alongside the Allies against Nazi Germany. But they did not want to press the British too much, given Britain's difficult position vis-à-vis the Arab powers and its important role in defeating Germany. But others were determined to press the British. Among them were delegates of the *Irgun Zvai Leumi* [National Military Organization], a Jewish Palestinian underground organization that often conducted acts of terror against Jews, Palestinians, and the British. Van Paassen became so frustrated and discouraged with their influence and tactics in the committee that he resigned in January 1943, accusing them of "fascist" methods. He also resigned because he was not made of the "stuff that makes leadership" and felt very awkward as a goy (Yiddish for gentile) in a dispute among Zionists.<sup>25</sup>

He remained active, however, on behalf of Zionism. In September 1943 he wrote an open letter on behalf of the Emergency Committee to Save the Jewish People to US President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, asking them to establish an inter-government agency with powers to rescue the Jewish people in Europe and to open the "doors of the Holy Land to its children."<sup>26</sup> In the same year he wrote the bestseller *The Forgotten Ally*, in which he stressed the importance of the Jewish contribution to the war effort. Many Jews were serving in the British army, he pointed out, while Palestine

was making an important economic contribution.<sup>27</sup>

Van Paassen was very pleased with the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. The Jews now had reappeared on the scene of history, he felt.<sup>28</sup> Like most of his contemporaries he did not believe Palestinians had been driven from their homeland by the Israelis during the brief war between Israel and the Arab powers, 1948-49. He asserted that the Mufti



This 1951 essay explains Van Paassen's move toward pacifism.

of Jerusalem and spiritual leader, Mohammad Amin al Huseyani had been responsible for the Arab flight.<sup>29</sup> Evidence revealed since has demonstrated this was not the case.<sup>30</sup>

Van Paassen believed Israel would be a model nation and laboratory where humankind's problems would be tested.<sup>31</sup> Aside from the satisfaction he derived from the creation of the State of Israel, Van Paassen also gained personal recognition from his Zionist endeavors. He had always had, according to fellow Zionist Joseph Brainin, "a great suppressed desire" to receive an honorary degree from the Jewish Institute of Religion in New York. This wish was granted on 9 June

1946, when the Institute granted that "Dutch Calvinist Unitarian," who had been a "magnificent, doughty, fiercely eloquent defender of Jewish rights" the honorary degree in Hebrew letters.<sup>32</sup> This honorary degree filled a significant "gap" in his life; he had never had the benefit of much formal education except for a few years of secondary school and perhaps some academic work at Victoria College. In spite of his claims to be a graduate of the Erasmiaans Gymnasium in Rotterdam and the École pratique des hautes études in Paris, this degree was the only one he received.

### Author and Unitarian Minister in the Post-War Era

In the years after World War II, Van Paassen continued writing books and a few shorter pieces, most of which had a religious content. One of the most interesting was *A Pilgrim's Vow*, in which he takes the reader on a pilgrimage through the Holy Land to visit many biblical sites.<sup>33</sup> He also wrote a biography of the Italian martyr Girolamo Savonarola (1452-1498), who was executed for his criticism of widespread abuse and corruption in the Catholic Church.<sup>34</sup> In *Why Jesus Died*, Van Paassen blames not the Jews but Roman officials for Jesus's execution. According to Van Paassen, the Romans considered Jesus a subversive, a dangerous agitator, a messianic rabble-rouser, and a seditionist who might try to replace the empire by the theocracy of Yaweh. Furthermore, he rejected the "metaphysical person" of Jesus who emerged from the creeds; to him that person was a symbol borrowed from Greek philosophy and mythology. Van Paassen also rejected what he called the "myth" of the resurrection.<sup>35</sup>

*Why I Became a Unitarian* explains his rejection of the "petrification of the American people's innate religious sentiments" and the "creedal

churches.” He wanted to belong to a “militant church,” which by progressive social action demonstrates that it did not look upon the concept of the kingdom of God as a miraculous fairy tale or a recompense in a vague hereafter. . . .” His ideal church was one advocated by the Dutch Remonstrant theologian and Christian pacifist Gerrit Jan Heering (1879-1934), a church that entered the arena of life to overcome the institutions of injustice, exploitation, discrimination, and violence of this world.<sup>36</sup> Apparently Van Paassen had returned to his pacifist roots. Not surprisingly, Van Paassen was ordained a pastor by the Unitarian Church on 20 January 1946. In this capacity he often spoke to various audiences.<sup>37</sup>

Van Paassen was a prolific writer who used his journalistic skills to warn against the dangers of National Socialism and to speak on behalf of the persecuted Jews. Unfortunately, much of his other writing has limited historical value as he tended to fictionalize events and individuals including aspects of his own life. That was especially true of his Gorinchem stories. Considering this kind of disposition, one may rightly question the veracity of his other writings. His contributions to the Zionist cause were valuable, but, like many of his contemporaries, Van Paassen had not thought enough about the consequences of implementing Zionist ideals. He was also a bit unrealistic if not naïve about Israel’s future and its place in the complex world of the Middle East. ☺

### Endnotes

1. In the Gorinchem Gemeente Archief [County Archive], Van Paassen’s name is registered as Pieter Antonie Laurusse van Paassen. Autobiographical details of Van Paassen’s early life can be found in at least three of his books: *Days of Our Years* (New York: Hillman-Curl Inc., 1939); *That Day Alone* (New York: Dial Press, 1941); and *To Number Our Days* (New York: Scribner’s, 1964). The accounts vary on details in places.

2. Van Paassen, *Days of Our Years*, 21-24.

3. Toronto: Archives United Church of Christ.

4. Van Paassen asserted he was shamed or forced into enlisting by a furious super-patriotic mob, *Days of Our Years*, 64-65. Details on his military career can be found in Ottawa: Canada Library and Archives. RG 150. Accession 1992-93/166-30. Regimental no. 249785.

