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Resident of the Month: Joost Harwig & Mary-Ann Rivers

Written by: Nancy Dupuis

Born in the Netherlands, Joost endured a childhood none of us could ever imagine.

1929 - the time of the great economic slash of jobs; just out of school, his father had been hired by an international company and was sent off to the Island of Java (part of the Netherlands at the time, now Indonesia). During this time on Java, he arranged a marriage with Joost's mother by proxy, taking place in the Netherlands. Joost's father's brother stood for the proxy husband.

His wife then arrived in Java, and they were fortunate to travel back and forth to the Netherlands for vacations for the first 10 years of their married life in Indonesia. The first child in the family was born in Indonesia and it was there that his mother became pregnant with Joost. Joost was born in 1937 during a visit to the Netherlands.

1940 and World War II was underway in Europe. In 1942, the Japanese invaded Indonesia in search of oil, rubber, aluminum, coffee, tea, and spices – all items in great demand during the war and beat the western coalition.

His father was called to serve in the Royal Netherland East Indian army in 1942. Shortly after he was taken as a prisoner of war. Joost (almost 6 years old), his mother, his older sister (almost 9) and younger sister (4) were all taken to a Japanese concentration camp. His mother was quite ill at this point with a thyroid condition and the oldest sister, a child of only 8-9 years old began to take charge of the family.

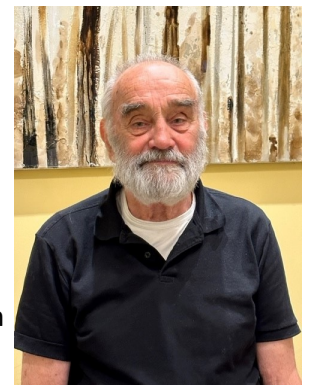
The camp was a military set-up, with thousands of prisoners, all women and children. When the boys at the camp reached the age of 10, they were sent on to the prisoner of war camps. Disease was common in the camps; Malaria, Dysentery, Monkey Pox, and Hepatitis A with starvation rampage. There was no medication to combat these diseases.

There was no school; some Catholic nuns attempted to teach, but there were just too many children. The little boys used to play a very dangerous game at times, that of imitating the Japanese soldiers.

In 1945, the US dropped a bomb on Hiroshima and the Japanese surrendered. In 1946, the repatriation to the Netherlands began. Joost's family was transported by commercial ship to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). The next 3-4 months were spent in quarantine trying to overcome the prevailing diseases.

After the war ended, his father (who was still in a prisoner of war camp) was transported by the British to a hospital in Singapore. Soon after, he was able to join the family in Ceylon. In 1947, the family arrived back in the Netherlands on a passenger ship that had been converted into a type of troop transporter ship. Joost remembers the hammocks stacked 7-8 rows above each other, a very crowded ship.

Back in the Netherlands, Joost about 10 years of age now, the family moved in with his mother's parents, in a tiny Dutch farming area (Ittersum).



A younger brother was born in 1949 in the Netherlands. Meanwhile his father had to go back to Indonesia for a time to help the company salvage whatever holdings that remained. Meanwhile the older children had had no schooling (his sister was now 13 and he 10) – they felt like they didn't belong, they also spoke a different dialect. Life was hard, there were many fights amongst the young children at school. Eventually they were accepted. It was at this time that the Red Cross was organizing exchanges with farms in Denmark, on the Island of Bornholm, close to Sweden to literally “fatten up” the children who had lost so much in the concentration camps. It was here Joost thrived learning to milk cows and also a lot about gardening. This was his first experience with agriculture - something that would remain with him throughout his life.

Finishing high school at the age of 19, he was then drafted into the Dutch Marine Corp for 2 ½ years. Becoming a Lieutenant, he was shipped from the Netherlands to New Guinea.

After his time in the Marine Corp, he furthered his education at the College of Tropical Agriculture and also at MacDonald College at McGill University receiving his PhD in 1968. His hope was to now become a researcher at an agriculture research station. But no, the economists wanted the government out of the agricultural business – Joost feels that spelled the end of mixed farming. The environmental benefits were ignored. The power of food production ended up in half a dozen international corporations which eventually was the industrialization of agriculture in regards to seed, fertilizer and pesticides.

