

When we were in Holland in 2008 we visited Aunt Cecilia and she passed on to me some poetry from our grandfather. As I read it, it was amazing to feel the love and genuine admiration he had for his children. It was as if across the years his words arrived as clear and poignant as the day he wrote them. Thanks to Aunt Miep and Uncle Jan we have them translated into English.

My request would be to accumulate and gather any poetry from our father and grandfather and the extended families if we can. It would be a heritage for the Verkley generations to come.

Frank Verkley

1) A poem about his three children. Written around the early 1920's

The first sentence needs some explanation. In many families, the littlest one was called "zusje," or, in rural folksy manner: zussie, as in: Hoe gaat het met je kleine zussie? The two toddlers could not say it well, and called her Tussie. (She was Marietje)

For my dear Hannie and Piet and Tussie.

Aunt To sure was happy
When she saw you coming!
So friendly, so full of life
As I never could have dreamed of.

It is a pleasure to see
How big you have grown!
That Hannie is such a doll mother
And Piet can ride on a horse!

As well that sweet lille sister,
She is already sitting up by herself!
I'll first pick her up
How lovely to cuddle her.

Oh, Piet, what a beautiful horse you have!
And Hannie, is that your doll?
My, that doll has beautiful hair
With such a pretty hat!

Piet, do not ride too fast from the stable
And do not let it happen again,
That you fall into the water filled ditch
Or your mother will be sad.

What a lovely cloverleaf
You threesome are!
How nice is Hannie's thick hair,
And Piet's bare knees.

But more than anything I love
Your eyes, little sweethearts.
Mirrors of your little souls,
So innocent and pure....

I ask my dear Lord,
That He in later years
Your beautiful and tender souls-
Will keep this innocent.

Written by grandfather Jan Verkley (Johannes Theodorus)
1888-1951
translated by Frank Verkley & Miep Verkley

Aan mijn lieve Hanny en Piet en Tussie

Wat was die Tante To toch blij
Toen ze jelui zag komen!
Zoo vriendelijk en flink daarbij
Als 'k nooit had kunnen droomen.

(2)
Wat deed het me plezier te zien
Dat jullie al zoo groot zijn!
Dat Hanny poppenmoeder is
En Piet al op een paard rijdt!

En dan die lieve kleine zus.
Wat zit die al parmantig.
Haar pak ik 't eerste maar eens op
En knuffel ze eens handig.

„Zeg, Oiet, wat heb je 'n prachtig paard!

En, Hanny, is dat jou pop?
Wat heft die pop een prachtig haar,
En wat een mooie hoed op!’

Piet, rijdt maar niet te hard van stal
En laat ‘t nooit meer gebeuren,
Dat je weer in de stoepsloot val’
Want dan gaat moeder treuren.

Wat alleraardigst klaverblad
Vind ik toch jelui drietjes!
Hoe snoezig Hanny’s dike pruik
En Piet z’n bloote knietjes.

Maar ‘t allermeest bekoort me wel
Je oogjes, lieve kleinen.
Die spiegels uwer aieltjes zijn,
Zoo schuldeloos.... Zoo reine....

En ‘k vraag dan Onzen Lieven Heer,
Dat Hij in laat’re jaren
Die zieltjes, mooi, maar, o, zoo teer
Onschuldig wil bewaren.

2) Written in 1918 just before our father Peter was born.

Dear Doctor,
Once again I am asking a lot,
For another tiny tot.
The first one came in September,
This one, I hope, half way November.
Preferably a little brother, mister,
As we have already two little sisters.
Please, order one without delay,
I'll come to fetch it, if I may.
The address is Ridderbuurt-Brentano,
p/s by the way, I hope this child plays piano.!

(Piet was born soon after on 08-11-1918)

translated Miep Verkley

3) A touch of the Christmas Season. In Europe St Nicholas traditionally came December 6th.

This one demands some explanation that you may want to include in your publication.