5. Ottawa: Canada Library and Archives. RG150. Accession 1992-93/166. Box 9908-30. Regimental no. 2497852. For some reason, Van Paassen informed enlistment officials he was born in Gorinchem, Belgium. He also gave 1894 as the year of his birth.

6. Details on Van Paassen’s personal and domestic life are confusing. He and Ethel were married on 5 May 1914. Most likely Pierre and Coralie began living together in the early 1920s and married in 1940. *Current Biography* (New York: Wilson and Company, 1942), 856. According to Pierre’s grandson, Hugo, when Pierre and Coralie were unable to find their marriage certificate one day, they decided to (re?) marry in 1940. Most likely that was first time they were married. Pierre and Coralie raised Hugo, son of Pierre and Ethel Russell’s daughter, Antonia Molly. However, Hugo was told Pierre and Coralie were his parents and Antonia Molly his sister. Some of the details of this family history came from the author’s correspondence with Hugo Van Paassen and the latter’s daughter, Julie Plyler. I cannot thank Julie Plyler enough for all her help to unravel some family mysteries.

7. Hugh W. Morrison, “Pierre Van Paassen’s Rise and Fall with the *Toronto Star*” and “Van Paassen’s Last Supper.” Unpublished mss. Ottawa: Canada Library and Archives. RG 30. Series E 408. v 7.

8. *Star*, 29 March 1933; Van Paassen,

“The Danger to the World Peace,” in Pierre Van Paassen and James Waterman Wise, eds., *Nazism: The Assault on Civilization* (New York: Smith and Haas, 1934), 226.

9. Van Paassen, *The Time Is Now!* (New York: Dial Press, 1941), passim.

10. Ross Harkness. *J.E. Atkinson of the Star* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1963), 301-305.

11. Van Paassen’s first four books sold one million copies. *Newsweek*, 6 May 1946.

12. (New York: Dial Press, 1941).

13. (New York: Dial Press, 1946). There is a Dutch translation of *Earth Could Be Fair: A Chronicle* (*De aarde zou schoon kunnen zijn* (Amsterdam: Spieghele, 1947).

14. There is a considerable amount of literature on the Zionist movement. Very helpful was Raphael Patai, ed., *Encyclopedia of Zionism and Israel* (New York: Herzl Press, 1971), passim.

15. There is a large amount of literature on the Dreyfus affair. A good introduction is Guy Chapman, *The Dreyfus Trials* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972).

16. Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land Two Peoples* (Edinburgh, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 73.

17. Jonathan Schneer, *The Balfour Declaration: The Origins of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: Random House, 2010).

18. J.C.Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (London: Schocken Books, 1976), 94ff.

19. Van Paassen, *Days of Our Years*, 351ff.

20. *Ibid.*

21. Van Paassen, *Earth Could Be Fair*, 470ff; Bart Stamkot, *Geschiedenis van de stad Gorinchem* (Amsterdam: Bert Stamkot, 1987), 96.

22. Van Paassen, *Jerusalem Calling!* (New York: Dial Press, 1950), 228.

23. Van Paassen, *To Number Our Days*, 249ff; and Paul C. Merkley, *The Politics of Christian Zionism, 1891-1948* (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 106-113.

24. *Congressional Record*, 77th Congress. First Session, 87, part 13 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1941), A34537.

25. Pierre Van Paassen, “Letter to the Editor,” *The Protestant*, April 1944.

26. Van Paassen, “Letter to the

Editor," *The Answer*, September 1944.

27. Van Paassen, *The Forgotten Ally* (New York: Dial Press, 1943), passim.

28. Van Paassen, *Jerusalem Calling!* 218.

29. *Ibid*, 176-177.

30. Ilan Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2006).

31. Van Paassen, *Jerusalem Calling!* 232-234.

32. Correspondence on this matter is in New York: Archive Jewish Institute of Religion MS-19. Box 7, file 6.

33. (New York: Dial Press, 1956),

34. There is a Dutch translation titled *Een ongewoon reisverhaal: Een pelgrimage door het Heilige Land* (The Hague: Boekencentrum, 1959).

34. *A Crown of Fire: The Life and Times of Girolamo Savonarola* (New York: Scribner, [1960]).

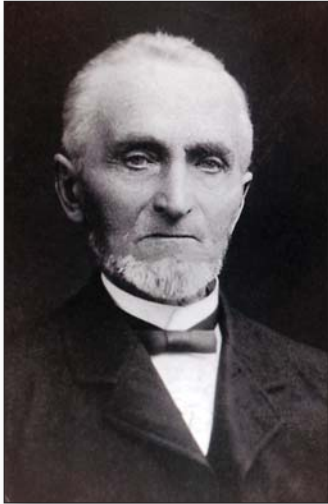
35. *Why Jesus Died* (New York: Dial Press, 1949, passim. Van Paassen's views were influenced by Charles Guignebert (1867-1939), a prominent French historian who wrote on the life of Jesus and the history of the early Christian Church.

36. *Why I Became a Unitarian* (Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1950). His concern for peace was also expressed in his essay *Peace is Possible* (Boston: Community Church of Boston, 1951). Gerrit Jan Heering (1879-1935) was a Remonstrant theologian and minister who taught at the University of Leiden. He was the author of *De Zondeval van het Christendom: Een studie over het Christendom, staat en oorlog* (The Fall of Christianity: A Study of Christianity, the State and War) (Arnhem, Van Loghum Slaterus], 1923). In it he makes a plea for Christian pacifism. The book went through five editions between 1928 and 1981 and was translated into Danish, French, German, and English. The Remonstrants seceded from the Gereformeerde Church in 1619 over the issue of predestination.

37. Archives of the Unitarian Church, Andover Harvard Theological Library, Boston, MA.

# An Immigrant with Pretensions<sup>1</sup>

L. Vogelaar



The elder Pieter van Woerden (1830-1906). Image courtesy of the author.

