

A  
**BOUQUET**  
FOR  
OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS



An Arrangement of Stories,  
Poems and Meditations

Nick Ellerbroek



# MAP OF THE NETHERLANDS

Boskoop, birthplace of Nick  
Foudgum near Raard, birthplace of Alice



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## THE ELLERBROEK GENEALOGICAL TREE SINCE 1753

Europe was in economic, political and religious disarray when Carl Lodewijk Ellerbroek was born in Osnabruck Germany in 1753. In 1780 at the age of 27 he lived in Amsterdam, was Lutheran and married Johanna Christina Ter Plaat when she was 23. They had 1 son, Carl Henrich Ellerbroek. His Dad Carl Lodewijk died in 1783 at the age of 30.

Johanna Christina Ellerbroek-Ter Plaat remarried and moved from Amsterdam to Boskoop. Her son, Carl Henrich Ellerbroek became a shoemaker in Boskoop and went by the name of Karel Ellerbroek.

Karel Ellerbroek married Geertrui Koekoek in 1808. They had 7 children. The 5th child was born on February 1, 1815. His name was Karel Lodewijk Ellerbroek.

Karel Lodewijk married Klaasje Van Kleef on November 22, 1839. They had 4 children (2 sons and 2 daughters). He was a nurseryman.

The second son of Karel Lodewijk was Klaas Ellerbroek. Klaas was born on August 7, 1842. He also became a nurseryman. He married Ida Van Oosterum on March 5, 1875. They had 7 children. The 7<sup>th</sup> child Maarten, was my Dad, born on January 13, 1891. Maarten also became a nurseryman in Boskoop and married Geertruida Johanna Spaargaren on June 5, 1924. They had 6 children: Ida Johanna, Johanna Geertruida, Nicolaas, Janna, Immetje Geertruida Neeltje, Karel Lodewijk.

Nicolaas (Nick) was born in Boskoop on March 8, 1930. He immigrated to the U.S.A. in November, 1949. He first lived in Terra Ceia, N.C. and moved to Holland, Michigan in 1951. He served in the U.S. Army for 2 years and was stationed in South Korea near the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel for about 18 months.

Aukje (Alice) De Graaf was born in Foudgum, Friesland, The Netherlands on May 22, 1930. She immigrated to the U.S.A. with her parents in July of 1947. They settled in Holland, MI.

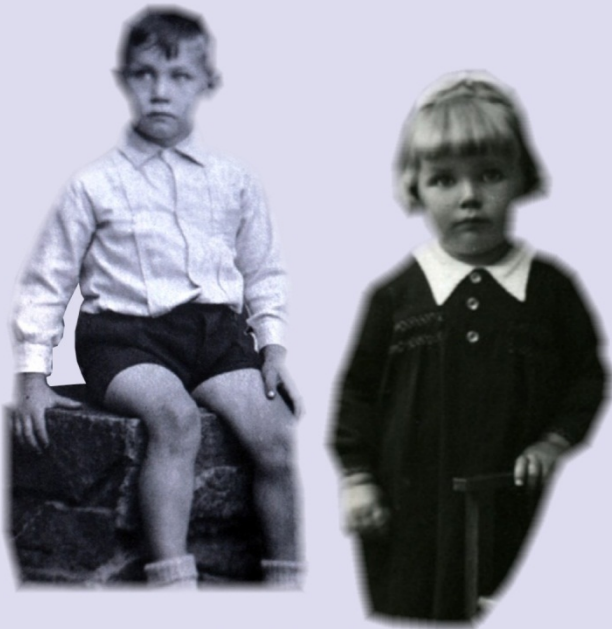
Nick and Alice met in May, 1951 and were married on October 22, 1953. They have 4 children: Martin John, John Mitchel, Nancy Gayle, and Diane Lynn.

Parents of Nick	Date of Death	Age	Location
Maarten Ellerbroek	5-Jan-84	93	Boskoop
Geertruida Ellerbroek-Spaargaren	17-Mar-99	100 1/2	Boskoop
Parents of Alice	Date of Death	Age	Location
Jan De Graaf	25-Mar-83	77	Holland, MI.
Nancy De Graaf-Van Der Wal	27-February 2003	96	Holland, MI.

**Nick & Alice Ellerbroek  
Met in May, 1951  
Married October 22, 1953**



**May 1951**



**Nick & Alice 1934**



**Just Married Oct. 22 1953**

## THE DE GRAAF GENEALOGICAL TREE SINCE 1764

Europe was in economic, political and religious disarray when fourth generation Heine Jan was born in Friesland, The Netherlands in 1764. He died in 1807 at the age of 43. He left behind his wife Nieske, daughter Djeuwke, and son Jan.

By 1811 it was required by Napoleon to select a surname. The name De Graaf was chosen and the only son of Heine Jan was now called Jan De Graaf. He became a shoemaker and at age 27 he married 25 year old Ruurdje Tuinstra in May, 1825. Their first child was born on Feb. 6, 1826. His name was Hein Jan De Graaf. A second son was born on March 23, 1833. His name was Aldert De Graaf. In 1836 a daughter Pietje was born and in 1839 a daughter Nieske was born.

The genealogy continues with the second son of Jan and Ruurdje, Aldert De Graaf. He married Antje Monsma in December, 1859. Aldert and Antje lived in Akkerwoude Friesland. They had 13 children.

The second son of Aldert and Antje was Jan Aldert De Graaf born January 12, 1863. He married Froukje Elderhuis in May of 1888 and between 1889 and 1911 Jan Aldert and Froukje had 11 children: Aldert, Gerlof, Beitske, Antje, Sietse, Dirkje, Jitse, Martje, Jan, Tietske and Pietje.

The ninth child born to Jan Aldert and Froukje was Jan De Graaf, born October 24, 1905. He married Trijntje Van Der Wal on October 26, 1929. Six children were born of the marriage: Aukje, Jan, Froukje, Hendrika, and a twin boy and girl who passed away at an early age. As a family they immigrated to Holland, Michigan U.S.A. in July, 1947.

The first child of Jan and Trijntje (Nancy) De Graaf was daughter Aukje (Alice) born on May 22, 1930. She met Nicolaas (Nick) Ellerbroek at age 21 in May, 1951. Nick and Alice were married on October 22, 1953 in Holland, Michigan. They have 4 children: Martin John, John Mitchel, Nancy Gayle, and Diane Lynn.

<b>Parents of Alice</b>	<b>Date of Death</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>
Jan De Graaf	25-Mar-1983	77	Holland, MI
Nancy De Graaf-Van Der Wall	27-February-2003	96	Holland, MI
<b>Parents of Nick</b>	<b>Date of Death</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Location</b>
Maarten Ellerbroek	5-Jan-1984	93	Boskoop
Geertruida Ellerbroek-Spaargaren	17-Mar-1999	100 ½	Boskoop

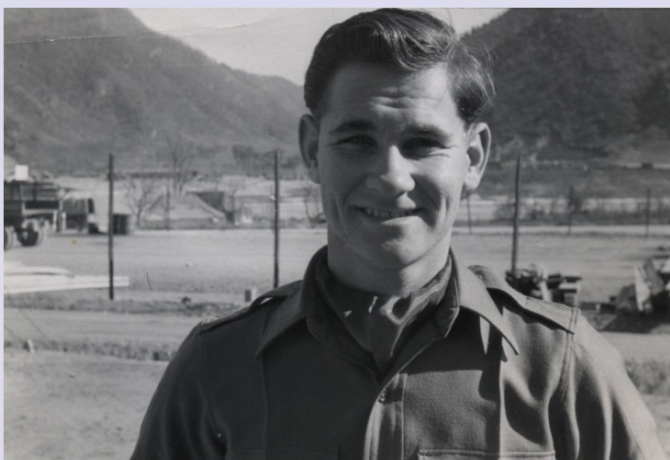




Nancy De Graaf-Van Der Wall  
Alice De Graaf  
Jan De Graaf



Alice De Graaf



Nick Ellerbroek  
Korea 1952-1953



Nick Ellerbroek, Nancy De Graaf, Jan De Graaf  
Frances De Graaf, Alice Ellerbroek, Helene De Graaf  
October 22, 1953

## **GROWING UP**

**1930 to 1949**

During the 1930's the United States as well as the Netherlands experienced an economic depression. Fortunately my father had a job at a nursery in our home town of Boskoop. I have been told that my Dad was having a conversation with his employer who said "Maarten, when your son is old enough to go to college he should study to become a "Dominee" Minister."

The problem was I was left handed and would be forced to write with my right hand as soon as I started first grade on April 1, 1936. As was predicted I had difficulty with this from the start and it soon showed up in the marks I was getting in class. In the Netherlands kids in school at that time were not graded by A B C or D but from zero to 10. After a year in school my report card showed two 8's, one for doing my best, the other for good behavior. For the rest of the subjects in class I was given zeros with a note saying, "I had to do first grade over again." I did not pass.

Although I was not very smart in first grade my energy made up for it. To make use of this energy I was given some rabbits to care for. So one day I went to a nearby farm in search of some food for my rabbits. I enjoyed going to the farm and soon was helping the farmer with chores a boy of my age could do.

By the time I was 10 years old and finished 3<sup>rd</sup> grade I had learned to write with my right hand. My grades were good and I was able to do what was expected of me in school, it was March 30, 1940.

On May 10, 1940 Germany invaded the Netherlands. I was in 4<sup>th</sup> grade and by the time I was in 6<sup>th</sup> grade in 1943; German occupation troops had taken over all schools in Boskoop to live in. For me it was the last year of going to school.

So when I was 14 years old in 1944 I started to work for a farmer who owned 15 milk cows and 8 Belgium horses that were used for work in the field. On the 160 acre farm besides having a pasture for the cows and horses, potatoes, sugar beets, peas, wheat and oats were grown. Each day I was allowed to take home a half gallon of milk as part of my wages and during harvest time I could buy a certain amount of food that was grown on the farm.

For our family this was a real blessing because in 1944, even if we had money, very little food was available in stores to buy. I remember from the milk I brought home my Mom often made butter, wheat was ground up in a coffee grinder to make bread and potatoes were often all we had. But most of the people in the Netherlands depended on food that was rationed and if you happen to be of Jewish descent and was caught, deportation was your lot. No one was allowed to own a radio, only propaganda was heard. And when the people thought condition of life could not get worse, lack of food for many folks caused malnutrition and death. In June of 1944 soon after the Allied invasion in France, especially at night, the sound of American planes could be heard. They were on their way to destroy what ever and whoever started World War II.

It was in early spring of 1945, although the war was not yet over, American planes were allowed by the German authority to drop tons of food to the starving people in the Netherlands. It consisted of crackers, condensed milk, canned vegetables and chocolate candy. This food was than distributed by local organizations.

Soon after the war was over in May of 1945, families who owned a small farm and single young men who worked on a farm were made aware of the opportunity to immigrate to the United States or Canada. In 1946 at the age of 16, I was invited to become an immigrant by a sponsor in Terra Ceia, N.C.

As I thought about this I knew this was something I wanted to do with my life, it was an adventure I wanted to experience. So, with other young men with an agricultural background and Dutch families who had relatives in the U.S. or Canada willing to sponsor them, I filled out the necessary papers, with the idea I soon would be on my way to the U.S.A. But because I was only 16 years old I needed more education and experience. This was obtained by going to agricultural school two days a week while continuing to be employed on the farm.

Soon after my 19<sup>th</sup> birthday I received a letter from the United States consulate in The Hague giving me the name of my sponsor in Terra Ceia, North Carolina and a date to receive a physical examination. Several weeks later another letter was received stating I was given permission to live in the U.S. as an immigrant and work for my sponsor in N.C.

After making travel arrangements, I was able to leave on November 4, 1949 out of Rotterdam on the ship Veendam with its final destination as New York.

The day I left home for good was not as easy as I had thought it would be. I remember my Mom and Dad traveled to Rotterdam to wave me good-bye when the ship Veendam left her dock in the harbor of Rotterdam. On November 3, 1949 one day before I left home to become an immigrant I promised my parents I would uphold the Christian faith I was taught, to be honest and good. This promise has influenced many decisions I made since Nov. 1949. Mistakes were made, but because of my mistakes I learned to be the person I am today.

It is now 2011 and this year I am writing my memoirs. So in this book you can read more of what happened when I finally came to live near Lake Michigan in April 1951 in a town called after my native land.



**Gertruida Ellerbroek-Spaargaren**  
**Maarten Ellerbroek**

*Picture taken in June 14, 1963 at Karl & Adele's Wedding*



**Nicolaas Ellerbroek**

*Dutch Passport Picture 1949*

## FROM NOVEMBER 1949 TO NOVEMBER 1953

It was November 4, 1949 at the age of 19 when I immigrated from Boskoop, The Netherlands to the United States and lived in a small Dutch community called Terra Ceia, located near the coast of North Carolina.

I boarded by a Southern family, Mr. and Mrs. Keech and worked on two different farms, first on the Westerbeek farm, than on the Van Dorp farm. I remember the summer of 1950 was hot and humid.

After doing regular farm work for a year in Terra Ceia I became restless mainly because there were very few Dutch young people I could share my free time with. So one day I asked for two weeks' vacation to travel to Grand Rapids, Michigan to visit a family I had met on board the immigrant ship Veendam. Their last name was Spanjer and consisted of a husband, wife and two daughters. One special friend of mine on the voyage across the Atlantic Ocean was the 17 year old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Spanjer and to be honest she was the main reason for my vacation, to find out what happened to her and her family after we arrived in New York on November 16, 1949.

Well, my trip by Greyhound bus from Terra Ceia to Grand Rapids took longer than I had expected. Traveling through the Blue Ridge Mountains was most beautiful. Something I had never seen before. When I was hungry on the more than two day trip I bought a ham sandwich at a bus stop. It was something I knew how to order in English.

Finally I arrived in Grand Rapids and found my way to Bemis street where the Spanjer family lived. Only Mr. Spanjer was home. Mrs. Spanjer was in the hospital for something I don't remember, but I was welcome. My question was where is the now 18 year old daughter? After all, I was searching for a young lady to share my life with in America.

Well, I soon found out she had a boyfriend, was happy and in love. When I left for Holland, Michigan the next day I remember her saying to me "Nick, I am sure you will find the right Dutch girl". In Holland I visited with the Spek family. They also had immigrated in 1949 and like me came from Boskoop.

I knew their son Arie who was working for the Weller Nursery. But it was John and Mien Koning, my first cousin who had immigrated in 1947 and lived in Holland, Michigan who invited me to stay with them till it was time for me to return to work in Terra Ceia.

