

The Queen Wilhelmina Fund, was formed and is now more than seventy years old. Its aim ?, to help people of Dutch origin who are in financial or other trouble not of their own making. Help is not restricted to Dutch people. Substantial financial help was given when Darwin was hit by a cyclone in 1974.

When the Juliana Village Association had bought the land where the Village is now standing there was a large old house on the site. At about the same time, parents of three children died in an accident. There were two girls, one of 19 years old one of 15 and there was a boy of 17. The children could not pay the high rent of the house where they had lived with their parents and were told to leave. The Social worker of the Council asked us if we could help. We made the house available for them on a quarter of the rent a real estate agent could have got for us, from one of his clients. We dropped two quarters and the Queen Wilhelmina Fund paid the last quarter. The two girls were good and clean housekeepers. The boy was lost after his parents died. He started to drink and was maybe on drugs. One evening he crossed the railway line illegally and was found dead the next morning. A tragic affair.

The house was really too big and too uncomfortable for the two girls, so when the youngest had finished her course in graphic art, and was also earning money, they hired a two bedroom flat somewhere else. The real estate agent who was, free of charge, looking after the house put a sign in his window that the house was for rent. A young man, conservatively dressed wanted to hire it for a friend and himself. The house was let to him for a reasonable rent.

When he moved in, not a friend, but about seven of them and not so conservatively dressed moved in with him. They made a nuisance of themselves to the neighbours and fell behind with the rent. We gave them notice to move. They disappeared without paying. In the house we found injection needles, a half burned mattress and a mess.

It took six volunteers a full day to clean up.

It is easy to criticise these lost young people, but if one can't do anything to help them all that is left to do is pity them.

I have always said, " the Age Pension should come when you are twenty five. " If you are young you can do so many things you can't do later.

I thought that again when Nel and I, with another retired couple, came to Lightning Ridge, the little mining town where the black opals come from.

Many young couples spend a year or two there digging. A hole, about two metres wide is drilled in the ground by a big machine, until the depth is reached where the ground is supposed to hold opals. Iron ladders are fixed to the wall and a winch is fixed across the top to bring up the earth. This is then washed to see if somewhere an opal is hiding. I would have loved to live there for a while if I had been younger and stronger.

While still working to get Jul iana Village built, I decided to spent more time on my hobby 'painting'.

The previous years I had taken some painting lessons and of course it was not a new hobby for me.

In my nineteenth year I had obtained a diploma to give drawing lessons , although I never tried to get a position at a school.

My land in Heathcote was a corner block and my garage was at the back. Herein I built a study and a gallery. I put up a sign saying " Oil copies of old Master Paintings."

You do not have to be an artist to copy, but you have to be a good craftsman and to know your materials. I painted on heavy linen and framed every picture.

I can't say that there was a wild rush to buy, not even to come in and have a look. I had also given paintings on consignment to an art shop. They sold more copies than I did at home.

One of the paintings I brought there was a small 45 centimetre by 30 centimetre copy of a part of a Masterpiece. It was a " Lady with hat."

A woman asked the shopkeeper,

" What is the cost of this painting ? "

" The price label is on it madam, Forty five dollars, but I can not give you a discount on that."

" I'm not asking for a discount. It is sold for forty five dollars to me. Here is the money and please wrap it for me. I'll tell you something young man, this is not a copy it is a real old master. "

" No madam, it is a copy. It said so on the label."

" Young man," she said, " you do not know the first thing about paintings. This is the real thing and it is mine."

The shopkeeper wanted to have the last word and when the lady left he said, " Be careful with it madam, the paint might not really be dry."

I bought a painting myself in that shop, but that was real, I had seen it painted by my former art teacher Molly Johnson. I hope she will become famous.

## CHAPTER 21.

In the year 1981 I reached the age of seventy. Nel's depression worsened. She had given up her hobby, looking after the garden. Looking after her, doing the house work and keeping the garden trim became too much for me. The Juliana village Association had bought a house adjoining the Village. This was divided in two flats. I applied for one of them and insisted to pay ten percent above the sum paid for other two bedroom flats. I did this to avoid gossiping that I profited from my position as chairman. Not that you can avoid gossip. None of our boardmembers, members or volunteers in all the twenty years of work for the village got even one cent profit out of it. To the contrary, all had their expenses and none of them ever claimed for them. It doesn't worry me that there are still people who believe that we gain from it, but what worries me, is the fact that those people find that normal.

On the twenty third of September 1981, we moved into our flat in Juliana village. On the thirtied of that month, the day that we had been married for 45 years, Nel got intensive pain in the abdomen. As the hospital was only two minutes drive from the Village it was quicker to bring her by car than to call for an ambulance. Eight days later she died in the hospital.

A life full of anxiety, full of sadness and depression had come to its end. Why has she been so depressed ? She was no afraid to be home on her own with doors and windows open, but she was scared to walk into a large shopping centre with hundreds of people around her.

She never knew, or could, or wanted to explain why she was so sad, why she lived year after year in anxiety.

Neither knew I, neither knew her doctors, her psychologists , her psychiatrist. They give her pills of all sorts and they gave her shock treatments. I never saw that it did any good to her, but of course I don't know how she would have been without all this.

We had a good marriage. We had two good sons, who never gave us any trouble and who both of us loved. Why was life so difficult for her ?

We married in 1936 in the middle of the world-wide depression. Three years later the war started and we lived for five years under the boot of the German army. Sometimes not enough to eat, in the last year food became so scarce that people fell death of starvation on the streets, we ate sugarbeet roots and tulip bulbs. Sometimes we had money troubles. She never complained. She never felt sorry for herself, but her depression grew.

ALONE.

After 45 years for better or for worse , and after my sons had left after the funeral, I stood in the middle of the room and loneliness fell on me like a brick.

After 45 years there is not the excitement of the honeymoon any more. What is there is a deep warm friendship. A oneness. There is no other person in the world with whom you can talk so understandingly as with your partner for life. Your children, your worries, your hope.

Neither Nel nor I have ever regretted our emigration. The Netherland is a beautiful little country, a country full of history, art, canals bordered by lush trees, villages hundreds of years old.

We loved to have our holidays there. To live however we preferred Australia. Land of sunshine and space.

It is a pity that our low Country The Netherlands can't be brought to Australia.

There is room enough here. It will fit in 240 times.