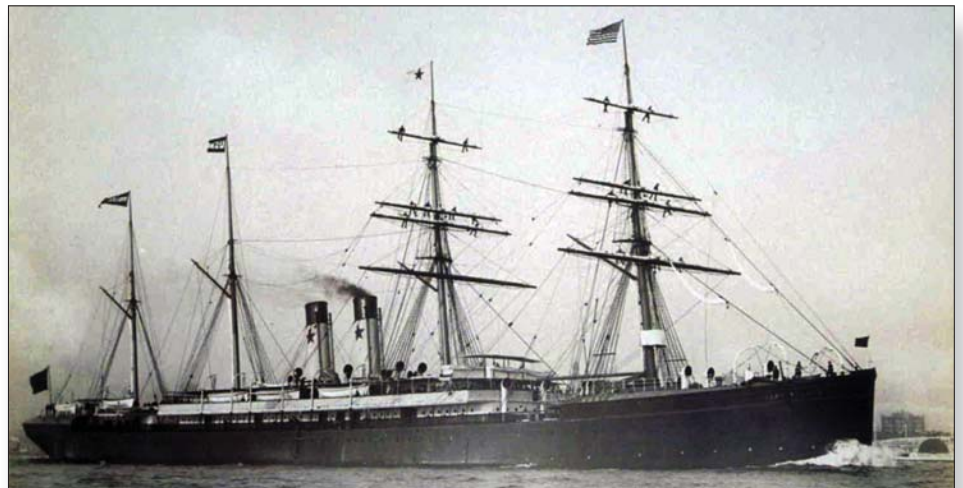
**P**[ieter] Court Van Woerden was well known, and even notorious, in the Dutch-American community around 1910. In the Netherlands he was known for preaching, practicing medicine, fighting against the use of alcohol, and speaking about the Dutch royal family. Although able in some of these pursuits, he was not trained or qualified in all and, when his shortcomings made life difficult in the Netherlands, he emigrated to the United States.

Van Woerden, whose given name was Pieter, was born on 20 June 1866 in Delft, the Netherlands. He was the seventh of fourteen children born to Pieter Van Woerden (1830-1906) and Lijgina van Driel (1836-1913).<sup>2</sup> The elder Pieter, also from Delft, worked in the flax seed oil industry and served on the city council. Lijgina van Driel was from Bleiswijk, a village about eight miles due east of Delft. The Van Woerden family can be traced back to 1570, and the younger

Pieter is in the tenth generation of this tree. In the United States he embellished his heritage by claiming to be from an ancient Dutch family tracing back to the Duke of Woerden, whose lineage traces back to the eleventh century.

When Van Woerden was a teenager, he ran away from home and sailed on the *Westernland*, bound for America. He had mailed a letter to his father apprising him of his intentions. The father cabled New York, notifying the authorities of the situation and asking that they take his son into custody, which they did. He was duly returned to the Netherlands on the same ship. After his return he may have studied chemistry, although the evidence for this isn't certain. As an adult he moved to the small city of Buren in the province of Gelderland and is listed as the owner of the windmill "The Prince of Orange," 1891-1893.

Of Van Woerden's five brothers who lived into adulthood, three



Built for the Red Star Line in 1883, SS *Westernland* sailed between Antwerp and New York or Philadelphia, with stops at Southampton and Liverpool. Public domain image.

L. Vogelaar (1967) from Scherpenzeel, the Netherlands, is a journalist of the *Reformatorisch Dagblad*. Since 1987 he has also published many books and articles about history, especially of the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* in the Netherlands and their sister church in the United States and Canada, the *Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC)*.

became well known in church or business circles. The oldest, Hugo Cornelis (1857-1912), was director of the Algemeene Landsdrukkerij (National Printing Company) in Den Haag. This company published the *Staatscourant*, the official periodical of the national government. Cornelis Bernardus (1860-1932) moved to Akkrum, Friesland, and became a wholesaler of butter and cheese. His company's large building still stands there, with the Van Woerden name in large white letters. He became well known as C. B. Van Woerden Sr, translating books by English and Scottish theologians into Dutch, as did his son C. B. (Cor) Van Woerden Jr. They did not attend a church, instead read printed sermons in their home. Another brother, Jan Cornelis (1870-1935), became a merchant in the sugar trade and was called "Suiker-Jan" (Sugar John). In the Nieuwe Kerk in Delft there is a memorial of Jan's work as president of those who maintained the church buildings. Ijsbrand (the second sibling with this name, 1875-1941) operated a successful bookstore in Chicago for a time before returning to the Netherlands. Jacob (1865-1941) lived a respectable but modest life. The three sisters, Catharina Alida (1862-1903), Maria Elizabeth (1864-1949), and Jannetje Lijgina (1868-1885), did not marry.

Pieter was twenty-five when he married Jacoba Maria den Hartog on 13 January 1892 in Maassluis, her home town, equidistant from Delft to the northeast and Rotterdam to the east. Their two children were born in Maassluis: son Ijsbrand Johannes (29 December 1892) and daughter Lijgina (28 February 1894, died 26 June 1894).

### Preaching and Public Speaking

During the early 1890s Van Woerden became involved in ministry. There is data that in September 1892 he

preached in a church service in the room above the "Meat Hall" in Rotterdam. Reportedly he was a gifted public speaker and could make listeners laugh or cry.<sup>3</sup> In both 1892 and 1893 he received a call from Maassluis, probably to be an evangelist or exhorter (lay preacher), calls he finally accepted.