Several months after I was back in Terra Ceia something happened at work on the farm that convinced me I was not needed nor appreciated, so I decided to move to Holland, Michigan and find a job there.

After I moved to Holland, Michigan in the spring of 1951 I was employed at Chris Craft Corporation and boarded with Mr. and Mrs. Van Zonneveld, a Dutch family who had immigrated in 1948 and lived at 321 Central Avenue. They were very nice people. Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church was near-by and on Sunday afternoon a church service was held in Dutch.

Shortly after I began boarding at Van Zonneveld's another Dutch boy came to live there. His name was Evert and his girlfriend was Alice De Graaf. I had seen her picture and thought to myself: "Not bad Evert, not bad".

One Sunday evening while I was writing a letter to my parents in the Netherlands Evert's girlfriend stopped by. She wanted to know if Evert was home. Well, he was sick in bed, so upstairs she went but a short time later, down she came and asked if she could use the telephone to call her brother to pick her up. I looked at her and said "I can take you home."

Several weeks later my friend Arie Spek and his girlfriend, Harriet Gruppen, were making plans to have a birthday party. They were going to invite some couples but who could I ask to my girlfriend? I said to Arie, "You know this girl Alice De Graaf, she is not going out with Evert anymore and you know her from English class." So Alice De Graaf got a phone call from Arie Spek inviting her to his birthday party. That was "Okay" Alice said, but she didn't have a way to get to his house. Arie told her May 1<sup>st</sup> is my birthday and someone will pick you up about 7 O'clock. That is how our friendship began. It was May 1, 1951.

In September of 1951 I received a notice to report for military duty and on October 3, 1951 I was inducted into the US Army. I received 12 weeks of basic training at Fort Belvoir, Virginia near Washington D.C.

After basic training my furlough was spent with Alice and her family with orders to report on a certain date at a place in Seattle, Washington. From there with many other soldiers I would leave to serve either in Japan or Korea.

I finally served the Army in Korea at 8<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters near the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel as a member of the 313 Engineer Utility Detachment. In September of 1953 with many other soldiers I was on my way back to the U.S. and received my discharge in Chicago on September 22, 1953.

During my absence Alice wrote a letter to me every day. One month after I came home from the Army, on October 22, 1953, Alice and I were married in Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church. We bought 4 acres of land on 16<sup>th</sup> Street near Country Club road in Holland, Michigan, built a house there and raised our 4 children. We lived there for 52 years. Finally we sold this property to Tendercare of Holland. Both Alice and I turned 81 years old in 2011 and when we look back on our lives together we can relate to the providence of God. We are thankful and praise the Lord.



Alice and Nick Ellerbroek 2010

Written by Nick Ellerbroek, September 2011

Nick & Alice Ellerbroek Family



Nancy, Martin, John  
Alice, Nick, Diane

*Church Picture 1975*



## THE FAMILY

This book would not be complete unless the names and pictures of our children, grand children and great grand child were introduced to the extended family and friends in the U.S., The Netherlands and England. We hope who ever reads our story and see the pictures will know it all began when two lives were joined together in marriage on October 22, 1953.



**Marty & Linda Ellerbroek**



**Brad & Alicia  
(Ellerbroek) Gibbons**



**Kirby Ellerbroek  
& Austen**



**John & Ellen Ellerbroek  
Joel, Brett & Holly**



**Anthony & Megan  
(Ellerbroek) Porter  
and Eli**



**Beth Post & Nancy Ellerbroek**



**Diane & Frank Barefield  
Samantha & Ben**

## The Old Homestead



## Our New Home at Hidden Creek



Tendercare now  
owns this address:  
1221 E 16th Street



## TO ALL WHO ARE PROUD TO BE FROM FRIESIAN DESCENT

A study of Friesian history reveals that in 1551 there was a Friesian nobleman by the name of Gemme Van Burmania who represented Friesland in the inauguration of King Phillip II of the Netherlands. Van Burmania, in alliance to the King, was required to kneel in making his oath, but refused on the grounds that Friesians only kneel to God.

Perhaps this conviction by the nobleman started the idea that Friesians are stubborn, in fact throughout history we find that Friesians ought not to be taken for granted. Further study shows that Friesian history dates as far back as Christ, when the Romans tried to eliminate them. This was avoided by the Friesians who desired that two representatives, Verritus and Mallorix, should be sent to Rome. The fact that the Friesian culture is alive today is perhaps the result of the efforts of these two men who were sent to Rome.

This was not the only time the Friesians had to defend their soil, their language, their culture and their faith. Throughout history we find accounts that Friesians were on the defense constantly, united as long as a common enemy existed, but much bickering among themselves went on in times of peace.

Around the year 1600, Holland and Friesland were united to fight the Spaniards. The time had come for Friesland and Holland to become, *The Republic of the Netherlands*. But because most Friesians wanted to keep their individuality in areas of language, culture and traditions, it was not until 1814 Friesland became a province of the Netherlands.

Today, we find Friesians everywhere; many immigrated to the United States and Canada after World War I and World War II. Even there, we find the Friesian language and remnants of culture and traditions flourishing.

As the writer of this essay on the history and culture of the Friesians, I believe they can be proud of their heritage. A heritage that gives them the right to say with nobleman, Gemme Van Burmania in 1551:

**“I kneel to no one but to God. I am a Fries.”**

## A FAMILY STORY

William Buursma was born in Friesland, The Netherlands and immigrated to the United States with his parents in September 1929.

During the Second World War, William was drafted into the U.S. Army, and after his basic training in the states, was stationed in Germany in 1945. While on furlough he decided to travel to Friesland and visit his Uncle Jan, Aunt Trijntje De Graaf, and his cousins: Aukje, Jan, Froukje, and Hendrika, who lived in Raard, a village near Dokkum.

When he arrived, the De Graaf family was happy to see their nephew, cousin, and soldier from America. During his stay, at the De Graaf home, William stated in the Friesian language: "Uncle Jan, why don't you with your family immigrate to Holland, Michigan. You will have a good life there."

Sometime later, the decision was made to accept the offer and help needed to make the transition from Raard, Friesland, The Netherlands to Holland, MI. U.S.A.

The long journey by the De Graaf family was made from Rotterdam to New York on the ship **Veendam** in July of 1947. They lived in rural North Holland for a while and in 1948 moved to the city of Holland at 169 E. 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

Even their names were changed. It was now Jan and Nancy De Graaf and their four children: Alice, John, Frances and Helene,

In the spring of 1951 I moved from Terra Ceia, N.C. to Holland, MI.

By marriage on October 22, 1953 I became part of the De Graaf family.

Not only did Alice and I become husband and wife but now I had a brother-in-law and two sisters-in-law. Father Jan was a good man and I recall that after Dad and Mom retired he told a friend about the beautiful house he and Mom had at 40 West Apartments, and that one day he would go to his eternal home that would be much more beautiful. Dad De Graaf passed away on March 25, 1983 at the age of 77 and is in his eternal home with Jesus.

As Christians, each of us has an eternal home to look forward to. A home that is more beautiful than what we can imagine.

What I also know about Mom and Dad De Graaf is they had two close friends, Manus and Dora Nyboer. They even went on trips to northern Michigan together. What I recall about Manus is that with other members of the Salvation Army he would stand on the corner of 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Central Avenue, singing and playing musical instruments. Later, when Alice and I got to know Manus better, we would go along with him to a nursing home in Hudsonville, where he would lead a service and sing some Dutch hymns. I still remember him saying to me: "Nick, if I cannot do this any longer, I want you to take over."

One of the Dutch hymns he often sang was: "*Scheepke onder Jezus hoede*". In English this Hymn is called: "*In the good ship of the Captain*".

**In the good ship of our Captain**

**We are sailing o'er life's sea-  
Pilgrims to a better haven,  
Heirs to hea'n's felicity.**

**See the gospel banner floating  
From our topmast o'er the waves;  
Sinner, read its gen'rous offer:  
"Come, find refuge, Jesus Saves."**

**Faith and prayer and strong devotion  
To our Pilot at the helm,  
Calm our fears and urge us onward,  
Steadily to heaven's realm.**

**Just beyond the surging breakers  
Looms the land of peace and rest;  
Few more days and we are welcomed  
In the haven of the blest.**

**CHORUS**

**E'en tho' the clouds sweep fast and wild  
And breaking billows roar,  
We're safe and Jesus at the helm  
to pilot us to shore!**



P.S. Manus Nyboer and Dad De Graaf died within weeks of one another. Both loved the Lord and looked forward to the life to come with Him.

## **A LIFETIME OF LEARNING**

Learning means: To acquire knowledge and skill. One of my first learning experiences in school was learning to write neatly between the lines. In 1936 it was as important as learning to read, how to add, subtract and divide. Other subjects in elementary Christian school were Dutch history, geography and learning a Dutch psalm by heart each week. Paying attention in class was also important and each child was given a grade accordingly. The education I received from 1936 to 1943 was enough to prepare me for the work force. Only young people with exceptional learning abilities were given an opportunity to go to college at the expense of the Dutch Government.

What I learned in grade school was used in a practical way by working on a farm from 1944 to 1949. This experience and following a class in agriculture gave me the opportunity to immigrate to the United States on November 4, 1949.

During the first 15 months I lived in the U.S. I worked mainly on the Westerbeek farm in Terra Ceia, N.C. On Sunday the Westerbeek family took me along to the C.R. Church, it was a good opportunity for me to be with people and learn to understand English.

In early spring of 1951 I moved from Terra Ceia, N.C. to Holland, Michigan and found employment at Chris Craft Corp, working on an assembly line building boats. This really was a new learning experience for me. At the same time Alice De Graaf became part of my life by way of being attracted to each other.

On October 3 of 1951 I was drafted for service in the U.S. Army and received 12 weeks of basic training at Fort Belvoir, Va. After basic training I was given two weeks furlough and time to travel to a Naval Base near Seattle, Wash. About two weeks later with many other soldiers I left Seattle, Wash. to serve in Korea.

When by train I arrived in Seattle, Washington and checked in at the Naval Base I had time to visit my uncle Jack and family in Seattle. They had immigrated to the U.S. from the Netherlands in 1947. Uncle Jack already had started his own nursery called Hollandia Gardens and during my visit with him he offered me a job at the nursery after my discharge from the army.

This offer did not sound good to Alice, so after I was back in Holland, Michigan on September 22, 1953, I was rehired by Chris Craft Corporation while Alice worked at Heinz. On October 22, 1953 one month after my discharge from the army Alice and I were married.

A few weeks before we were married Alice and I bought 4 acres of land with a basement on 16<sup>th</sup> street near Country Club Road. We were fortunate being able to pay for this piece of property from our personal savings and so the stage was set where we would live and raise our family. Alice sometimes reminds me of our humble beginning. I agree.

Part of our humble beginning was living in the basement while our house was being built, but in the summer of 1955 we were happy the house was finished enough for us to move in. About 4 months later on November 18, 1955 our son Martin John was born and on July 11, 1957 our son John Mitchel was born.

Alice stayed home and cared for the boys while I continued to be employed at Chris Craft Corp. But besides working at Chris Craft I had an idea that someday I would start a nursery business and would call it Hollandia Gardens.

Alice and I sometimes wonder how in the early years of marriage we were able to afford what we did without borrowing a large amount of money. For example in the summer of 1959 we managed to take a 3 month vacation to the Netherlands with our 3 1/2 year old son Martin and 2 year old son John. By train we traveled to Montreal and on the ship Ryndam via the Saint Lawrence Seaway and the Atlantic Ocean we arrived in Rotterdam.

My family in Boskoop, Zuid Holland, was happy to meet the 4 of us from America and everyone did their best to please us. Even my sister Jopie and her husband, John, came from England to meet us. Especially for my Mom and Dad it was good to see their family together.

Alice and I with the boys also travelled by car across the Afsluitdyk (a dyke between Noord Holland and Friesland) to visit with Alice's relatives in Friesland. Everyone was happy to see us and wanted to know what life was like in America for us and for Alice's Mom and Dad, Jan and Tryntje De Graaf. But besides meeting our relatives in Zuid Holland and Friesland part of our vacation was to find out if my 18 year old brother Karel was interested to immigrate to the U.S.

and help me with starting a nursery in Holland, Michigan. I was sure with his experience in Horticulture we could make it work.

Giving my brother Karel the opportunity to immigrate and live in Holland, Michigan he soon applied for the necessary papers. Within a year his immigration papers were approved by the U.S. consulate in the Netherlands. In September of 1960 Karel Ellerbroek came to live in America. He lived with us on 16<sup>th</sup> street for a while and started working at Chris Craft in the fiberglass department. It didn't take him very long to learn to speak English, he was no different than any 20 year old American. He wanted a car and a girlfriend. He soon had both.

On January 12, 1961 a miracle happened in the Nick and Alice Ellerbroek family. Alice gave birth to twin girls, Nancy and Diane. We were now parents of 4 children. Alice had her hands full taking care of them while I continued to be employed at Chris Craft. It was no longer possible to have Karel living with us, so he began boarding with the Ploeg family. After a while he went to live with Harris and Joyce Kortman until Karel got married to Adele Kortman on June 14, 1963.

In 1965 Karel and I started doing landscape gardening full time and called our small business Hollandia Gardens. For the next 15 years we worked together as a partnership, when in 1980 Karel decided to be on his own and move, including the name Hollandia Gardens from 1221 East 16<sup>th</sup> Street to 13057 Quincy Street.

I continued to do business at 16<sup>th</sup> street under the name Eastside Nursery and sold landscape material to people who wanted to do their own landscaping. What I sold mostly was perennials and unprocessed bark that came from saw mills and was used as ground cover. When I retired in 2004 our daughter Nancy continued to operate Eastside Nursery but moved it to Stanton Street in West Olive, MI and the name was changed to Zone 5 Perennials. Most of the perennials she grows are sold at the Holland Farmers Market from May to September. Our son Martin and his wife Linda own and operate Ellerbroek Landscape Service in Holland their work can be seen on the Internet. As for me, a simple idea became reality, not without problems, but I feel blessed.

Written by Nick Ellerbroek October 2011



## EVERY COUNTRY HAS A STORY – EVERY LIFE HAS A STORY!

An interesting story about the Netherlands is: That many years ago, during a terrible storm, a large dike broke, flooding thousands of acres of land. Many people drowned. While survivors watched the rising water from higher ground, they noticed a cradle drifting among the debris. After the cradle was retrieved, the people experienced a surprise. They found lying in the cradle a little child and with the child was a gentle cat holding the cradle in balance while it drifted on the rushing waters.