There were a lot of traditions around the feast of St. Nicolaas, on the 6th of December. This holy bishop had a white horse that had the amazing skill of stepping easily over the roofs of houses, carrying his master. St. Nicolaas, and his helper Black Peter, peered down the chimneys to see if all children were good, and in bed in time.

Then they would drop some sweets and toys down the chimney, aiming for the shoes the children had left near the stove or fireplace.

This time however: Piet's father had to do something with this:

"She could not help it, the old mare,
She had to "do" it somewhere.
Right in the chimney went her poo,
Dropping straight in Piet's shoe.
So, horseman, pig pen cleaner,
milker and feeder of cows and calves,
scooper of cow patties off the field,
Here you have a weapon to wield.
Dear Peter, to say the least,
Be good and proper for every beast.
Help your father well,
and your days will be swell."
From St. Nicolaas.

translated by Miep Verkley

4) A sense of humor

Ode to the Stork

(who has built a large nest on the roof of "Brentano", the family farm.)
(this after a motif from Hannie)

Sweet, dear mister Stork,
Sleeping on top of the chimney,
Tell me, mister clatter,
Does it not matter, to catch a little fish,
As you earlier, did this?

Hello, they say, distinguished bird,
That you bring babies, we have heard.
Look, how still he stands there!
Dear daddy-long-legs, I do wish,
That you bring us a little boy,
It would be our utmost joy.

Come on, tell us what you are saying,
With all that clapping and braying.
You do not call it yawning?
I would like you to bring,
Us a sister on your wide, strong wings.

Go, fly away, and do your job,
Before the doctor gets in the way.
He is the competition, say.
So, if you possibly can,
And beat this learned man,
A nice frog could be your reward.

translated by Miep Verkley

5) This poem written by our father "Peter Verkley" on the ocean liner S. S. Prins Willem 11. It was for our Uncle Jim Stokman's birthday during the Atlantic Ocean crossing. Both men were coming in 1948 to work in Canada to reclaim the Canadian Air force hangers in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. They disassembled the hangers and shipped all the wood back to Holland to aid in the restoration of Holland after the war years. I received them from Aunt Truus recently who has kept them all these years.

26-1-48
S.S.Prins Willem 11

For my (almost) brother in law, on his birthday.

Every day afloat
without a birthday celebration,
Jaap roams the puddle
and does now see
how floating the seas
is wonderful.

So too go the years,
on the sea and the waves,
your life on the sea.
You will be old
before you realize
How it really was.

If you do not risk,
you will never learn,
and will not get anywhere.
But if you try,
you must carry your load.
and win in the end.

Jaap! on your birthday,
as long it may be,
come on and have courage,
get up and keep lifting,
by daring and willing
and all will be well.

Hold in your own hands,
where you want to go.
Then you know surely
after many more birthdays,
and rich with experience,
that life is beautiful.

North Atlantic
49 19 N.B.
22 53 W.L.
P.Th. Verkley

(translation Jan P.P. Verkley)

6) On the wedding anniversary of Uncle Jim and Aunt Truus Stokman Peter wrote.

On the "copper" (12 1/2 years) anniversary of Jaap and Truus.
February, 1966

Of all the days we have forgotten,
Much has been good.
J. and T. knew this all along
and now celebrate their copper feast.
chorus: J.and T.

this is a feast,
as never before.

V. and D. had Truus in their files,
when Jaap met her, dancing away.
and after planning, and much ado,
everything went well.

With the farm, Surge and the chickens,
they have done very well.
You never know what will happen next,
but it does not worry them now.

All those years, now in the past,
J. and T. were together,
worked and slept together too,
and celebrate a copper fest.

Sons and a daughter have arrived,
growing up as part of it all.
They too have their dreams,
and so every one is content.

The barns full of chickens,
and one with a tractor too,
the fields with manure,
and a home with a hi-fi in a room.

We wish you, "copper couple"
That all goes well with you.
And in 12 1/2 years from today,
we will see you at your "silver" feast.

J. and T.
this is a feast,
as never before.

P. Th. Verkley.
translated by Jan P. P. Verkley