One of Van Woerden's biggest problems in Maassluis was the abuse of alcohol. On 5 April 1895 he was a



At the left, Pieter van Woerden (1866-1946) with his brother Cornelis Bernardus (1860-1932). Image courtesy of the author.

speaker at the first public meeting of the Christian *Geheel-Onthouders* (Total Abstainers) Society *Eben-Haëzer* in Rotterdam. In September of that year a newspaper reported that Van Woerden, who was becoming well known for his public speaking, was invited by the Christian Young Men's Society *Paulus* to speak in Kralingen. There he pleaded for total abstinence and strongly emphasized the harmful effects of drinking alcohol.<sup>4</sup> The misery caused by alcoholism was also the subject when he spoke on 2 February

1897 at a gathering of the Order of Good Templars in Rotterdam. The one-half million members of this fraternal order worldwide advocated against drinking alcohol. Members promised to never again drink, serve, or trade any alcohol. The Netherlands had six of these lodges. Ultimately, Van Woerden came to conclude that it was better to remove wine from the celebration of the Lord's Supper.<sup>5</sup>

He became known for speaking on topics in addition to abstaining from alcohol. In November 1895 he spoke in Rotterdam to the *watergeuzen*<sup>6</sup> society *Pro Patria*, whose principal aim was to commemorate the House of Orange, the Dutch royal house. On 13 January 1896 he spoke on "The press and its errors watched from an anti-socialist view."<sup>7</sup> On 1 April 1897 Van Woerden spoke briefly but powerfully at the freedom monument in Rotterdam in commemoration of the 325<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Den Briel, the first city taken from the Spaniards by the *watergeuzen*. A newspaper described it as a "short speech sparkling of patriotism."<sup>8</sup> He recalled the battle for independence and the courage of the *watergeuzen*, who fought with the slogan "God, Orange, and the Netherlands." He closed, wishing well to the queen of the Netherlands. Before he was able to finish, all the hats and caps flew into the air as the audience shouted three times "Oranje boven!" (Literally the House of Orange is the best, similar to Long live the House of Orange).<sup>9</sup>

He apparently also served a congregation just south of Rotterdam. A newspaper indicated that on 26 July 1897 Van Woerden preached his farewell sermon and was given a beautiful Staten Bible<sup>10</sup> as a remembrance. Touched by the many tokens of love and affection, Van Woerden thanked the meeting, Psalm 68:10 was sung, and everyone was wished the Lord's blessing. Less than two months later,



*Pieter van Woerden after he had run away to the United States and had been sent back. Image courtesy of the author.*

an announcement was published that a church building would be built in Smitshoek, also south of Rotterdam, in which Evangelist Van Woerden would preach regularly and that land for this had been purchased. In anticipation of the construction of the evangelism building, regular worship services were held on Sundays in an empty building belonging to Mr. Van Ekelenburg.<sup>11</sup> An indication of the interest in the preaching by Evangelist Van Woerden is that pew rental produced much more income than previously. Only a week later the newspaper reported that Van Woerden was looking for another (probably larger) building.<sup>12</sup>

### Misfortune and emigration

In spite of evangelism work and well-received public speaking, his personal life was troubled; his marriage ended in divorce on 8 October 1901 in Den Haag.<sup>13</sup> The divorce meant he was no longer accepted as an evangelist, and he left the Smitshoek evangelism society. What he did next for work is

unclear, but in December the judge in Vianen, south of Utrecht and thirty miles east of Smitshoek, assessed Van Woerden a fine of 100 guilders or thirty days in jail, for unlawfully practicing medicine.<sup>14</sup>

He emigrated to the United States in 1902, where he took up his previous activities, preaching, practicing medicine, fighting against the use of alcohol, and speaking about the Dutch royal family. A. Dingemanse, an immigrant from Vlissingen living in Denver, may have been referring to Van Woerden when he wrote, "He had been an assistant teacher in the province of Zuid-Holland, but he wanted to be a minister and therefore he came to America. (At the moment there are so many preachers who come to the pulpit via astounding means in

Canada and the United States. In some cases it is unbelievable how they have reached their goal.)"<sup>15</sup>

There are reports that a "Rev. P. Van Woerden" preached in Muskegon, Michigan, in 1903, probably in the church that had become vacant after Rev. M. H. A. Van Der Valk returned to the Netherlands in 1902. On 3 July 1905, the consistory of the Netherlands Reformed Congregation (NRC) on Division Avenue in Grand Rapids recorded in its minutes that the consistory of Fremont, Michigan, wrote that they had accepted Dr. Van Woerden as minister, and he had been installed by John Van Den Broek.<sup>16</sup> After this was discussed, the consistory unanimously decided that Elder Merison would tell them that since they had their own minister, the union between Grand Rapids and Fremont to share a minister had come to an end.<sup>17</sup>

Shortly after this Van Woerden must have adopted the name Court, for from this time forward he was usually cited as P. Court Van Woerden, as is the case in the 1906 minutes of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC).<sup>18</sup> The reason for the name change is not clear. After a few years, Van Woerden left the small congregation in Fremont and settled in Grand Rapids, where he reestablished his ties with the Netherlands Reformed congregations there in 1909.<sup>19</sup>

In Grand Rapids Van Woerden ran afoul of the law and was tried for practicing medicine without a license, as had been the case in the Netherlands. In Superior Court, Cornelis Meyer, the father of the child who was a victim of Van Woerden's medical intervention, was the main witness for the prosecution. Meyer admitted that he knew that Van Woerden was not a licensed physician when he asked for his help. When it was too late, Dr. George Baert from Zeeland<sup>20</sup> was

P. COURT VAN WOERDEN.



**Urine Specialiteit.**

Mr. P. Court Van Woerden, de welbekende urine expert, en geemployeerd door Dr. J. W. Was, is als zoodanig te spreken, aan Dr. Was's offices 10727 Michigan Ave., des Dinsdags van 9-12 a. m. 2-5 p. m. en 7-9 p. m., en Vrijdags aan 't zelfde office van 1-2 p. m. en 7-8 p. m.