When I was listening to this story in the Dutch language, tears came into my eyes because the people who rescued the child took off their caps and gave thanks to God. But even more inspiring was the determination of a young woman who said: “The hand of God saved this child and please let me care for him.” The request was granted and since that day the dike has been called *Kinderdijk*. In English, this means Child’s Dike.

Today, the Child’s Dike with its many windmills, is a tourist attraction and people from around the world walk along this dike and learn something of interest about the Dutch people in their struggle against the sea.

Note:

Sad to say, millions of people today need to be rescued. Not so much from a natural disaster, but from all kinds of addictions.

Also, remember, that as Christians, we were rescued by our Savior and Lord.



Nick & Alice at the Child’s Dike

Essay written by Nick Ellerbroek, translated from the Dutch

## TO BE INSPIRED

I heard it said that quiet moments in solitude are good for the soul. In such a time apart in the fall of 1980, I wrote: Today my wife Alice and I are visiting my family who live in Cannon Beach, a tourist town along the Oregon Coast. They immigrated to the U.S. in the early 1950's. I recall they took care of me for a while when I was young. The quiet and natural scenery of this part of the state of Oregon is just beautiful. Looking from a distance at the waves of the Pacific Ocean I see large rock formations sticking out of the water.

It's a perfect place to **'Feel Inspired'** and assured what I see and hear is in **'The Hands of God'**. Later that day, Alice and I walked on the beach for a while, the weather and temperature was just right. We really enjoyed the moments together.

When Alice returned to the house, I found a spot on the beach to write down my thoughts while inspired. I wrote: The awareness of being here alone with my thoughts is marvelous. I see and hear a mighty ocean directly in front of me. The waves are calm, it seems to give me a sense of peace and contentment.

When I said good bye to this experience many years ago, I was reminded I was given the opportunity to understand that the action of the great Pacific Ocean influences weather patterns all over the world.

It was one more place in the natural world Alice and I visited, we sensed we are part of what God in the beginning of time spoke into existence.



Written by Nick Ellerbroek

## A TRIP TO FRANKENMUTH, MICHIGAN

Sometime ago, Arie & Harriet Spek, Alice and I visited the small tourist town of Frankenmuth, Michigan. While we walked through one of the stores I noticed inscribed on a plaque a portion of Revelation 3:20 which says:

*“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him, and he with me. (N.I.V)*

Friends, with this verse in mind, a story is told about King George and Queen Mary of England, who were vacationing somewhere along the seashore. One evening while they were taking a stroll together the Queen sprained her ankle, so it became necessary to find a place for her to rest. The King finally spotted a small cottage and helped his wife to the door and knocked.

“Who is there?” a voice called out. “King George and Queen Mary” the King said. The voice from inside called again: “You don’t expect me to believe this do you?” “Come to the door” the King commanded, “and see for yourself.” The man of the house soon came to the door and saw that his visitors were indeed the King and Queen of England. They were invited in and given the best hospitality the poor couple could muster.

For years, the man and woman in the cottage by the sea retold the story of the night they were visited by King George and Queen Mary.

Friends, Jesus is at the door of our heart and says: *“If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him and he with me.”*

This gives us something to think about.



Written By Nick Ellerbroek  
Part of a Meditation given at Haven Park

## THE GREAT CREATOR

I often think of God  
In terms of the Great Creator.  
How He created the human mind  
So man too could be creative.

Sometimes I look up at the sky  
And marvel, because of its beauty.  
But from day to day I focus most  
On what I see and goes on around me.

Today I saw a flock of geese fly south,  
And thought: "what makes them fly in that direction?"  
I said: "God gave them what they needed most,  
A perfect guiding system."

The Salmon too, will find their way  
Up river where they were hatched.  
It's something I don't understand,  
But God commanded it  
And saw that it was good. Genesis 1:20-21

So we can go on and on  
About the wonder of it all.  
One thing still puzzles me  
That we as sinful man  
Are supposed to be the crown of His Creation.

It is hard for me to understand  
That Jesus Christ, by dying on a cross,  
And rising from the grave,  
Has paid for all our sin. Psalm 32:5

But then again, I see the geese fly south  
And see the fish come home.  
I then repeat what the Bible says:  
"The just shall live by faith." Romans 1:17 (K.J.)



Written by Nick Ellerbroek

## I REMEMBER

The folks I knew from long ago  
They tilled the soil and told their tale  
As time went on they were no more  
Only their legacy is not gone.

So now the time for me has come  
To do my best where they left off  
And what you are about to read  
Is what I know from memory.

What I remember from the past  
A Christian Mom and a Christian Dad  
A school where I was taught to pray  
And not to use God's name in vain.

I also learned in school and still know  
The three "R's", where to go and what to do.  
So with two good hands and a strong back  
What I enjoyed most was 'Work'.

One day my uncle Kees came to me  
He told me of a country across the sea.  
With land to spare and buildings tall,  
A land just right for me.

I was still young when I left home  
Promised Mom I would be good  
Go to church, Love the Lord  
And never would use His name in vain. DE 5:11

But once I lived far from home  
My fantasies of America were soon gone.  
They were replaced with what I needed most  
*"To put my trust in God"* (Psalm 62:8)

With family and friends I go on with life  
Think of them and pray for all:  
Dear Lord: May your will be done.  
(Matthew 6:10 NIV)

Written by Nick Ellerbroek Feb 2011

## SPARK OF INSPIRATION

At times I receive a spark of inspiration  
And get the urge to write.  
The subject can be anything  
That brings happiness and peace of mind.

Today I read some notes I had written  
Reminding me of a young girl's faith.  
Invited to share the pulpit,  
She spoke of God's abiding grace.

As she was speaking to the congregation,  
Her beautiful eyes had filled with tears  
"Have faith in God" she said "Have faith in God".  
Igniting a spark in me to write these lines.

Concluding her testimony  
A glow of sincerity remained.  
"Have faith in God," she sang "Have faith in God".  
It seemed her voice echoed through the church.

How many are there still among us  
Who can share this kind of faith?  
How many are there among us  
Who believe in God's amazing grace?



*Hoge Beintem Friesland*

Written by Nick Ellerbroek

## GOD'S GRACE

I often think of God  
And pray to Him in silence.  
At times all I say:  
'Lord may your will be done' *Mt 6:10*

By way of prayer, I also thank the Lord  
For beauty I see in the realm of nature  
What I am most thankful for:  
'His love and grace that saves us.' *Joh 3:16*

It is wonderful to know  
To be guided by His hand.  
That from day to day He uses me  
May be not for what I say  
'But chose to live for Him each day.' *Jos 24:15*

The pilgrims knew without help from God  
For them there was no hope.  
So all of us must depend on God  
'For blessings He bestows.' *Ps 115:13*

What is written on this page  
Is part of what it means:  
'To belong to the family of God' *Eph 2:8*



Written by Nick Ellerbroek

## STORY ABOUT WILLIAM

Some years ago I read a short story of a young man  
Who remained child-like and immature.  
He knew his name was William.  
It was enough to give him joy.

What is important to know about William  
That in church he felt right at home.  
He had a special seat near the elders,  
A place near the preacher who spoke.

But the best part of the service for William  
Was the music and the singing of songs.  
When his family talked to him about Heaven  
That was the place William wanted to go.

Jesus also was part of a picture  
William had formed in his head.  
He called Him "His Friend" and like his older brother  
Was kind and always there.

So when William was sick one morning  
He was ready to meet his Father in Heaven.  
And wanted his friend Jesus to come along.

William never knew what it meant to be sinful.  
He did not worry about it at all.  
He had a child-like faith,  
For which we praise the Lord.

Read Matt. 18: 3-4-5



Not the words, but the story was translated from the Dutch to English in 1985



## HAPPY DAY 1973

### A poem about P.O.W's

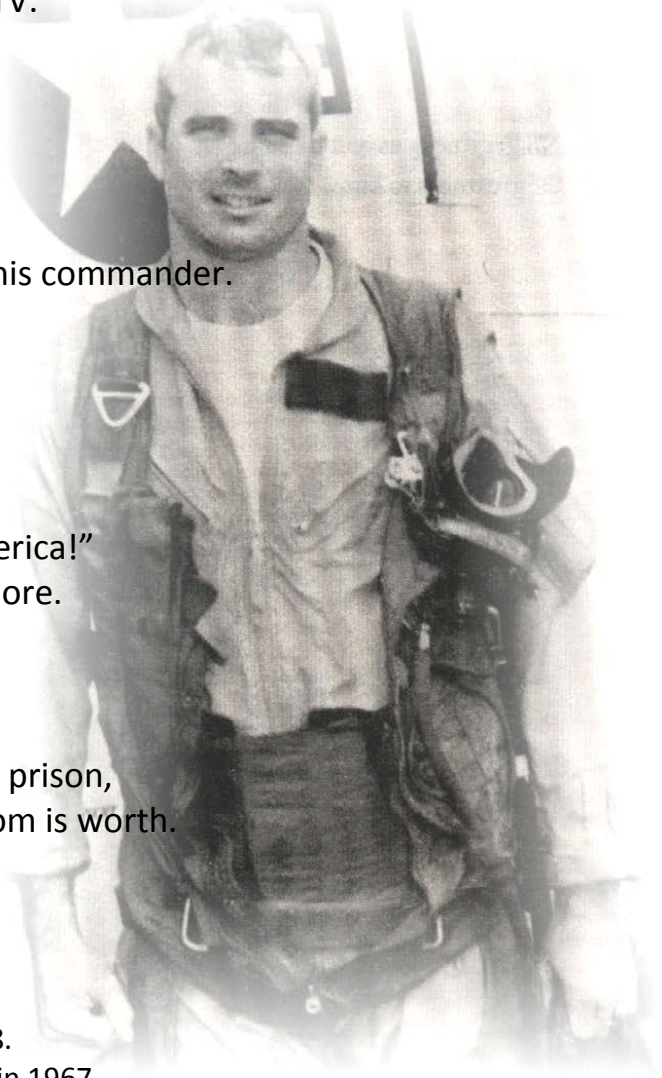
An aircraft is coming in for a landing,  
Its descent is seen by many Americans on TV.  
Its precious cargo is P.O.W's  
We are happy for them to come home.

The first man steps from the aircraft,  
Oh, but he looks real good!  
With a broad smile, he shakes hands with his commander.  
We wonder what he endured.

He is now asked the question,  
"If he willing to talk to the world?"  
With his voice filled with emotion  
He expressed his thoughts: "God Bless America!"  
Indeed, no other speech could have said more.

The emotions of many Americans  
Were also stirred that day.  
American soldiers survived in a communist prison,  
To remind us of how much personal freedom is worth.

John McCain was born on August 29, 1936.  
He graduated from the US Naval Academy in 1958.  
As a pilot, he was shot down over North Vietnam in 1967.  
He, along with other P.O.W.'s was returned to the US in 1973.



Written by Nick Ellerbroek

## **PRAISE AND WORSHIP AT HAVEN PARK NURSING HOME**

At Haven Park Christian Nursing Home, a program called 'Praise and Worship' was held on the second Thursday of each month by members of several Holland and Zeeland churches. It was started in 1970 by Fred Oudenmulder, Otto Kamstra and a few of their friends as a Dutch hymn sing program. In 1982 Alice and I continued this program with the same group of friends.

Over the years several changes were made. We changed from singing Dutch psalms to singing familiar hymns in English and the name Dutch Hymn Sing was changed to Praise and Worship. Also members of Niekerk Church were asked by the evangelism committee to participate in this program every other month.

The short meditations I delivered revolved around the theme: What does it mean to be Christian? As part of one such meditation, I used for an example a story about a young lawyer who sat at his desk one day deep in thought, asking himself what he was going to do with his life. Answering himself he said, 'Be successful in practicing law of course.' 'And then what, Charles Finney?' he asked himself. 'Well', he said to himself, 'I will get rich, retire and someday I will die'. But then Charles Finney's thought repeated the question, 'And then what?' In response he left his law office, walked to a nearby park and did not return to his office until he had made peace with God and had settled his life's work. Shortly after this experience Charles Finney left his law career for the ministry and later became a well-known evangelist.

The question is. Have you or I ever made a conscious decision to be a Christian? If so, may the following stories in this book be a blessing to you.



Nick & Alice Ellerbroek

## BLESSED IS HE OR SHE WHO PERSEVERES

Dear People:

A Bible passage many of us can identify with is a statement by James, the brother of Jesus in James 1:12: (NIV)

*“Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God promised to those who love Him.”*

To understand the meaning of this verse, let me read to you a beautiful poem I heard some time ago on W.C.S.G. (a Grand Rapids Radio Station) that was sent to me by the station, at my request.

It was written by Sherri, a friend of Susi Toas, whose young son Toby died of Leukemia in 1983. Let us listen to what Sherri says to her friend, Susi, by way of this poem.

*From the riches of His goodness  
God creates a newborn child.  
Then He loans them out to parents  
And we have them for a while.*

*We try to teach them how to live  
Be good, love God, and don't lie  
But sometimes there's an even greater task  
To teach a child to die.*

Sherri writes:

I've been a privileged witness  
As I watched my dearest friend  
Receive, with joy, a little boy  
Then give him back again.

The bond between the two of them  
So tender from the start.  
She had given to him life and love  
He held her very heart.



Yes, Toby was a gift from God  
A precious work of art  
It was with deepest sorrow  
She knew they had to part.

But Susi didn't waste their time  
Lamenting, "Why, Lord, Why?"  
She bravely went about her task  
And taught her son to die.

She led him to her Savior.  
He claimed Him as his own.  
She shared how Jesus loved him  
And prepared for him a home.

Through his mothers' pure example  
Toby learned to pray and praise.  
And we knew that he was ready  
To see his Maker's face.

They walked this path together  
But when it had to end,  
Toby bravely said, "Goodbye" and  
Released his mother's hand.

For he had an understanding  
This would not be the end  
But a glorious beginning of  
Life eternal with his friend.

As for Susi, she had been faithful;  
She didn't despair or mope.  
She drew her strength from Jesus  
Who died to give us hope.

Friends, what a beautiful poem about a Christian mother and her son Toby, how they lived and together persevered under trial and finally said: 'Goodbye' and released each other's hand.

May it be that you and I, like Toby, understand that the end of life is not the end of our existence, but in fact, becomes a glorious new life in the realm of glory with Jesus Christ. So let us hold onto the promise that says: *"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him."* James 1:12 (NIV)



This poem was used for a program at Haven Park May 13, 1993

## TO BE AN EXAMPLE

A special story I have used at Haven Park Nursing Home to illustrate Spiritual Contentment, is the story of a retired nurse by the name of Helen, who one Sunday walked down the aisle of her church and turned her life over to Jesus Christ.