Joost first married in 1964 while still a post grad aiming to obtain his PhD in agriculture from McGill University and did so successfully in 1968. By that time research positions in agriculture had become very scarce and to support his family (his wife and two sons), he decided to instead apply for a research position at Health Canada; in the end being accepted first as a Research Scientist, in 1968, then as a Research Manager in 1974. By this time his marriage had ended but Joost stayed in the area, wanting to be close to his two young sons. His oldest is now an organic chemist doing pharmaceutical research and his youngest, is a good carpenter.

In 1985, Joost was promoted to Director, Bureau of Microbial Hazards, a position that was aimed at the control of food and water-borne disease in Canada and required lots of decisions on recalls of contaminated food. Another important aspect of the position was the promotion of novel methods of food-borne disease control. Joost's second marriage ended after a stressful period in which he had tried to recreate an old homestead while performing his duties as Director in his job.

Meeting Mary-Ann in 1990 in the workplace, they were married in 1992 and moved to the Burnt Lands Road to a life filled with the enjoyment of gardening, training horses with the further fun of numerous cats and dogs filling their days.

Mary-Ann was born in Ville la Salle (Montréal); her mother being a war bride who had met her father in England and married, later coming to settle in Verdun, Québec. A sister was born first, then Mary-Ann. A friend of her father's offered him the opportunity to buy a piece of his land and thus a house was built in Saint Eustache (later renamed to Deux Montagnes) where the family spent many years.

Keep on Smiling





Thank you and Congratulations to Araina for raising over \$2,300 in her Parkinson Canada



Employee of the Month - Sheyann

Congratulations to Sheyann on being October's employee of the month. Sheyann is a vital part of the Dietary department as she helps serve the Memory Living Residents. She is kind, a team player, attentive to her tasks and willing to get the job done! Our Memory Living Staff are big advocates and supporters of Sheyann and will go the extra mile with her. Congratulations Sheyann and keep up the great work!

Special Events in October

October 9th
Thanksgiving Weekend

October 23rd Oktoberfest

October 26th Country
Harvest with Trevor Baker

October 31st Halloween

Laugh out Loud with Orchard View

A man walks into a bar and there is a bunch of meat hanging from the ceiling. The man asks the bartender what's the deal with the meat and the bartender explains that if you jump and slap a piece of meat, you get to drink free for the night, but if you miss, the man must buy drinks for everyone in the bar. The man responds, "Nah, the steaks are too high."

Testimonial ~ Olivia Papura - Recreation Assistant

Over the last couple of months, I have been fortunate enough to work at Orchard View where I was able to meet some of the most incredible people. Although my time at Orchard View was short, I was able to learn so much from the staff and residents. The residents were always super welcoming to me while I was still learning the ropes of the job. The residents always came to me with helping hands and gave me kind words to guide me through the job. I am most appreciative of the staff at Orchard View who always greeted me with smiles and "good mornings" and made me feel as though I belonged from day one. I have never worked with such warm and thoughtful people who went out of their way to support me during my time here. I am incredibly grateful for the relationships I've acquired with the staff and residents at Orchard View.

Resident of the Month Con't

Mary-Ann received a Science degree from the University of Montréal before marrying her first husband and moving to Ottawa, where he was employed as a policeman. A daughter was born, who now lives in Vancouver and owns a mobile food truck, catering to crews working on films and TV commercials.

While in Ottawa, the marriage ending in divorce, daughter and mother were on their own from the time her daughter was about 2 years old until she reached the age of 15-16.

Before meeting Joost in the workplace, Mary-Ann was a downhill ski instructor, a scuba diver instructor and held a motorcycle license, owning a Yamaha Virago 750; an interesting and varied lifestyle, all the while raising her young daughter.

She also mentioned their move to the Burnt Lands, included a lot of gardening, horses, and chickens and ducks. I loved the passion in her voice as she spoke of her horse, now 24 years old and boarded at a friend's farm, providing much enjoyment to that family and their children. She had never had a horse and learned all she could and then more from books and manuals. He is a steady riding and driving horse, all of which she taught him.