Donderdags aan Dr. Was's office in Chicago, no. 2121 west 12th st. (oud no. 988), 's morgens 9-12 ure, 's namiddags van 1-5 ure, 's avonds van 6-8:30.

Zondag, Maandag, Woensdag en Zaterdag zijn Dr. J. W. Was's officieuren aan zijn woonhuis, no. 13 111th st., Roseland, 's namiddags 2-4 ure, 's avonds 7-9 ure.

*An advertisement from De Grondwet featuring Van Woerden's chemistry work for Dr. Was, 18 December 1909.*

asked to come, who remained until the child died. Van Woerden responded that he did not serve as a physician as Meyer knew that very well. The *Grand Rapids Press* of 15 December 1906 reports that Van Woerden was found guilty and, three days later, fined \$100 for practicing medicine without a license.

He moved to the Chicago area and in 1907 is listed as a pastor from the Roseland Neighborhood of Chicago when he established a Dutch Reformed Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba.<sup>21</sup> The congregation later was served by Rev. John Van den Broek (from August 1907 until April 1908).<sup>22</sup> In May 1908, Van Woerden, almost forty-two, married twenty-five-year-old Martha Wiersema (1883-1976) in Chicago. She had been born in Pieterburen, Groningen, the daughter of Kornelis Wiersema and Kornelia van der Schaaf. Martha's brother Nicholas and sister Gertie also lived in the United States, in Evergreen Park, Illinois. Van Woerden and his second wife had two sons: Peter Cornelius (1910-1987), and Cornelis Martinus (1914-1984).

In the summer of 1909, Pieter's younger brother, Ijsbrand (1875-1941), emigrated to America. He married Wilhelmina Dorothea Van Der Plas (1877-1927) and later Hendrika J. Bolink. Ijsbrand opened a bookstore in Roseland.<sup>23</sup> He also probably published a few sermons of Pieter's. But, Ijsbrand did other things as well. In 1914 he applied for a patent for "certain new and useful Improvements in an Egg-Testing Apparatus." He received this patent in 1915. Shortly after that he returned to the Netherlands.

On 28 May 1909 Pieter Van Woerden spoke to the Roseland Health Insurance Society about "Willem I, Prince of Orange, Father of the Fatherland" and later on the same topic to the Chicago branch of a



Van Woerden with his second wife, Martha Wiersema, and their sons, Peter (left) and Cornelis. The photo was taken at their home on Pettibone Street in Crown Point, Indiana. Image courtesy of the author.

Dutch American Society. In June 1910 a meeting took place in the vestry of the Reformed Church on 62nd Street with Van Woerden presiding. The purpose was to establish a Christian Anti-Saloon Society.<sup>24</sup> Van Woerden was the founder and president of the society, which also opposed prostitution, gambling, and crime.

In 1909 and 1910, Van Woerden's photo appeared almost weekly in an advertisement in *De Grondwet* in which he offered his services for the analyzing of urine as part of the services provide by Dr. J. W. Was. This newspaper announcement in 1909 was as follows:

It is handy to know for the inhabitants of Lansing and surroundings, that the famous specialist in the urine research Mr. P. Court Van Woerden can be consulted every Wednesday in Lansing at Mr. C. de Kreek's place. Mr. de Kreek lives in the house of Mr. A. de Heus, who trades vegetables, onions, etc.

In the old country, Mr. Van Woerden has been a doctor for years. He was one of the doctors who discern the character of the disease from examining the urine. In the U.S. Mr. P. Court Van Woerden may not act as a doctor.

He keeps the laws of the country strictly and does not act as a doctor. Dr. J. W. Was, who had heard praise of the great competency of Van Woerden in the examining of the urine for a long time already, has hired him for that. The great success which Mr. Van Woerden always has had, does not fail to happen again. Great crowds of people flow towards Dr. J. W. Was to bring their urine and to have Mr. Van Woerden examine it. . . .

In a later advertisement Van Woerden's credibility was attested by noting that he received a very high salary from Dr. J. W. Was. But "Time and again it is alleged, both by doctors and others, that Dr. J. W. Was knew nothing of the practice of medicine, and that the urine examination by Van Woerden was a swindle. Others disagreed. Apparently, Van Woerden did act as a doctor, for after a young man in Chicago passed away, his brother-in-law blamed Van Woerden. There are claims that Van Woerden studied at the University of Illinois in Chicago.<sup>25</sup> On 16 September 1910, *Onze Toekomst* announced: "We are happy to report that Mr. P. Court Van



The south and west façades of the Van Woerden Warehouse at Galemaleane 6, in Akkrum, Friesland. The Van Woerden name is on the front (east) façade. Public domain image.

Woerden, our well-known Dutch chemist and urologist, will be connected, beginning 16 September, with the Medical Specialty Company. He will now be able to employ his mind in a more extensive sphere, and to be of even more help to suffering humanity, than heretofore.”

Van Woerden’s lack of medical qualifications had been recognized in both the Netherlands and United States, but his ability as a chemist and his method of urinalysis attracted the attention of medical authorities. Even while still a boy, he proved that he had a natural talent for chemistry and, according to an advertisement, drew the attention of a chemist, De

Kruijf, who lived in Delft. Van Woerden learned much in the sphere of urinalysis from De Kruijf; he continued studies with Dr. Bastiaan de Haan from Bleskensgraaf, whose reputation was known throughout Europe.<sup>26</sup> In Grand Rapids, Van Woerden came to the attention of the Grand Rapids Medical College.<sup>27</sup> In Chicago his services were requested by the Medical Specialty Company which, after a strict examination, offered him a salary of \$5,000 per year for work in the field of urinalysis.