After this experience, Helen became a most enthusiastic Christian and learned as much as she could about her Lord. But a short time later, Helen was called on to face one of life's hardest trials because she found out she had cancer. She went into the hospital and was a source of encouragement to everyone she met.

Following surgery, Helen found no time for self-pity. Instead, she concentrated on uplifting others, not hesitating to tell the source of her courage. Her last statement on earth was: "Whatever happens, I am in the hands of the Lord." And so are you. And so am I.

Peggy Simmons, who told Helen's story said: "When I see seagulls soar high on a raw and windy day, I think of Helen, who in her last days of her life soared high above her trials in life and I seem to hear her say: "Tell them to have faith. The Lord will see them through."

The Apostle Paul, in a letter to his friend Timothy, writes:  
*"Godliness with contentment is great gain."* 1 Ti 6:6 (NIV)

This is true today. It's true today!



By Nick Ellerbroek  
This Story was used at Haven Park

## FORGIVEN

A story is told of a young man and a preacher who occupied the same compartment on a railroad train. They had not said a word, but the young man looked worried, so the preacher asked him if there was anything wrong and if so, maybe he could be of some help.

During the conversation that followed, the young man told the preacher he had run away from home and had disgraced his family. He said, "Finally, I realized the mistakes I made and the problems I caused. I wrote my parents a letter asking them if they were willing to let me come home. I soon received a letter from my Mom telling me she was happy to have me back, but that she had to talk to my Dad. She wrote that if my Dad agreed to let me live at home again, she would hang a white rag on the tree in the garden which is visible from passing trains."

After listening to the young man's story, the preacher offered to look for the white rag on the tree in his parent's garden. As the train whizzed past the garden, the preacher shouted: "Cheer up my friend; the tree is covered with white rags. A welcome home awaits you!"

May we know for sure that by the grace of God and through faith in Jesus Christ, our sins are forgiven and a welcome home awaits us in the realm of glory.



By Nick Ellerbroek  
This story was used at Haven Park Nursing Home

## ROMANS 1:16

A familiar statement made by the Apostle Paul is found in the first part of Romans 1:16 and here the Apostle says: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.”*

Friends, one of my first meditations I prepared for a program at Haven Park, I asked the question: “What does it really mean to be a Christian?” So let me repeat this question: “What does it mean to you and me to be a Christian?”

Now my answer to this important question is that it is my desire to live in obedience to the will of God, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my strength, and to love my neighbor as myself. To be a Christian example who in the words of Psalm 100 serves the Lord with gladness.

But, what do you think, my friend? Do you think it is possible to be such a person today and be taken seriously?

I know that during Bible study or other religious activities, we seem to have no problem discussing what is important about the Christian faith. But to talk about our relationship with Jesus Christ often seems to be more personal. Oh, may it be that with the Apostle Paul, you and I can say from the heart: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,”* It’s then that we can also say to each other with words from Psalm 100: *“Indeed the Lord is good, His mercy everlasting and His faithfulness continues through all generations.”*

For an example of such a life, Pastor Ron Noorman told the Niekerk congregation an inspiring story about an elderly lady he met in a former church he served. He said, “I still remember Freda as a good friend and God-fearing lady, but lost contact with her after accepting a call to another church. But some years later I met Freda again when I came to the same church to preach, and here she was old Freda, the person I had learned from so much as a young preacher. But now Freda was really old and had become much smaller physically. This was no problem for her. What was important to Freda was to be a real child of God, a pillar in the church of Jesus Christ, a witness to those she came in contact with. She was like the Apostle Paul, not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



May the story of our life be similar to that of Old Freda, that the older we get the closer we want to live to the Lord. The weaker our body becomes, the stronger we feel in our faith.

Let's remember: *"The Lord is good, and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations."* Psalm 100:5 (NIV)

A short prayer says it this way:

*Savior, let me walk beside Thee  
Let me feel my hand in Thine.  
Let me know the joy of walking  
In thy strength and not in mine.*



*My Mom and Dad's hands*

Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
This was part of the meditation at Haven Park Feb. 10, 2000

## **SPIRITUAL CONTENTMENT**

Reading John 4:4-17 & James 2:5

As a soldier in the United States army during the Korean War in 1952 and 1953 I was allowed several times to go to Japan on R & R which stands for rest and recuperation. I am not sure if it served the purpose, but since that time I learned that as a Christian I need more than R & R so once in a while, I need to be: Spiritually Content – Spiritually Alive.

Friends, but as we search for spiritual contentment, many of us know that disappointments also are part of what we experience in life. This is not all bad because disappointments often become the driving force to look for answers to questions we have about life and the life to come.

For example, a while ago I read to you the story of a Samaritan woman who had her share of disappointments in life and admitted she had lived with 5 husbands, her life just did not turn out as she had hoped. But when she met Jesus at the well she was invited to drink of the living water He would give her. And so are you and so am I! Let's expect this living water from Jesus and know for sure that *'Blessed is the man who trust in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him.'* Jeremiah 17:7 (NIV)

Now, your question might well be: What is a good example of such a person? Well, one example I found is the story of a rich man who was inspecting the progress his hired man was making in digging a ditch through his land. What struck him as he approached, he heard John, the hired man, singing at his work. And this is what he sang:

**My Father is rich in houses and lands  
And holds the wealth of the world in His hands  
Rubies and diamonds, silver and gold  
His coffers are full – He has riches untold.  
I am a child of the King – a child of the King  
With Jesus, my Savior, I am a child of the King.**

Hearing this, the rich man said: "John, why are you singing such nonsense? You know you are just a poor ditch digger." "That is true, Sir" was John's reply. "But, God is my Father and He has given me so much for which to sing and be thankful for. Over yonder is my home and when my days work is done and go home, Mary, my wife, stands at the door to greet me with a kiss and we sit down to a bountiful meal. So, why shouldn't I be happy and sing for joy?" Hearing this, the rich man unburdened his heart and said: "John, I am sorry for what I said. Over yonder is my house but they do not love me over there. John, I wish I had what you have."

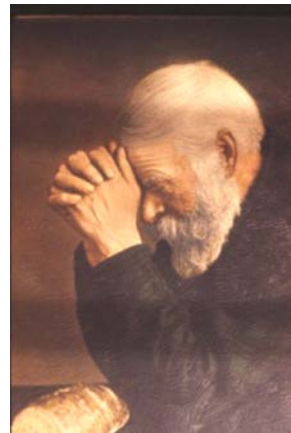
Friends, in James 2:5 it says: *"Hath God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love HIM?"*

Indeed, God wants you and me to be rich in faith, hope and love. He wants us to be like John, the ditch digger, spiritually content and spiritually alive.

Or, like the poet, who wrote:

**With my eyes upon the Savior  
I can walk the sea of life.  
With the waves and billows round me  
With its tempest, storms and strife.**

**Savior, let me walk beside Thee  
Let me feel my hand in Thine  
Let me know the joy of walking  
In Thy strength and not in mine.**



With this in mind let's sing together hymn 288. It is a hymn that says:

**Far away in the depths of my spirit tonight  
Rolls a melody sweeter than psalms  
In celestial like strains it unceasingly falls  
Over my soul like an infinite calm.**

Written By Nick Ellerbroek

This was part of the Meditation at Dutch Treat Campground Summer 2004

## SEED OF FAITH

Friends, I am asking the question: What does it mean to be a Christian? I am sure it has been explained to us many times theologically, but what about in everyday life?

And for an example: A Christian lady by the name of Linda Knight tells us that when she was a young girl and growing up on a small farm, she once planted a handful of Morning Glory seeds beside an old barn. She says: "For a few days afterward I checked to see if the seeds had sprouted, after all, I am used to instant tea, instant fruit drinks, so why not instant flowers? And then I forgot all about the seeds I had planted." But a few weeks later, to her surprise, Linda found a vine had grown up alongside the old barn with beautiful flowers blossoming on it. She says: "My harvest had arrived! My harvest had arrived!"

You know that this is the way our spiritual life grows and develops. Before a seed of faith can grow it first must be planted in our heart, then comes a time when faith develops. Finally, faith and patience, along with the working of God's Holy Spirit will produce a harvest. The question is: What might such a harvest be?

Well, my wife Alice received a beautiful Mother's Day card from our 16 year old granddaughter who lives in North Carolina. This is what it says: "Dear Grandma: I've always been inspired by your strength and courage. I love you for helping me see the best in life and the best in myself. Thank you for being such a wonderful Grandmother. Love, Kirby."

I believe this is the kind of harvest as Christians, we pray for. Nothing really is more important than seeing our children and grandchildren grow up knowing what it means to be a Christian.

Galatians 6:9-10 says it this way:

*"Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." ( NIV )*

Yes, let us do good to all people!

Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Haven Park Meditation July 12, 2001

## THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

Friends, an auctioneer thought it was not worthwhile to spend much time on an old violin, so he held it up with a smile and said: "Who will start the bidding for me? One dollar - One dollar - then two, only two - two dollars, and who will make it three? Going for three."

Suddenly from the far back of the room a gray-haired man came forward and picked up the bow. Then, wiping the dust from off the old violin and tightening the loosened strings, he played a melody pure and sweet.

When the music ceased, the auctioneer, with a voice that was quiet and low said: "Now what is your bid for this old violin?" and held it up with the bow. "A thousand dollars - and who will make it two?" "Two thousand - and who will make it three?" "Three thousand once - three thousand twice - and going - and gone!" he cried.

The people cheered, but some of them cried: "We do not understand. What changed its worth?" Quick came the reply, "The touch of the Master's hand." Friends, many men and women with life out of tune are auctioned cheap to a thoughtless crowd, much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage - a glass of wine - a game - and he travels on. He is going once - and going twice. He is going - and almost gone!

But the Master's hand is the only hand that can transform the soul. Hear His call as recorded for us in Isaiah 1:18. Listen. *"Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool."*

Like wool when touched by the Master's hand.



By Nick Ellerbroek

This story was used at Haven Park as part of the Meditation May 1, 1991

## I WILL DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

For the meditation this afternoon we will focus on Psalm 23, a Psalm which is familiar to many of us. Psalm 23: Let's listen again to what it says.

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; he leads me in the path of righteousness for his name sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.*

*Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over. Surly goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

Friends, I believe many of us are familiar with Psalm 23 and it is safe to say that the words and message of this Psalm is dear to Gods people around the world. Saint Augustine called Psalm 23 the Hymn of Martyr's because countless men and women perished for Christ sake with the words of Psalm 23 on their lips.

Another saint of God explained Psalm 23 this way:

The Lord is my shepherd, He is all I want. As my shepherd He knows what things I need before I ask Him and is well able to supply all my needs.

But sad to say, there are many lost sheep today, men and women who are desperately in need of the Shepherd spoken of in Psalm 23. The question is: What about you and me? Do we know the 'Good Shepherd' whose goodness and unflinching love is available to each one of us, who leads us in the path of righteousness? O, may it be our goal in life to be worthy sheep of His pasture.

You know, when I began to study Psalm 23, I pictured David the psalmist as a young shepherd boy, and I am sure that for those of you who grew up on the farm can also picture young David as a lad who tended sheep for his father Jesse.

But, as much as I can picture David as a shepherd boy, I also see him as a gifted poet; a young man with many beautiful thoughts on his mind, thoughts that were in harmony with God and his surroundings. Yes, I believe that by divine inspiration David's thoughts were focused on God as being the shepherd of his people; like David himself was the shepherd of his father's flock.

And so David says:

*The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still water. He restores my soul; he leads me in the path of righteousness for his name sake.*

Yes, David realizes that the Lord not only cares for his physical well being but that also spiritually he is depended upon the leading of his Lord, the creator of heaven and earth.

May it be that through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit our faith is in harmony with the will and word of God; the word of God that teaches us through Psalm 23 that the Lord leads you and me in the path of righteousness for his name sake.

Oh, what a blessing it is to know that our Savior like a shepherd leads us. That He will be with us in the final moments of our physical life, and we will live with him forever.



Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Dutch Treat Campground May 25, 2003

## THE STORY OF JESUS

Friends, when we think of West Michigan communities we realize they consist of many Christian homes and if we are part of such a home, I believe we find comfort in the fact that: *God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. John 3:17*

To explain, think of the story about Naomi and Ruth (in the book of Ruth). As Christians we only have to hear their names mentioned and see in our mind a beautiful story unfolding. A story of love and determination, a story that leads us to the greatest story ever told; the story of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

However, when we study the life of Jesus, we get the impression that many people of his day were not sure who He was. So, one time Jesus asked His disciples:

*“Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13-16)*

*“And they replied: “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” Jesus asked.*

*“Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered: “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”*

Friends, and isn't that really what the Christian faith is all about, about Jesus, the Son of the Living God? Oh, may it be that each one of us personally, like Simon Peter, is willing to accept Jesus Christ for who He really is!

If so, let us in thought go back in time some 2000 years to a place called Calvary. And as we consider what happened there, what do we see?

I know what I see. I see in my mind's eye, three crosses. Jesus is nailed to the middle one; I think it is awful, it's cruel. But listen! Jesus has just spoken His last words from the cross and cried: *“Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit.*

*Vader in Uwe handen beveel ik mijn geest! ( Lucas 23:46)*

It seems it is all over. But, is it? No, at the very moment of Jesus' death on that cruel cross, there was a great earthquake and the veil of the temple in Jerusalem was torn in two from top to bottom. But, wait! What is that Roman soldier still doing by the cross?

It's the same man who helped to crucify Jesus and gambled for his robe.

But, someone heard him say: *“Truly, this man was the Son of God!*

*Waarlijk deze mens was een zoon Gods!” (Marcus 15:39)*



Friends, perhaps you and I never cursed the name Jesus and did not help to put Him on that cruel cross. But listen to what it says in Isaiah 53:5;

*“He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we were healed.”*

Yes, we are as guilty as that Roman soldier and like that Roman soldier, we personally must come to the foot of the cross to say:

Truly, Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God. He is my Lord and Savior.

The question is: Why do we praise and worship Him today?

Because, as Christians we are assured that although Christ died on the cross, He rose victorious from the grave and at the right Hand of God the Father, Jesus reigns as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Oh, let us accept this with child-like faith and feel confident:

That our lives are in His hand  
Whatever this life may be  
Pleasing or painful, dark or bright  
As best may seem to Him.

Yes, our lives are in His hand  
Why should we doubt or fear?  
A Father’s hand will never cause  
His children needless care.

Our lives are in His hand tonight  
Let’s always trust in Him  
So that at death, in Heaven,  
We shall with Him forever be.



*Mom & Dad Ellerbroek & Mom & Dad De Graaf*

So that, at death, in Heaven, we shall with Him forever be.

Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Haven Park Meditation April 9, 1992

## NATURAL BEAUTY

Sometime ago, a man wrote about his family and how they lived in some of the most remote but beautiful places in the United States. As he described these places, he quoted from Psalm 33:8-9 (NIV)

*“Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the people of the world revere Him. For He spoke, and it came to be, He commanded, and it stood firm.”*

He said, while they lived near this natural beauty he often looked for a place where he could spend special moments alone with God. One place he remembers was a place along a stream in the Colorado high country. Another place was under the lush growth of some tall pines in the forest of Oregon. But as he thought about Alaska, he said: ‘It seemed like God was every where.

A Dutch hymn says it this way:

*“Op bergen en in dalen, ja overal is God.”*

*The translation is: “On mountains and in valleys, yes, God is everywhere.”*

Friends, when I think of moments alone with God in my life, let me tell you that sometime ago I woke up early, it was 5 o’clock, so I put my head back on the pillow, but instead of thinking about what I should do that day, the words of a well-known hymn came to my mind and suddenly I was saying to God:

*“I serve a risen Savior, He is in the world today  
I know that He is living, whatever man may say.  
I see His hand of mercy and I hear His voice of cheer  
And just the time I need Him, He’s always near.  
He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today.  
He walks with me; He talks with me along life’s narrow way.  
He Lives! He lives! Salvation to impart.  
You ask me how I know He lives,  
He lives within my heart.”*



I hope that the words of a song are drawing you close to the Lord. Or maybe it's a well-known Dutch Psalm that is your testimony of faith.

Whatever it is, from my childhood I remember an elderly lady and friend of the family. Her name was Mrs. Van Der Wilde and when she knew she soon would be leaving her earthly life, I recall my mother telling me that before she passed away, she sang her favorite Dutch Psalm. Psalm 89:1

*"Ik zal eeuwig zingen van God's goedertierenheid".*

Translated, this means that forever she would sing of God's mercy and grace.

Friends, may you and I be ready to meet our Savior and Lord with a well-known song in our heart. Trust in him at all times, for he is our refuge. Read Ps. 62:5-8



These two roses I gave to Alice after  
Nancy & Diane were born January 12, 1961

Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Meditation at Haven Park Nursing Home with Niekerk C.R.C. March 1986

## **THIS IS MY FATHER'S WORLD**

It is May 1996 and in most of the northern part of the world nature is in the process of a natural re-birth. In fact The Song of Solomon Chapter 2:11-12 says: *'See! The winter is past; the rains are over and gone, flowers appear on the earth; the season of singing has come, the cooing of doves is heard in the land. '* Friends it was during this time of the year I was inspired to write the following poem, I called it: **A Morning with God and Nature**

**The sun is still beyond the horizon  
A smell of spring is in the air  
The birds are happily singing  
And I am there!**

**In the restfulness of this environment  
I have planned to spend some time  
Alone in thought on Nature  
And on God, the giver of all life.**

**Over there a field of corn will soon be growing  
The seeds have not yet come up  
But I know that through the laws of nature  
God works and will not withhold His sustaining love.**

**In the distance a church steeple stands gleaming  
As the first rays of the sun appear,  
It stands there to remind me  
That God, the giver of life, is near.**

**In the valley the river is restless this morning  
The water of a recent rain is finding its way  
It is winding through the country  
Till finally it reaches the lake.**

**We are much like a river  
As we find our way through life.  
Let me ask you a question this morning,  
Did you reach your goal in this life?**

**There is much talk about purpose,  
And a reason for life in this age.  
Perhaps you should take a walk some morning  
And see for yourself how God refreshes His world.**

**I am sure it will help you to be thankful  
For the things you have accepted as gain.  
It will help you when you are eating breakfast this morning  
To say: "I have received it all by His grace."**

Friend, let's be thankful for the blessings of each day and say, I have received it all by His grace. Yes, lets sing or say:

This is my Father's world,  
And to my listening ears,  
All nature sings and round me rings  
The music of the spheres.  
This is my Father's world  
I rest me in the thought  
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas  
His hand the wonders wrought.



Written By Nick Ellerbroek  
This was used as part of a program at Haven Park. May 9, 1996

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE RICH?

In America as well as in Europe, many people associate possessions and a substantial bank account with being happy and content.

To illustrate this, let me tell you about a man by the name of Jack Wurm.

In 1949 Jack was broke and out of work. But one day when he was walking along a San Francisco beach he found a bottle with a piece of paper in it. As Jack read the note, he found out it was the last will and testament of Daisy Singer, heir to the Singer Sewing Machine fortune. The note read: To avoid confusion, I leave my entire estate to the person who finds this bottle and to my attorney, Barry Cohen, share and share alike.

The story further tells us that the courts accepted the theory that the heiress, Daisy Singer had written the note 12 years earlier and had thrown the bottle into the Thames River in London England, from where it had drifted across the oceans to the feet of a penniless and jobless Jack Wurm. The discovery of this bottle along a San Francisco beach netted him over six million dollars in cash and Singer stock, and so we say; 'What a lucky man!'

Now, let's not underestimate the importance of money and possessions in our way of life and for that matter in the world's economy. But let us also for a moment compare Jack Wurm's inheritance of 6 million dollars with the inheritance of a sincere Christian; the Christian who has accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior and Lord. Remember this person, according to Romans 8:17 has become an heir of God and co-heirs with Christ. You know, this is eternal life we are talking about. Oh, let us think about what a tremendous gift eternal life is. I am sure all of us agree that not even Jack Wurm's six million dollar inheritance can even begin to compare with it. And, if you are interested in what else the Word of God has to say about the inheritance of the child of God. Colossians 3:23-24 says: (NIV)

*"Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving."*

Friends, let us keep in mind the treasures of earth do not last, but God has prepared a place for us, where someday with Him, we will dwell and enjoy the riches of His grace.

Written By Nick Ellerbroek

This was part of a meditation used at Haven Park Meditation October 5, 1989

## DEAR JESUS, TAKE CARE OF ME

It is 1986 and when I think of elderly Christians, I am sure their conviction of faith have been an example to many young people, who in turn have shown their Christian love to those they have been in contact with.

With this in mind, I read a story about a pretty Indian girl who was taken to a missionary hospital in New Mexico in order that she might receive treatment for rheumatic fever. She was a sweet child, eleven years' old, but very weak physically. Her name was Jenny. Although she was in the hospital, her health continued to be poor. An examination also revealed that her tonsils were enlarged and would have to be removed. Surgery, in her case, would be dangerous, but was necessary, so preparations were made. Jenny said she was not at all afraid because she loved Jesus and trusted Him in everything. A strange thing happened during surgery. Although Jenny had received an anesthetic, she unexpectedly regained consciousness and said: **"Dear Jesus, take care of me."**

The missionary pastor who told Jenny's story to the congregation said: I will never forget those words because they were the last prayer Jenny ever spoke on earth. Soon after the operation, she stopped breathing and Jenny went to live with Jesus, who was her Savior and Lord." Everyone at the mission station was heartbroken. And when Jenny's friends sang at her funeral "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" all seemed to know that Jenny's short prayer had been answered in a manner which God knew was best and would forever care for her in the most glorious way.

May we who are older than Jenny, learn to say with child-like faith Jenny's simple prayer, **"Dear Jesus, take care of me."** I believe it will make us unafraid for what is for sure to come, to say good-bye to our life on earth in exchange for our heavenly home.

But while we live, let's meditate on Psalm 139 verse 23 and 24:

*"Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."*

But above all, before we go to sleep this evening, let's pray young Jenny's prayer. **"Dear Jesus, take care of me, take care of me"** Amen

Written By Nick Ellerbroek  
Haven Park Meditation February 6, 1986

## CHRISTMAS 2009

Friends, Luke 2 verse 14 says:

*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace goodwill towards men.”*

This Bible verse is often beautifully printed on Christmas cards we receive. But when I hear of strife and wars in this world, I wonder if there will ever be peace on earth and goodwill between each other and between nations.

Still, there are also days I feel good about what is happening in our society and to our fellowman. For example, sometime ago I read a true story about Queen Victoria of England, and her visit with a woman who was 104 years old. The old woman was pleased to meet the Queen and she expressed her appreciation for the visit.

However, being a fearless witness for her Lord, she said to the royal visitor: “May I ask you a question, your Majesty?” “You may ask me anything you like.” answered the Queen. Slowly and earnestly the old woman asked: “Shall we meet again in the home above?” Bending her head and in tears, the Queen replied: “Yes, we shall greet each other again in Heaven by the grace of God and through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is my Savior, too.”

Friends, this is a beautiful story that speaks of having peace with God, and goodwill toward our fellowman. But listen, when the multitude of angels came from heaven to the fields of Bethlehem praising God and saying: *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace goodwill toward men.”*

It was grace and good will toward men from God the Father because John 3:16 tells you and me *“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”* (NIV)





May it be true that by the grace of God and through faith in Jesus Christ, we are saved for all eternity. And that we can say with Fanny Crosby, the blind American hymn writer:

*I am safe, safe in the arms of Jesus, safe from corroding care.  
Safe from the world's temptations and sin will not harm me there,  
Yes, Jesus is my heart's dear refuge; Yes, Jesus has died for me.  
So, firm on the rock of ages, ever my trust shall be.  
Here let me wait with patience – wait till the night is over.  
Wait till I see the morning break on the Golden Shore.*

Yes! Let us all be patient. Accept Jesus Christ as our personal Lord and Savior. Then, at last, we will see the morning break on the Golden Shore.

Let us now respond and sing:

Come Thou long expected Jesus  
Born to set Thy people free.  
From our fears and sin release us,  
Let us find our rest in Thee.

*DeGraaf Family Reformed Church. Raard, Friesland.  
The tower of the church was used by Dad DeGraaf  
to hide his radio during World War II.*



Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Tendercare Meditation December 13, 2009  
With Harriet Spek at the piano - *Special Music*

## BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD

We are living in a time many people are in a hurry and rush from doing one thing to doing the next. The question is: Is what people are busy with in our materialistic society really important in light of the Christian faith?

It shouldn't be because Psalm 46 verse 10 says: *'Be still and know that I am God'*. The result would be we would know our Father in Heaven like we know and love our best friend. So when you read this meditation may you realize the importance of spending some quiet time with God each day.

A 'quiet time' to become more familiar with Him: From whom all blessing flow.

Now to illustrate such a time apart let me tell you the story of a young girl who without saying a word quietly sat on the floor in her father's study room. After a while her father said to her: 'Honey, is there something you want?' 'No Daddy' the young girl replied. 'I am just sitting here because I Love you.' She soon left as quietly as she had come in, but little did she know the lesson she had taught her father. She had not come to ask him for anything, she just wanted to be near him because she loved him. And so the thought came to the father: 'How often do I spend time in God's presence just because I love Him, or do I seek Him only when I have physical or other problems?

Friends, I believe you and I have to ask ourselves the same question as the busy father did. How often do I spend time with God just because I love him and hear him say: *'Be still and know that I am God'*.

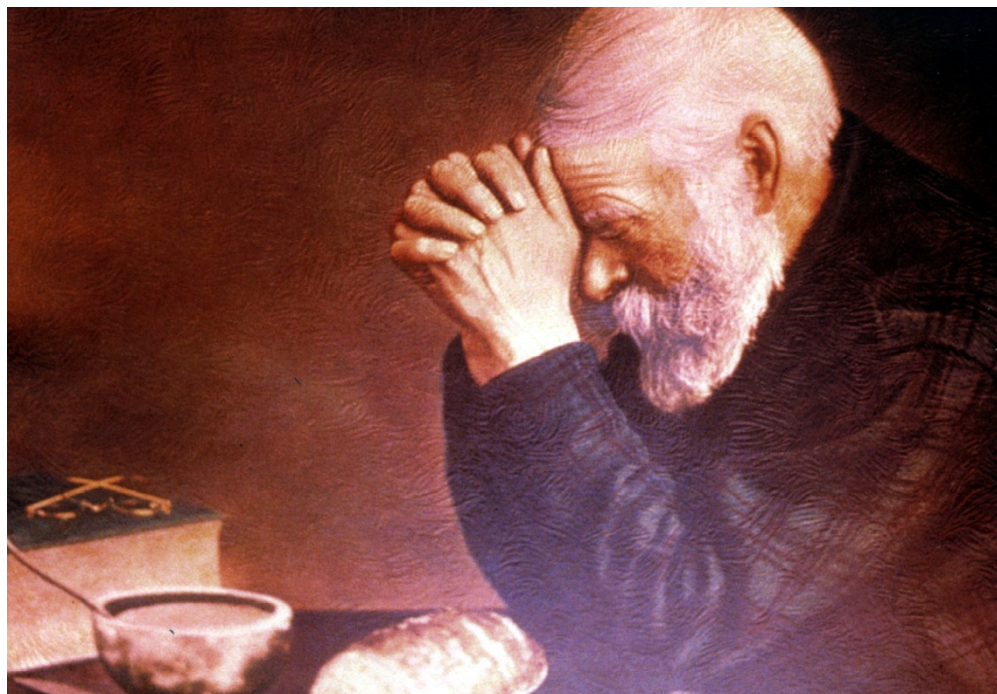
But what do these words really mean you may ask. In a devotional book called: 'Streams in the Desert' the author Dr. Griffith says: 'To be still before God begins with the absence of excitement, haste, and confusion'. He further explains that many men and woman in the history of the world experienced an environment of solitude during the course of their lives. For example, think of Moses who after he worked for Jethro his father in law for many years was called by God to bring the Israelites out of Egypt (Exodus 3). Another good example is Abraham Lincoln who came out of the quiet mountains of Kentucky and the forest of Illinois to become the 16<sup>th</sup> president of the United States of America from 1861-1865

Yes, periods of quietness and thought prepared many men and women throughout history to know self, their environment and God.  
God, who prepared many of us for our task in life so that: *'His will be done'*.

The question is: Are you and I spending time in communion with God? If so, may we do so with a thankful heart because of what it says in Psalm 46 verse 1: *'That God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble'*.

Or maybe you want to commune with God in a way a poet once did and said:

*It is enough for me to know that Jesus saves  
It ends my fear and doubt  
As a sinful soul I came to Him  
I came to Him alone,  
I am now on my way home  
I am now on my way home!*



Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
Haven Park Meditation January 12, 1989

## FAITH IN ACTION

Some years ago I read the following story in a church magazine called The Banner. It was written by Pastor Meyer and he tells us that when he was 13 years of age and went to Sunday school there were two girls who always sat straight in their chairs and with eyes fixed on the teacher, they were perfect examples of Sunday school students.