Mary-Ann spoke of her disability – a rare form of muscular dystrophy, the result of a gene inherited from her father. This disease does not usually manifest until in your 40s; and then progressively causes further deterioration. OPMD (Oculopharyngeal Muscular Dystrophy) is a rare genetic condition. It causes weakness in the muscles around the upper eyelids and part of the throat called the pharynx. The condition may affect vision and cause problems swallowing and talking. Mary-Ann spoke of her father's mother having this condition, although at the time, nothing was known of the disease. The origins of this disease in Canada, can now be traced back to 3 sisters coming from Normandy, France to marry Coureur des Bois in the early 1800s.

This spring, Mary-Ann and Joost made the move to Orchard View by the Mississippi. Joost loves the contact with people, and mentioned he is truly enjoying speaking Dutch with two or three of the residents. He also enjoys the opportunity to chit chat about agriculture in the Bistro with a group of farmers who make him feel most welcome. Mary-Ann frequents the local neighborhood most days, going quite a distance in her motorized chair. She says she loves the dogs here as well as out in the community and they love her, as she always carries a few dog treats with her.

Both Joost and Mary-Ann spoke with great love of family - Joost's mother lived a long life until the age of 85, but endured a great deal of illness during her life. His father passed away in 1953, just a few short years after being reunited with his family. His oldest sister earned a Home Economics degree, his younger sister went on to become a physiotherapist and then a social worker; both sisters are now deceased. his brother, now burdened with Alzheimers, was the CEO of Philips in charge of research (holding a PHD in Physics) had a spectacular career. Philips at one point had 450,000 employees around the world, but when their patents expired, they lost their competitive edge. The company was reduced to 250,000 employees. His brother had a 1billion euro budget for research – his vision was to give away the buildings and to sell the equipment in those buildings; this would give way to the eventual rising from the ashes to multiple small companies. Setting up opportunities for these smaller companies, all the while talking and promoting the ideas to Philips management and politicians earned him a Knighthood in the end.

Mary-Ann's sister met her future husband while he was going to university in the east. They then went back to Alberta and currently live in Red Deer. Mary-Ann mentioned she and Joost have been married 30 years this year. What brought them together, I asked? Without hesitation, the answer was both loved canoeing and especially camping in Algonquin Park.

I thank you both for sharing the intimate details of your lives, especially your time Joost in the concentration camp as a young boy and you, Mary-Ann for sharing with me the details of your disability. I am deeply moved by your story.



Stories of History

The principal use of Grandma's apron was to protect the dress underneath because she only had a few and because it was easier to wash aprons than dresses and aprons required less material. But along with that, it served as a potholder for removing hot pans from the oven.

It was wonderful for drying children's tears, and on occasion was even used for cleaning out dirty ears.

From the chicken coop, the apron was used for carrying eggs, fussy chicks, and sometimes half-hatched eggs to be finished in the warming oven.

When company came, those aprons were ideal hiding places for shy kids.

And when the weather was cold, Grandma wrapped it around her arms.



Those big old aprons wiped many a perspiring brow, bent over the hot wood stove.

Chips and kindling wood were brought into the kitchen in that apron.

From the garden, it carried all sorts of vegetables.
After the peas had been shelled, it carried out the hulls.

In the autumn, the apron was used to bring in apples that had fallen from the trees.

When unexpected company drove up the road, it was surprising how much furniture that old apron could dust in a matter of seconds.

When dinner was ready, Grandma walked out onto the porch, waved her apron, and the men folk knew it was time to come in from the fields to dinner.

It will be a long time before someone invents something that will replace that 'old-time apron' that served so many purposes.

Send this to those who would know (and love) the story about Grandma's aprons.

REMEMBER:

Grandma used to set her hot baked apple pies on the window sill to cool. Her granddaughters set theirs on the window sill to thaw.

The Government would go crazy now trying to figure out how many germs were on that apron.

I don't think I ever caught anything from an apron - but love...