#### Other activities

On 3 June 1911, Van Woerden spoke in Holland, Michigan, on found-

ing a colony in Florida. He did not go to Florida himself, however, but stayed in Illinois, where he became involved in politics, particularly the Progressive Party. He also founded an independent Presbyterian congregation north of Chicago,<sup>28</sup> which may

have been organized after Rev. Van den Broek died on 8 February 1913, and his church group disbanded. According to Robert Swierenga’s *Dutch Chicago*, a short-lived Dutch Holland Presbyterian church was established by Van Woerden, an Englewood physician and lay cleric, in 1913 on the South Side.<sup>29</sup> Like Van Woerden’s wife, most of the members of this new congregation came from the province of Groningen.

Together with Rev. A. Lokker from Kalamazoo, Michigan, and Rev. Isaac Contant from Lodi, New Jersey,<sup>30</sup> Van Woerden served unaffiliated congregations in Roseland.<sup>31</sup> But Van Woerden must not have been licensed as a minister, for couples whom he married had to remarry later. He must have stayed with the Roseland group until the 1930s, when elders read sermons. The congregation disbanded about 1947.<sup>32</sup>

In 1916 Van Woerden moved to Lake County, Illinois, and the next February he became an American citizen. He continued to work to improve social conditions and focused on working with those incarcerated or institutionalized, as well as working in national and local efforts to ameliorate racial discrimination.<sup>33</sup> Van Woerden died in 1946 in Crown Point, Indiana, at the age of seventy-nine. His widow survived him by more than thirty years. 🐦



After a varied career, Van Woerden enjoyed fishing in retirement. Image courtesy of the author.



## Endnotes

1. I am indebted to and thank Rev. Gerrit Bieze of Grand Rapids for much information about Van Woerden. Bieze was baptized by Van Woerden in Chicago.
2. The first-born, Cornelius Bernardus, lived just eight days: the ninth, IJsbrand, lived to be three and a half; and the last two were stillbirths.
3. Informatienu provided by Th. Van Woerden of Lexmond, the Netherlands.
4. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 7 September 1895.
5. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 3 February 1897.
6. *Watergeuzen* (sea beggars) were the rebels who sought independence from Spain in the sixteenth century.
7. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 13 January 1896.
8. *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 3 April 1897.
9. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 3 April 1897.
10. The *Statenvertaling* (States Translation) or *Statenbijbel* (States' Bible) is the first Bible translation from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into Dutch, and was ordered by the government of the Protestant Dutch Republic first published in 1637. Since then a half million copies have been printed and it remained authoritative in Protestant churches well into the twentieth century.
11. *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad*, 8 January, 15 January, 23 February, and 5 April 1898, and 7 June 1899.
12. About 1903, the evangelism post in Smitshoek built the *Zuiderkapel* (South Chapel). Other than newspaper stories, there are no records from this effort extant.
13. Jacoba Maria never remarried and died on 4 June 1957 in Driebergen at the age of ninety-six.
14. *Het Nieuws van den Dag*, 9 December 1901.
15. *Bijzonderheden uit het leven en de bekeering van A. Dingemanse, geboren te Gapinge, eiland Walcheren, Zeeland en overleden te Denver, Colorado, Noord-Amerika (Medegedeeld in brieven aan vrienden en uitgegeven door zijne weduwe, Kalamazoo, 1921.*
16. Rev. J. Van den Broek (1849-1913) had been a minister in Alblasserdam/Kinderdijk, Gouda, Nieuw-Amsterdam, and Den Helder. He published the periodicals *De geestelijke Wandelaar* and *Het Olijfblad*. In 1887 he emigrated to the United States after being involved in marital infidelity. He founded an independent congregation in Grand Rapids. Like Van Woerden, he also advertised his work in medicine.
17. Van den Broek founded several congregations in Illinois, Minnesota, Iowa, and South Dakota. He baptized children of parents who had not made confession of faith and who therefore could not be baptized in the Christian Reformed Church. Van den Broek made preaching tours to these congregations and also published church periodicals for them. The Fremont congregation may have belonged to this church group for a short while.
18. I described the history of the Fremont congregation in Volume 1 of the series *A Memorial Stone Set Up. The History of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in North America* (Norwich, Ontario: GA Printing, 2012).
19. *Acta der Synode van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk*, 22 June 1906; p. 26
20. Richard H. Harms, "The Baerts of Zeeland, Michigan, and the Development of Medical Education in the Nineteenth Century," *Origins* (Fall 2013) 13-22.
21. "Dutch Church in Winnipeg," *Winnipeg Tribune*, 9 December 1911. Klaas and Reindert de Vries, *Leaving Home Forever* (Windsor: Electa Press Series, 1995).
22. After Rev. Van den Broek returned to Grand Rapids, the congregation in Winnipeg joined the Christian Reformed Church, the second one on Canadian soil; Nobleford (Nijverdal) in Alberta had been the first one, in 1905. The present Covenant CRC in Winnipeg is a merger of this congregation (Elmwood) and a second-generation immigrant church that was started in the early 1960s.
23. *Onze Toekomst* (the Chicago Dutch-language weekly newspaper) announced on 24 September 1909, "New Bookstore. We have often pointed to the desirability of a good Dutch book store in Chicago. According to information received this desire has now been fulfilled. Mr. I. J. S. Brand (sic) Van Woerden, who only last summer came from the Netherlands to Chicago, has opened such a book store. It is located at 10727 Michigan Avenue, Roseland. We trust that Mr. Van Woerden has started this business in the right way and in that case he will be successful. Chicago is a desirable location for such an undertaking."
24. *Onze Toekomst*, 24 June 1910.
25. Information of Rev. Gerrit Bieze.
26. *Onze Toekomst*, 16 September 1910.
27. Richard H. Harms, "Whatever Happened to the Grand Rapids Medical College?" in "Wonderland Magazine," *Grand Rapids Press*, 4 December 1988, 39. The college closed in 1905 as the Medical School at the University of Michigan and the Michigan Medical College in Detroit expanded.
28. The *Banner* of 26 June 1913 announced, "A new Holland congregation was organized in our city, not of our denomination, nor of the Reformed, but of the persuasion. The minister in charge of this church is Mr. Court Van Woerden, one of the Holland leaders of the Progressive Party last fall. Mr. Van Woerden is a good speaker and preached for a group of people near Fremont about seven years ago."
29. Robert P. Swierenga, *Dutch Chicago: a History of the Hollanders in the Windy City* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002) 151.
30. Information on Rev. Isaac Conant can be found at [http://www.calvin.edu/cgi-bin/lib/crcmd/search.pl?ID=369&prevmode=name&termid=380&act=show\\_details](http://www.calvin.edu/cgi-bin/lib/crcmd/search.pl?ID=369&prevmode=name&termid=380&act=show_details).
31. This congregation ceased to exist after members left for Bethany RCA in Roseland, where Dr. H. J. Hager had been installed as pastor.
32. A young man from this congregation, George J. Ossenjuk, became a Presbyterian minister in 1931.
33. *Evening Tribune, Register-Republic, and State Times Advocate*, 12 December 1930.