In fact, they were examples by which we boys were measured and compared. Pastor Meyer writes: "But something was about to happen that changed my life, because the teacher, an elderly farmer said something that caught my attention. He said in his own slow way: "That not a spring had passed in all of his years of farming that he didn't kneel down behind his loaded grain drill, before putting a single seed into the ground to pray that God would bless the crops."

Meyer writes: "This was nothing short of a testimony, something we were not used to in West Minnesota, not at least back then. Sure, we prayed and were good Christian people. But we didn't talk about our private religious experiences, our intimate moments with God. Details about personal communion with God fell in the category of private business."

On this special Sunday, this elderly farmer broke custom and Pastor Meyer is still able to picture in his mind this 'weather-creased farmer' alone in the field with God. His tractor is idling and he is ready to make his first round, but he first walks to the back of his drill, pulls off his woolen cap and bare-headed against the chilly wind of early seed time, he slowly lowers himself to his knees in the dirt to pray.

This special Sunday school lesson Pastor Meyer heard many years ago remains in his memory. He says, may it teach us we are dependent on God and that real Christian faith is often expressed by way of humble prayer.

By way of putting our 'faith in action' Matthew 5:14-16 says it this way. (NIV)

*"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men so that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven!"*

Written By Nick Ellerbroek

This story was used at Dutch Treat Campground June 21, 2009

## A SOUL SET FREE

I believe many of us remember celebrating the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with family picnics and watching evening fireworks. But as Christians let's also celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in a spirit of thanks giving to God and be reminded that although we are blessed with civil liberties, only Jesus Christ offers forgiveness of sin and eternal life in the realm of glory.

The question might well be, how was this made possible? Well, the Bible tells us that Jesus Christ by dying on a Roman cross became our Lord and Savior. Those who saw the awful scene must have been repelled by it. But John 3:16 assures us that *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Besides, the Bible further tells us that on the third day Jesus rose from the dead ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

With this in mind, I remember standing by the bedside of a friend who was dying. I could not think of any words to pray, but holding his hand I asked him, "John are you ready?" His answer was, "Yes, I am! How long yet?"

Friends, today let me ask you the same important question, are you ready to meet Jesus? If your answer is yes, then you are able to say with the poet:

*"Oh, what will it be like when my eyes behold  
The Lamb of God on His Kingly throne;  
When He welcomes me to the Heavenly fold  
And the joy of the Father's home".*

So let us with patience wait from the rising of the sun to the close of day. Then at last our Savior will come with outstretched arms in love and say: *"Well done, enter into the joy of the Lord". "Ga in tot het feest van uw Heer"*.

Read Matthew 25:14-29 The Parable of the Talents

Written by Nick Ellerbroek  
This is part of a meditation given at Haven Park July 1987

## MOTHER'S DAY 2009

Friends, last week Sunday was Mother's Day and with this in mind, let me read to you what it says in Ephesians 6:2-3 (NIV)

*"Honor your Father and Mother, which is the first commandment with promise. That it may go well with you, and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."*

A moving story is told of a widowed mother and her only son. They were poor and the mother worked many hours a day to support herself and her son. But the boy was bright and graduated with honor. On graduation day, he said to his mother: "Mom, I am graduating today and why are you not getting ready to see the program?" "Oh," she said, "I am not going son, because I have nothing good enough to wear. The most important people in town will be there and you will be ashamed of me in my faded dress." His eyes beamed with admiration and answered: "Ashamed of you, Mom! Never! I owe everything I have in the world to you and I am not going unless you go with me." He insisted, and so his Mom consented to go to the graduation program and see her son receive his diploma. He helped her to get as tidy looking as possible and soon they were on their way to the place where the graduation program was to take place. The mother was brought to one of the best seats in the room and there she sat in her faded dress among some of the most important people in town.

A little while later her son took his place on the platform to present his graduation speech. Afterward along with his diploma, he was given a gold medal for being outstanding in a particular study. But no sooner had he received it, he walked from the platform to where his mother was sitting, pinned the gold medal on her dress and said to her "Mom, this belongs to you! You earned it."

Friends, I believe many parents can identify with the mother in this story because they have given of themselves to make it possible their children could receive the education they wanted them to have. And, if you are one of those parents, I am sure you are not looking for a gold medal, only some appreciation for what was done out of love.

But, as pleased as we are to be respected for a life of service, there is something more precious awaiting us when we belong to Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul, in a letter to his friend, Timothy, writes about this in 2 Timothy 4:7-8 and says: (KJ)

*“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”*

The apostle Paul says: *“And not to me only, but also to all who have longed for His appearing.”*

I believe that is you and me! So let’s live with the assurance that someday we will live with Him in the realm of glory, not just for a season, but for all eternity.



Written By Nick Ellerbroek  
Meditation given at TenderCare May 17, 2009

## MEDITATION ABOUT HEAVEN

There are many people today, who believe that life, as we know it, is the sum total of our existence, and claim when they die they simply cease to exist. But the Bible says there is one appointment each one of us must keep. It is an appointment with God at the end of life's journey. I believe this is made clear to us when Jesus said to Martha in John 11:25-26 (NIV) *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies: and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe in this?"*

Now, a story is told about a preacher who spoke about this to an ungodly crowd. After his sermon, a man said to him: "Preacher, I don't believe a word you said. I believe that when I die, I will be buried and that is the end of the road for me." "Was that what your mother believed?" the preacher asked. "No," the man said. "My old mother loved her Bible and I remember she cried over it many nights because I would not accept what it said." "By the way, is your mother still alive?" the preacher inquired. "No," the man said. "She died several years ago." "And you believe that your mother, after she was buried, that was the end of her?" "No," the preacher continued: the Bible teaches that if your mother was a Christian she died as a child of God and is safe with Him in Heaven today."

Friends, when we think about the end of our physical life, it may cause us to be fearful. But let us all be reminded of what it says in John 3 verse 16:

*'For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.'*

If we accept this verse with all our heart I believe we can look forward to what lies ahead, namely Heaven. A place the Bible describes as a place of beauty, a building of God, a better county. The Bible also indicates that Heaven is a place of great understanding and knowledge, a place where the many mysteries of God will be revealed to us; a place where our very being will praise God for all eternity. Yes, my friend, the Bible teaches that as a child of God, we will be serving God in the realm of glory without ever being sick or lonely, and without ever growing old. 2 Corinthians 5:1 says it this way:

*"That if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in Heaven, not built by human hands" (NIV)*

This was part of the meditation at Haven Park April 2, 1987



## THE TRAVELING PREACHER

Some 200 years ago it was not uncommon in America and England for preachers to serve two or three congregations and travel on horseback through the forest to visit them. Now the danger of traveling through the forest was not so much of having an accident, but more so of being robbed by someone and this happened to a traveling preacher one day.

The story is; he was stopped by a man who told him to hand over the money he carried with him. But the robber was surprised when besides getting a few coins from the preacher; the preacher invited him to search his saddle-bag. The robber shook his head and said, "No", nothing but books and what good are they. The preacher replied, "I have something of great value to give you. You may not think so now, but the time will come you will regret this kind of living and then it will serve you as your only hope."

The rest of the story is that many years later at the close of a meeting in a small town, a person, well-known to many folks wanted to speak in private with the traveling preacher. As he did, tears filled his eyes and said: Preacher, I was the person who robbed you many years ago. It was then you told me you had something of great value to give me. I didn't pay much attention then, but what is important for me now is what it says in Romans 4 verse 7 and 8: (NIV) *"Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him"*. These words have come to my mind many times until at last it led me to Christ. The person I am now, I owe to my Lord and Savior and to you sir. The preacher was the well-known Evangelist John Wesley and the robber, one of thousands who came to know the Lord during the late 1700. May it be true that many people young and old alike are made aware of Romans 4: 7-8 even today.



By Nick Ellerbroek

This story was used at Haven Park as part of the meditation, February 14, 2002

## WHEN CAN I GO AND MEET GOD?

Friends many of us elderly Christians enjoy close fellowship with God and sometimes wonder what it will be like to be present with Him.

In 2 Corinthians 5:1 the apostle Paul writes about this and says: *“We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands”* (NIV).

With this in mind let me tell you it’s not only elderly folks who think about Heaven and meeting God. I say this because some time ago I read an interesting story of a young boy who wanted to meet Him. He didn’t just think about it, he believed in action, and with child-like faith prepared himself for the long journey to where God lives. So one day he packed in his little suitcase some Twinkies and root beer and began his journey. When he walked about three blocks he met an elderly lady sitting on a park bench watching some pigeons, he sat next to her, opened his little suitcase and drank some of his root beer. But, when he was almost ready to eat one of his Twinkies he noticed the elderly lady looked hungry, so he offered her one of his Twinkies. She accepted it with such a pretty smile that the boy offered her some of his root beer. And so the elderly lady and the young boy sat together for a while watching the pigeons without saying a word.

Finally the boy realized how tired he was and got up to leave, but before he had gone more than a few steps, he turned around to give his new found friend a hug. When the boy came home a short time later, his mom was surprised by the look of joy on his face and asked him what he had done that made him so happy. “Oh,” he answered: “I had lunch with God.” “Mom, I had lunch with God!” Before his mom could respond, he added: “She’s got the most beautiful smile I have ever seen!”

Meanwhile, the elderly lady, radiant with joy, returned to her home and her son was stunned by the look of peace on her face. So he asked: “Mom. What did you do today that makes you so happy?” Oh,” she said, “I ate Twinkies in the park with God.” But before her son could respond, she added:

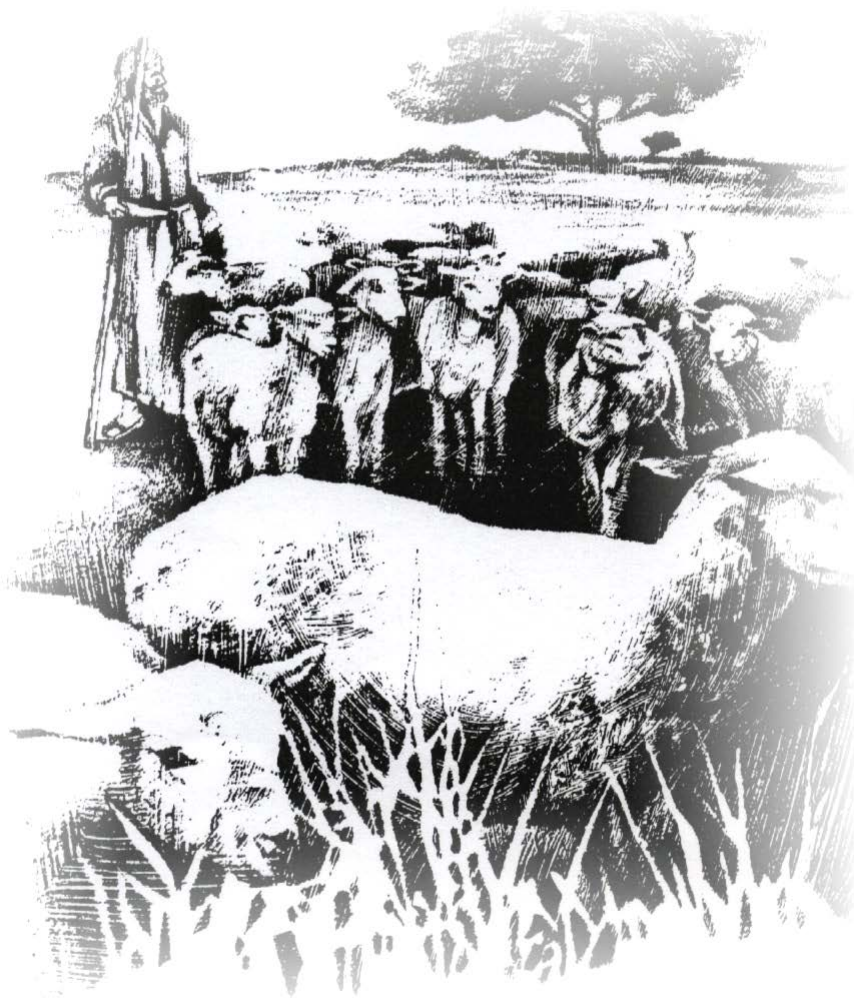
“And you know, He is much younger than I thought.”

Friends, this is only a story, but often by way of a story, we learn and understand. Even Jesus taught His audience by way of parables, known as stories today.

What surprised me, while I was preparing for this meditation, it was time for Alice and I to go to church, and what did the minister preach about on that Sunday morning? It was about Psalm 42. And the first two verses say:

*“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God.  
My soul thirst for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?  
“Wanneer zal ik voor Gods aangezicht verschijnen?”*

Friends, if it is our desire to meet God and have a personal relationship with Him, then remember, God is where we are. God is where each one of us is right now.



Written By Nick Ellerbroek  
Part of a Meditation at Haven Park Nursing Home November 8, 2000

## OUR DELIGHT IS IN THE LAW OF THE LORD

Some years ago I had a conversation with a friend who told me about a person he had known for a long time and was in the hospital being treated for cancer. He said: "I went to visit him and after a few minutes of small talk I asked him, John now that you are in the hospital with cancer, let me ask you, how is your relationship with God?" John's answer was: "Fred, if you are going to question me about that, then there is the door! There is the door! So we say: How Sad!

But as concerned as we are about the spiritual condition of our fellowman, we must also examine our own heart and ask: Do I have a personal relationship with God? Many of us are familiar with the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 1, Question 1. What is your only comfort in life and death? With the answer: That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and death, to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. But what does this really mean in our everyday life? I believe it means what it says in Psalm 1 verse 2 that *"Our delight is in the law of the Lord"*. Friends Psalm 1 compares such a person with a tree that grows near a stream of water and produces fruit each season. And who does not want to be fruitful? I believe all of us do, and want to use our talents to the glory of God.

You know, the words and music of hundreds of Hymns were written for this reason. And I remember that my mother at the age of 100 was able to express her sincere faith in God by singing by heart many Dutch Psalms and Hymns.

By the grace of God and influence of my parents I belong to the family of God. The question is: What is your relationship with Him? May your answer be similar to the words of a Hymn written by George Beverly Shea:

"There's the wonder of sunset at evening, the wonder as sunrise I see; but the wonder of wonders that thrills my soul is the wonder that God loves me.



Written By Nick Ellerbroek 2011

## PEACE WITH GOD

Friends, besides trusting God, I believe having peace with God is very important. The question is: What really is 'Peace with God'? To answer this question, let me tell you the story of two artists who were requested to paint on canvas their concept of 'Peace with God'.