# book reviews

## Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City

Robert P. Swierenga

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.  
& Van Raalte Press, 2014

Hardcover

Dr. Robert P. Swierenga, Dean of Dutch-American Studies and Albertus C. Van Raalte Research Professor, A.C. Van Raalte Institute, Hope College, Holland, Michigan, spent the past ten years researching the history of Holland, Michigan. The result of this prodigious labor is now available in *Holland, Michigan: From Dutch Colony to Dynamic City*. In 2002 reviewers admired Swierenga's *Dutch Chicago* for, among other attributes, its extensively detailed work. Since *Holland, Michigan* is three times longer than the *Chicago* book, it is an even more detailed look at a community that began as Dutch-American and is undergoing significant social, cultural, ethnic, and economic diversification. The work with its extensive index serves as an encyclopedic history of the community founded in 1847 as well as a micro- and comprehensive history of an immigrant community in the United States.

With 2,286 pages of text, 92 pages of appendices, nearly 900 illustrations, and 199 pages of two-columned index, *Holland, Michigan* is not a work that can be read in a few sittings. In fact, attempting to read it as such may well lead to being overwhelmed with a

cavalcade of information. Some might be daunted by this and perhaps even criticize, but this is scholarship that will repeatedly be savored. Further, the author has divided the work into topics and sub-topics which, combined with his engaging writing style, result in lively vignettes that can be read on their own, yet contribute to the larger narrative.

The book can be read for detailed information on a single topic, such as a local congregation like Zion Lutheran Church, or broad themes such as the religious history of a changing and increasingly diverse ethnic community. Topics in the three volumes include the coming of the Dutch beginning in 1847, the Native People they met and those who chose to live among the new immigrants, schools, grassroots politics, the effects of the world wars and the Great Depression, businesses, industries, city institutions, downtown renewal, and social and cultural life in Holland. Robert Swierenga also draws attention to founder Van Raalte's particular role in forming the city—everything from planning streets to establishing churches and schools, nurturing industry, and encouraging entrepreneurs.

The first thirty-two chapters are essays on a variety of historical topics, while the final two chapters deal with the present potential of the community. A reader expecting a single historical narrative may become disheartened when it seems a section may cover years discussed in previous sections. But the author's episodic treatment avoids overwhelming readers with

facts while allowing him to present a cogent account of complex events.

Swierenga begins with the Ottawa living on Lake Macatawa (also known as Black Lake) when the first Euro-Americans arrived. Some may wonder why there is nothing on the earlier woodland peoples known to have inhabited West Michigan, since evidence of these people has been found in the Holland area. But such evidence is sparse and scattered, compared to sites found elsewhere in southwestern Lower Michigan or along major rivers like the Grand to the north, and therefore have received more attention from archeologists. Rather, Swierenga focuses on the diversity of the community from the arrival of the Euro-Americans forward. He details the diversity among the Dutch immigrants, many of whom had previously traveled only a few miles from where they were born. Those from provinces such as Friesland and Zeeland were as alien to one another as were people from different foreign countries. In fact, the two groups spoke entirely different languages. And, as Swierenga notes, living among this diversity of people from the Netherlands were immigrants from Germany and Scandinavia, and chapter three focusses the experiences of Americans among the Dutch.

Some of the material included will be familiar to students of history. The life of Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte has already received extensive attention, as has the religious schism within the community that led members of the Reformed Church in America and members of the Christian Reformed

Church in North America to live in close proximity and often enmity with each other. In this case, *Holland, Michigan*, serves as a succinct review of secondary materials. But most of the work presents detailed and insightful views on new topics, such as the three chapters on education: public, Christian, and post-secondary. Contained here, for instance, is the education of students with unique needs, the effects of the economic crash of the late 1920s and 1930s on schools, the challenge of dealing with the currency shortage following the 1933 Bank Holiday, and the impact and place of the charter school movement beginning in the mid-1990s. The essay on the development of the Port of Holland has a detailed description of the reasons a

viable entrance for ships to the harbor was difficult to construct during the mid-nineteenth century and the result when this work was finally accomplished. Swierenga provides detailed descriptions of the development of bulk freight, cross-lake passenger service, and the development of resort traffic to Lake Macatawa, which was the foundation of the still important summer tourist industry in the area. Some information on the summer social scene at the parks and on summer residents like author L. Frank Baum is, unfortunately, not included.

Of course, in an effort of this magnitude there are niggling typographical errors that made it into print. For instance, the Ohio sandstone is Berea, not Berean (p. 803), and the names

of people are always a challenge: it is Garrietta (not Garietta) Schemper (p. 291) and Carolyn (not Caroline) Balfourt (p. 1275). But such do not reduce the value of this work, and based on past experience the author will do what can be done to correct such occurrences. The book is copiously illustrated with some nine hundred images, it is based on meticulous research, and it offers the most detailed history of Holland, Michigan, in print. These are its merits and its legacy. Robert Swierenga again has added significantly to historiography in general and to the community of Holland in particular.