So, the first artist painted a peaceful rural scene wherein the center stood a beautiful country home. Nearby were fertile fields showing an abundant harvest. Roads stretched in different directions from the home through the hilly countryside. As the sun shone upon this blissful scene, the first impression was that the artist indeed, had painted a beautiful picture of nature at its best, a place where we could escape from the strain and stress of everyday life, a place where we could find 'Peace with God'.

Now the second artist's concept of 'Peace with God' was totally different from the first artist who found inspiration in the restful countryside. Instead, he painted a destroying windstorm. The sky was dark and gloomy, trees swayed on a storm laced mountainside. All along the horizon flashes of lightening could be seen, and a waterfall seemed to create disaster in the valley below.

So the question was, how a violent scene could possibly be a representation of 'Peace with God'? The answer is because on a rock projecting from a cliff and sheltered by an overhanging boulder a little bird sat calmly on its nest, undisturbed by the howling storm and the water which plunged downward nearby.

Friends, we can be compared to that little bird and be unafraid during the storms of life which are experienced in the form of personal loss or disappointments, because in Heb. 13:5-6 God says: *"Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."* So we say with confidence, *'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can men do to me?'* (NIV)



Part of a Mediation at Haven Park By Nick Ellerbroek

## MY STORY

By: John A. Wood

It was the summer of 1972 and I had just graduated from Chelmsford Technical High School in England. I had a good education but no plans to go to college and was really unsure of what my future might hold, but I did have one thing to look forward to. Earlier that year my uncles Nick and Karl Ellerbroek who lived in Holland, Michigan in the USA had written and invited me to visit them and spend the whole summer there. Little did I know that this journey and adventure would change the direction of my life.

So on a pleasant summer's day I flew out of London to land in New York and then transfer to Chicago and finally to Grand Rapids, Michigan. When I landed in New York I didn't have a whole lot of time between connections, but the things that struck me about this new country were first how hot it was and also how busy and noisy it was. The weather was bad in the Midwest and so I was delayed in Chicago for a while and finally arrived in Grand Rapids after a 'bumpy' flight, where my relatives were waiting to pick me up. With the time difference and the delays I was really tired and don't remember too much about the drive to Holland, my final destination.

The next thing I remember is when I was woken up in Uncle Nick's basement by the neighbor boy, Jon Vanderkolk, who was really curious about this new visitor. I had slept in till late and everybody was also anxious to meet the Englishman. I had a funny accent and my blond hair was pretty long back then, making me look even more out of place. Everyone else had their summer tans already and I must have looked as white as a ghost!

But I could not have been more accepted by everyone I met. I was really impressed with how friendly everyone was and how interested they were in meeting me. They really made me feel at home. In fact when I woke up that first day it felt like I was emerging from a deep, dreamless sleep, and from now on my life was somehow changed.

It was also interesting that being the offspring of a Dutch mother and an English father, I always felt closer to my Dutch relatives when we would visit them in the Netherlands. But it was always difficult to communicate with them due to the language barrier. Now, in Holland, Michigan I could converse easily with all the Dutch immigrants that I met and also felt a real kinship with them.

The summer just flew by and I spent time staying with both my uncles. I also went on a couple of vacations 'up north' and had a great time helping out at Hollandia Gardens, doing landscape work and working with my cousins. This was a really good experience for me. I really enjoyed the hard work and the fact that it was all outdoors. Michigan was so much warmer and dryer than England. I was also amazed at the beauty of the native landscape of West Michigan, especially the 'big lake' and the wide open spaces. I was used to living in England which was overpopulated and smaller than Michigan.

I think my decisions about my future were being made one by one. I did not hate England, but here I was having the time of my life, and to be honest I did not have any time to think of my home and family very much!

One memorable trip I had with my cousins and some friends was to go to a cottage by a lake up north. One of my greatest fears was faced and overcome, the fear of deep water. When I was younger I had almost drowned in the local swimming pool when I stepped into water over my head I panicked. One of my friends noticed me struggling and rescued me from underwater. So here I was standing on a raft in the middle of a deep, dark lake. Everyone else was diving in and swimming, so I finally made the plunge. And ever since that day I have not been afraid of the water. It was like being baptized by total immersion. We had a great time camping and canoeing. I remember one day when we were canoeing we found and caught several frogs. We would see the occasional duck and I remember at one point flinging my oar at a low flying duck and hitting it in midair. It dropped into the water, dead! That night we ate roasted duck and frog legs, all with Boones Farm wine.

And to add to my wonderful experiences in this new country, I found two of the most important things that I needed in my life. The first was God. I had not gone to church for many years and not thought much about my relationship to God.

I was drifting away and feeling depressed and lonely and anxious about my future. But coming to America I was confronted head on by a new hope and faith. God was drawing me into a saving relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord, through my aunts and uncles, was pulling me away from a life of sin and selfishness into a far better life filled with light and love.

What struck me most about Holland, Michigan was the abundance of churches, especially of the Reformed tradition. It was ironic that I had been baptized in a Christian Reformed Church in London and now here I was in the American CRC listening to some good news about God and His truth found in His holy word. I had gone to different churches and Sunday school as a child and also been exposed to religious teaching in school, but this teaching was dynamic and personal.

I was also impressed by the vibrant and sincere faith of so many of the people that I met. They sincerely practiced their faith on the stranger that I was. My adopted American family also convinced me to get a haircut, which helped me to fit in better, but also felt like a cutting off of the past. I was starting to feel like a new creation and to see the future a lot clearer.

And then it seemed like the final puzzle piece was put into place, but not until a little later. After a wonderful 3 ½ months it was time to go home, and try to start up my life again back in England. It was not easy going back. I was changed by a new and better worldview and I now believed in a living God and His Word. The first thing I did was talk to my family about the Lord and my spiritual awakening. That met with opposition especially from my Dad. I tried going to church on my own, but it just didn't seem the same. The fellowship and atmosphere of joy were lacking and I started to feel a longing to be back in America. I got a new job and tried to settle down; even dating a girl I had met before leaving for the U.S. But my experiences and memories kept coming back.

And then one day out of the blue, a letter came from a young lady from Holland, Michigan named Tina Marie Grainey. Evidently she had seen me in Central Avenue CRC with the Ellerbroeks, but was too shy to introduce herself. So when I stopped coming to church later that summer she had her mother ask my relatives



about me. She also got my address and wrote the letter that basically sealed the direction for my future. We kept on writing for a couple of years and then finally we met in 1974, when I planned to revisit the U.S. for four months that summer. They were probably the best four months of our lives as we got to know each other and spent just about every day together. The promise of my Uncles, Nick and Karl, many years before to invite me over to visit them had far reaching consequences and eventually touched many lives. It was way beyond my dreams and imagination, as God was working out His plan for His creation.



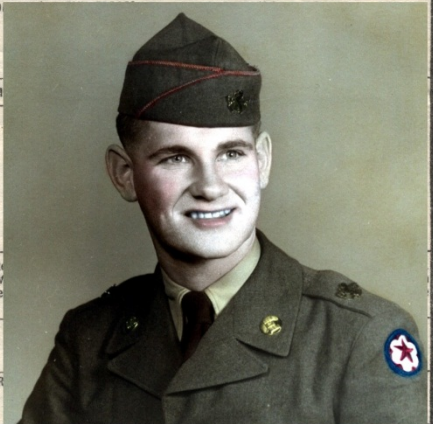
John Wood

Written By John Wood  
November 2011

# NICK'S ARMY RECORD

US 53 103 666

SEPARATION DATA		SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA		SERVICE DATA		INSURANCE AND PAY DATA		AUTHENTICATION		PERSONAL DATA	
CHARACTER OF SEPARATION <b>HONORABLE</b>		REPORT OF SEPARATION FROM THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES		DEPARTMENT <b>ARMY</b>		NA (NOT APPLICABLE CO "A")					
1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE NAME <b>ELLERBROEK, NICOLAAS</b>		2. SERVICE NUMBER <b>US53 103 666</b>		3. GRADE - RATE - RANK AND DATE OF APPOINTMENT <b>PFC(T) 20JUN52</b>		4. COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS <b>AUS CE</b>					
5. QUALIFICATIONS SPECIALTY NUMBER OR SYMBOL <b>NA</b>		RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND D. O. T. NUMBER <b>NA</b>		6. EFFECTIVE DATE OF SEPARATION DAY <b>22</b> MONTH <b>SEPT</b> YEAR <b>53</b>		7. TYPE OF SEPARATION <b>REL FR ACT MIL SVC</b>					
8. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION <b>SR 615-363-5 &amp; SEC V &amp; VI SR 615-3605</b>		9. PLACE OF SEPARATION <b>FORT SHERIDAN, ILLINOIS</b>									
10. DATE OF BIRTH DAY <b>8</b> MONTH <b>MAR</b> YEAR <b>30</b>		11. PLACE OF BIRTH (City and State) <b>NETHERLAND</b>		12. DESCRIPTION SEX <b>MALE</b> RACE <b>CAU</b> COLOR HAIR <b>BROWN</b> COLOR EYES <b>BLUE</b> HEIGHT <b>65"</b> WEIGHT <b>145</b>							
13. REGISTERED YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		SELECTIVE SERVICE NUMBER <b>31 7 30 300</b>		14. SELECTIVE SERVICE LOCAL BOARD NUMBER (City, County, State) <b>7 WASHINGTON (BEAUFORT) N.C.</b>		15. INDUCTED DAY <b>3</b> MONTH <b>OCT</b> YEAR <b>51</b>					
16. ENLISTED IN OR TRANSFERRED TO A RESERVE COMPONENT YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		COMPONENT AND BRANCH OR CLASS <b>USAR CE</b>		COGNIZANT DISTRICT OR AREA COMMAND <b>TRANS ARMY RES MICHIGAN MIL DISTRICT</b>							
17. MEANS OF ENTRY OTHER THAN BY INDUCTION <input type="checkbox"/> ENLISTED <input type="checkbox"/> REENLISTED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA <input type="checkbox"/> COMMISSIONED <input type="checkbox"/> CALLED FROM INACTIVE DUTY		18. GRADE - RATE OR RANK AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE <b>PVT-1</b>									
19. DATE AND PLACE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE DAY <b>3</b> MONTH <b>OCT</b> YEAR <b>51</b> PLACE (City and State) <b>RALEIGH, N.C.</b>		20. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE (St., R.F.D., City, County and State) <b>321 CENTRAL AVE HOLLAND (UNK) MICH</b>									
21. NET ( <b>NA</b> ) SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES EXCLUDING THIS PERIOD		A. YEARS		B. MONTHS		C. DAYS		25. ENLISTMENT ALLOWANCE PAID ON EXTENSION OF ENLISTMENT, IF ANY DAY MONTH YEAR AMOUNT			
22. NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES THIS PERIOD		1		11		20					
23. OTHER SERVICE (Act of 16 June 1942 as amended) COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES		0		0		0		26. FOREIGN AND/OR SEA SERVICE YEARS MONTHS DAYS			
24. TOTAL NET SERVICE COMPLETED FOR PAY PURPOSES		1		11		20		1 5 11			
27. DECORATIONS, MEDALS, BADGES, COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND CAMPAIGN RIBBONS AWARDED OR AUTHORIZED <b>KSM W/1 BSS UNSM NDSR GCM KOR PRES UNIT CIT</b>											
28. MOST SIGNIFICANT DUTY ASSIGNMENT <b>86th ENGR FIRE FIGHTING APO 909</b>		29. WOUNDS RECEIVED AS A RESULT OF ACTION <b>NA</b>									
30. SERVICE SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES, COLLEGE TRAINING COURSES AND/OR POST GRAD. COURSES SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED <b>NA</b>		DATES (From-To)									
32A. KIND & AMT. OF INSURANCE & MTHLY. PREMIUM 1951 <b>NONE INDEM</b>		32B. ACTIVE SERVICE PRIOR TO 26 APRIL 1951 <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/> UNKNOWN		33. MONTH ALLOTMENT							
35. TOTAL PAYMENT UPON SEPARATION <b>NA</b>		36. TRAVEL OR MILEAGE ALLOWANCE INCLUDED IN TOTAL PAYMENT <b>NA</b>		37. DISBURSING OFFICER							
38. REMARKS (Continue on reverse) <b>BLOOD GROUP "O" NO TIME LOST UNDER SEC 6a APP 2b MCM 51- REL FR ACT MIL SVC &amp; TRFD TO USAR TO COMPLETE (8) YEARS UNDER UMT SVC ACT</b>		39. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER AUTHORIZED TO SIGN <i>Marvin L. Mader</i> NAME, GRADE AND TITLE (Typed) <b>MARVIN L. MADER 1ST LT., INF</b>									
40. V. A. BENEFITS PREVIOUSLY APPLIED FOR (Specify type) COMPENSATION, PENSION, INSURANCE BENEFITS, ETC. <b>NA</b>		CLAIM NUMBER <b>NA</b>									
41. DATES OF LAST CIVILIAN EMPLOYMENT FROM <b>47</b> TO <b>51</b>		42. MAIN CIVILIAN OCCUPATION <b>FARM HAND, GENERAL</b>		43. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST CIVILIAN EMPLOYER <b>LEE WESTERBEEK WASHINGTON N.C.</b>							
44. UNITED STATES CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		45. MARITAL STATUS <b>SINGLE</b>		46. NON-SERVICE EDUCATION (Years successfully completed) GRAM-MAR <b>8</b> HIGH SCHOOL <b>4</b> COL-LEGE <b>0</b> DEGREE(S) <b>NA</b>		MAJOR COURSE OR FIELD <b>AGRICULTURE</b>					
47. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES AFTER SEPARATION (St., R.F.D., City, County and State) <b>169E 16TH ST, HOLLAND (UNK) MICH</b>		48. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED <i>Nicolaas Ellerbreek</i>									



## Private First Class Nicolaas Ellerbroek / United States Army

### Awards for service in the Korean War.

*Bio: Private Ellerbroek immigrated to North Carolina from the Netherlands in 1949. In 1951 he was drafted into the US Army for service in Korea, and while there, he was stationed at the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Headquarters on the 38<sup>th</sup> Parallel. He plans on bringing pictures to the ceremony to share memories of his time in Korea.*



**National Defense Service Medal:** The National Defense Service Medal (NDSM) was established by President Eisenhower per Executive Order 10448, dated 22 April 1953, for service during the Korean War Period, and it was given to later veterans for their service in varying conflicts over the past half century. This includes the Vietnam War.

The eagle, our National emblem, together with the shield of the Coat of Arms of the United States is used to symbolize the defense of the United States. The combination of oak and palm leaves signify strength and preparedness.