*Richard H. Harms*

**I Remember When:  
A Memoir of An Ordinary Life**

*Clarence L. Doornbos*

Grand Rapids, MI:  
Color House Graphics, 2012

304 pages

\$10.00

This book is an encyclopedic recounting of ordinary events in the life of an ordinary boy growing up in the Christian Reformed subculture, focusing on family life, Christian school days, church traditions, and community events. The narrative spans more than fifty years, beginning with the author's birth in 1940 and ending with his participation in "Sea to Sea," the 2007 cross-country bike tour organized by the CRC to benefit charity. Snapshots and photographs illustrate Doornbos's memories of ordinary times. His settings range from denominational centers like Kalamazoo, Zeeland, and Grand Rapids, Michigan; Sioux Center, Iowa; and Bellflower and Ontario, California.

But narrating the "ordinary" does not result in a boring read. The author weaves contexts in and around his many interests: education, music, travel, baseball, model trains, railroads, photography, bicycles, long-distance cycling, automobiles, carpentry, and home construction. The son of a mathematics teacher, Doornbos taught music in Christian schools from elementary through college level.

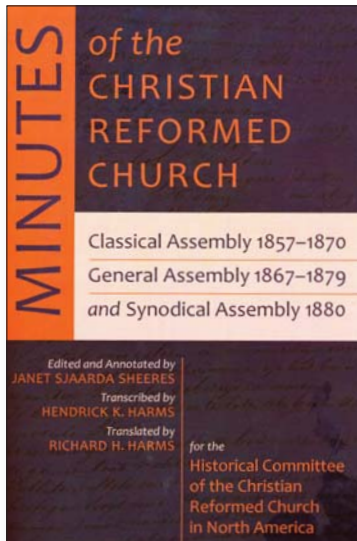
He must have drawn from either a photographic memory or copious journals, for he sketches details of ordinary life within an inviting frame of time. Not much escaped his notice. Readers will be reminded of the much-touted but short-lived Edsel, with its chrome "horse-collar grill," made by Ford from 1957 to 1960. They will visit the era of weddings and wedding receptions when brides and grooms did not incur indebtedness to stage their nuptials. Instead, they engaged homegrown services and volunteer talent—sometimes with unique results. The author recalls a vocal solo, "In Times like These, Be Very Sure," at his own wedding celebration.

Throughout the book, Doornbos reaches for two strengths he treasures: the gift of his Christian faith and an "understanding of psychology in dealing with friends, acquaintances, and students." Both essentials serve him well in his writing, whether he is taking a whimsical look at the home he and his wife occupied as cash-poor newlyweds in the "Hi-Ho Trailer Park," or remembering a thorny personnel issue during his college teaching days, and holding that memory only long enough to explain his family's next move back to California.

Any future edition will require some proofreading corrections. For instance, on page 86 there are periods inside and outside the same quotation; on page 115 there seems to be an omission of crucial words; and on page 153 there is a disagreement in verb tense. Nonetheless, surveying the decades with Doornbos affords a worthwhile and entertaining journey.

*Eunice Vanderlaan*

# book notes

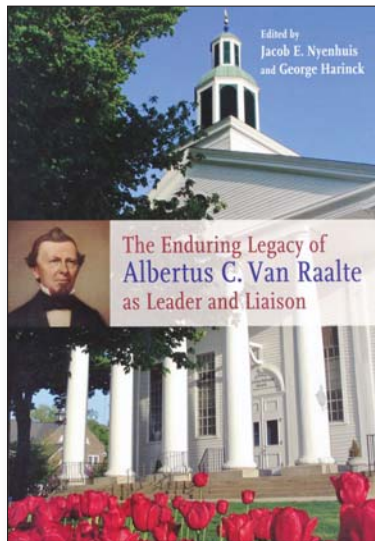


**Minutes of the  
Christian Reformed  
Church: Classical  
Assembly,  
1857–1870; General  
Assembly,  
1867–1879; and  
Synodical Assembly,  
1880**

*Janet Sjaarda Sheeres,  
Hendrick K. Harms,  
Richard H. Harms*

Grand Rapids:  
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing  
Co., 2013

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7253-1  
\$49.00 Softcover, 634 pages

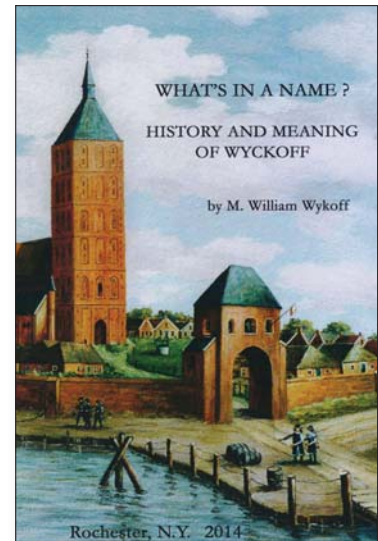


**The Enduring Legacy of  
Albertus C. Van Raalte as  
Leader and Liaison**

*Jacob E. Nyenhuis and  
George Harinck, editors*

Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans  
Publishing Co., 2013

ISBN: 978-0-8028-7215-p  
\$60.00 Hardcover, 518 pages



**What's in a Name?  
History and Meaning of  
Wyckoff**

*M. William Wyckoff*

North Charleston, SC:  
CreateSpace, 2014

ISBN: 978-1500379957  
\$9.50 Hardcover, 58 pages

# for the future

The topics listed below are being researched, and articles about them will appear in future issues of *Origins*.

Janet Sjaarda Sheeres details the life of Marrigje Hendriks Rook-Vanden Bosch, the wife of the first minister in the Christian Reformed Church



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