**Korean Service Medal:** The Korean Service Medal was established by President Truman per Executive Order 10179 to honor those servicemen who served in the Korean War. The design, created by Mr. Thomas J. Jones, uses the symbols associated with Korea to reflect service in that Country.



**Good Conduct Medal:** On 31 March 1943, Executive Order 9323 authorized the Good Conduct Medal for Army soldiers who had served three years service after 7 December 1941 or one year of service while the United States is at war.

The eagle, with wings spread, denotes vigilance and superiority. The horizontal sword denotes loyalty, and the book represents knowledge acquired and ability gained. On the



**United Nations Service Medal:** This was the first United Nations Medal to be created, and it is also known as the *UNITED NATIONS SERVICE MEDAL KOREA*. It was awarded by the United Nations to all countries which aided South Korea during the years of the Korean War. Since 1955, over two dozen additional United Nations Medals have been created by the U.N. and awarded for participation in various United Nations actions around the world.

*Boskoopse „Amerikaan” met verlof*

# Nic Ellerbroek ging naar Amerika en Korea

*(Van een medewerker)*

*BOSKOOP. — SOMS ONTMOET JE VAN DIE MENSEN, voor wie je behoorlijk je petje kunt afnemen. Zo iemand is Nic Ellerbroek, die nu over is uit Amerika om een maand verlof in zijn ouderlijk huis, Laag-Boskoop no. 86, door te brengen. Nic was 19 jaar, toen hij, door hard te werken bij een boer, al zóveel geld had overgespaard dat hij zèlf een reis naar Amerika kon betalen. „Hij was 9 jaar toen hij al ging kroos vissen en konijnen houden om geld te verdienen”, zegt zijn moeder. „Altijd maar was het sparen, sparen”. Hij volgde de landbouwschool in zijn vrije tijd, maar verder werkte hij. Amerika lokte hem onweerstaanbaar. En toen hij 19 jaar was en de overtocht kon betalen, toen ging hij. Op 4 November 1949. . . . Hij is nu vorige week Donderdag, 21 Januari, voor het eerst weer in Boskoop teruggekeerd, na 4 jaar in den vreemde te zijn geweest.*

Dear Friends

April 2011

If you read some of the stories in this book you know I left Boskoop my home town at the age of 19 as an immigrant to the U.S. on November 4, 1949.

I was back in Boskoop on January 21, 1954 because of a promise I made in Korea I would visit my parents in the Netherlands after my tour of duty in the U.S. Army was completed.

While I was back in Boskoop a reporter from the Gouda newspaper stopped by and wanted to talk to me about my experiences in the U.S. Army and my life as an immigrant in Holland, Michigan.

Part of the article he wrote in January 1954 was enlarged and is shown above. Even though it is written in Dutch I hope it might be of some interest to those who can read Dutch.

After 4 years it was good for me to be back in Boskoop, see my family and to reminisce, but I was happy to return to the U.S. and begin my life in earnest with my wife Alice in Holland, Michigan.

## THE SPORTSMAN

My Dad, Jan De Graaf was a true sportsman. He enjoyed hunting, fishing and just being with God's wonderful nature.

During World War II, while living in Raard, Friesland times became hard and food was scarce. Dad was by nature an early riser; he would leave his warm bed at 3 A.M. to go hunting for water duck eggs or whatever other type of eggs he could find. Dad always looked and found just laid eggs and would leave two in the nest for hatching. He practiced conservation.

One Sunday morning as Dad crossed a large open field to attend church in the little village of Bitterwerd, he found a new nest with 8 duck eggs. These were good size eggs. Dad carefully placed 3 eggs in each of his side pockets of his Sunday suit coat and went on to the church service. There he carefully choose an end seat staying very much by himself to protect those precious eggs.

I wonder how much of the sermon he heard that day.



Written by Fran Kortman De Graaf

## **FROM DIANE AND FRANK, NOVEMBER, 2011**

When we married in 1981, we wanted to have children, just not right away. We agreed that a period of adjustment to married life was important before adding a child to the family. At the time, five years seemed plenty of time to learn to live together.

After we were married, we bought our first house, our first dog, settled into married life, and about March, 1985, we learned Diane was pregnant. There were showers at work and among family. We converted a bedroom into a nursery. Diane's belly expanded considerably, and in the middle of the afternoon October 17, Diane went into labor. Thirteen long and painful hours later, Ben was born.

We never talked much about how many kids made for a right-sized family, but Diane was pretty sure that this one experience with labor was enough.

Bringing Ben into the world may have been painful but having him here was a wonderful experience. Though he could be a challenge (nothing Frank had ever done was as difficult as being a good parent), he was also a great addition to the family, and he played an important role in our decision to have another child.

When Ben was ten or eleven, he began asking us why he didn't have a brother or sister, and this got us to thinking about whether we wanted to go for another kid. Diane had turned 35 or 36 about this same time and knew it would be best not to wait long to make this decision. She'd always wondered what it would be like to have a daughter, so, after a bit of discussion, we decided that we should try to give Ben the sibling he said he wanted. Maybe, if we were lucky, we'd give him a sister.

Sadly, early in Diane's second pregnancy, she miscarried. The loss of this child was very important to us, and we continued to mourn for several months (the memory of this still brings tears to Diane's eyes), but we didn't change our minds about wanting a second child. We were thrilled to learn in January or February of 1998 that Diane was again pregnant.

On August 27 of that year, Sami joined the family. Diane remembers seeing her for the first time like it was yesterday and saying, “She’s perfect.” It was great for Diane to have 6 weeks off work to be home with Sami. She had a great time caring for Sami, relaxing around the house, and having a break from the stress of work.

Holding Ben and Sami in the delivery room immediately after they were born were two of the happiest moments in Frank’s life. They are continuing sources of joy for him and his only regret is that they grow up so quickly.



After living together and rearing an adult son and teenaged daughter, we are still learning how to live together. Every year brings changes to each of us in our life together and our separate lives. We continue to discover new things about one another, to be challenged by our children, and to learn that adjusting to life never ends.



**Sami and her 1<sup>st</sup> horse Bay Lee and dog Abby**

## MIJN VADER

Mijn vader werd geboren in 1891 in Boskoop – Zuid Holland.

Hij trouwde met mijn moeder in 1924, zij kregen 6 kinderen,

Ida, Jo, Nick, Jannie, Emmy en Karel.

Ik was het 5<sup>e</sup> kind en werd geboren in 1939. Mijn vader was toen 48 jaar.

Twee jaar later werd mijn broer Karel geboren, wij waren nakomertjes zoals dat genoemd werd.

Mijn vader was Hovenier, in onze tuin, voor het kleine arbeidershuisje stond een bord met daarop in grote letters:

M. ELLERBROEK AANLEG EN ONDERHOUD VAN TUINEN

Als vader naar 'zijn tuinen' ging, van dokter, dominee of notaris nam hij de grasmaaier, schop, schoffel en hark voorop zijn transportfiets mee, wij noemden dat zijn afweergeschut!

Vader stond vroeg op, maakte de kachel aan, dekte de tafel en zette thee.

Mijn moeder kreeg altijd thee en beschuit op bed en een geklutst eitje.

Zij is veel ziek geweest, daarom werd ze altijd verwend door mijn vader.

In het begin van hun trouwen hadden mijn ouders een bloemenzaak maar omdat mijn moeder te zwak was en veel ziek, moesten ze daarmee

stoppen. Wel bleven zij samen bruidswerk maken. Vader zorgde voor de

klienten en bezocht aanstaande bruidsparen. Ook kocht hij bloemen in.

Ik zie het allemaal nog voor me, grote emmers met daarin de bloemen en het groen. Meestal werden de bruidsboeketten van grote witte anjers gemaakt en veel fijn groen blad dat ze asparagus noemden.

Vader zette op de dag van de bruiloft de bloemen op draad en moeder maakte daar het bruidsboeket van. Zij maakte ook de corsages.

Het laatste bruidsboeket werd gemaakt in 1962, mijn bruidsboeket, niet van anjers maar van lelietjes van dalen en orchideeën, dat was heel bijzonder, vader was toen 73 jaar en moeder 66.

Het boeket was prachtig maar wat een verantwoording!

Mijn vader was lid van de Christelijke Harmonie 'Concordia' waar hij ook nog een poosje voorzitter van geweest is. Hij speelde op de grote trom.

Bij de jaarlijkse uitvoeringen waren wij altijd present, gezellig was dat!

Zondags gingen wij met elkaar naar de Gereformeerde kerk, lopend of op

de fiets. Uit de kerk gingen wij meestal koffie drinken bij Opa Spaargaren

de vader van mijn moeder. Hij woonde bij tante Marie en Oom Jan Spaargaren in de Nieuwstraat. Een oma heb ik nooit gekend.



Als we dan weer thuis kwamen ging moeder eten koken en wij deden een spelletje en luisterden naar de radio.

's Middags zongen wij bij het orgel psalmversjes. Moeder zong en speelde alles uit het hoofd. Om 5 uur gingen wij dan voor de tweede keer naar de kerk.

Vader heeft tot zijn zeventigste jaar gewerkt, toen was het tijd om te gaan rentenieren zoals hij dat altijd noemde. Toen 'trok hij al 5 jaar van Drees' ook zo'n gezegde van hem. Hij was veel bezig in zijn groentetuin. Later gingen mijn vader en moeder verhuizen naar een bejaardenflat, dat was wel even wennen zo zonder tuin en 'het straatje'.

Nog later werd het een verzorgingstehuis. De kerk werd beluisterd via de kerktelefoon en muziek kwam van de grammofoonplaat. Zo hebben vader en moeder heel wat koormuziek gehoord. Als vader een lied mooi vond schreef hij op de hoes: prachtig!

Ook had vader een voorliefde voor de muziek en zang van het 'Leger des Heils'. Dat kwam zo: hij was voor zijn trouwen eens in een samenkomst geweest. Daar werd veel gezongen en ook muziek gemaakt, daar hield hij van, zou hij zich daar dan ook thuis voelen?

Een vreemd gezicht valt op, en allerlei mensen maakten kennis met hem, ook de voorganger kwam zich voorstellen. Aan het eind van de dienst werd er tot zijn verbazing voor hem gebeden en met elkaar zeiden alle aanwezigen: Halleluja, ook voor Maarten!

Dat verhaal heb ik vele malen gehoord. Mijn vader is 93 jaar geworden en was 60 jaar getrouwd met mijn moeder.

Ik bewaar mooie herinneringen aan mijn ouders en kan er veel over vertellen.

Emmy Mulder Ellerbroek



## A TRANSLATED STORY

The source of the poem page 81 is my father in law Jan De Graaf who lived in Raard -Friesland, The Netherland and immigrated with his family to Holland Michigan in the summer of 1947.

After I met his daughter Alice in 1951 he would tell me stories about the time in Friesland before there was television. He said many evenings were spent with his friends around a cast iron stove telling stories. Sometimes a poem writing contest was held. One time he wrote a Dutch poem for me he knew by heart. It tells us of a young man whose parents became martyrs for their faith during a time of persecution in Europe. In a poetic way I translated this poem from the Dutch not so much the words, but the meaning and called it: Faith in time of Persecution

Jan De Graaf was born October 24, 1905. On October 26, 1929 he married Tryntje 'Nancy' Van Der Wall. Before Dad De Graaf and his family came to live in Holland, Michigan he worked for the Fortuin Suiker Fabriek (Fortuin Sugar Factory) in Dokkum-Friesland for 27 years. Most of the time he operated a press that made 12 Wilhelmina Peppermints at the time.



## FAITH IN TIME OF PERSECUTION

This interesting poem  
tell us of a young Christian  
whose parents were accused  
of Christian worship and became  
martyrs for their faith.

As we follow the young Christian  
we find him wandering through the land.  
Finally a farmer finds him  
and takes the cold and hungry  
young wanderer home.

“Mary”, so called the farmer  
as he enters his country home.  
“I found a young heretic  
and I could not let him go.”

The father of the farmer  
Also lived at the country home.  
He felt sorry for the poor Christian  
and demanded food and warm clothes.

But the farmer’s wife,  
she had no mercy and made a double cross.  
She raised her voice and said,  
“So long I’m a farmer’s wife  
no heretics in my home.”

“Calm, calm”, said the father of the farmer  
“I have a better plan.  
We can convert this young Christian  
and receive the favors of the land.”

As the writer of this story I will constantly try to be steadfast as this young Christian.  
I hope that whoever reads it knows what it means to be a Christian.

Soon the father of the farmer  
went to the young man and said:  
“Boy, you must stop the way you worship,  
then you are allowed to stay.  
You will not go hungry,  
no need to roam the land.

Without hesitation the young man replied:  
“Thank you for food and warm clothing.”  
But I cannot change my mind.  
I will pray to my Father in Heaven  
not to wood or stone.  
Jesus will take care of me  
because He chose me for His own.

In storm and bitter cold  
the young Christian was sent away.  
At sunrise the following morning  
near the edge of a canal,  
the farmer once more finds him  
his body was dead and cold.  
But his soul had gone to Heaven  
where now, he lives with His Lord.



Translated from the Dutch by Nick Ellerbroek

## THE PATRIARCH

Written by Brett Ellerbroek October 6, 1998

The “patriarch” in our family that I interviewed was my grandpa Ellerbroek. He does sermons for Haven Park Nursing Home and the story he told me is the sermon he is giving this week to the people there.

The dictionary tells us reminisce means ‘to call past events to mind, talk, or write about remembered events’. Grandpa says each one of us enjoys reminiscing and we don’t even have to be very old to do so.

The example Grandpa gave was that even though he is 68 years old, he often thinks or talks about the time he was a Dutch boy with wooden shoes and lived in the Netherlands. He used to walk to school in the morning and walked back again in the afternoon which was about two miles every day. Grandpa can still picture it now. First he would cross a river by a bridge then walk past a large church to a main street. At the end of that street lived an elderly lady and sometimes he would visit her just to say “Hello” and “How are you today?” Grandpa thought she liked him because she gave him candy while they talked and then he would soon be on his way home.

One day his mother told Grandpa that the elderly friend had been sick for a long time and that during the night she had passed away. He and his mother felt sad but his mother said that she was a child of God and that before she died she repeated her favorite Dutch Psalm, Psalm 89:1.

When Grandpa thinks of this experience today, even though his elderly friend passed away, what really sticks with him was not only that she was a child of God, but she was able to sing of His love and mercy unto the end of her life.

This experience has influenced my Grandpa into what kind of a Christian he is today. He says that his elderly friend was used by the Father in Heaven to be a light of the world to him when he was only a boy. He said “This is what Jesus wants you and me to be.” He told me to read Matthew 5:14-16 in my Bible where it says:

*“You are the light of the world and a city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on a lamp stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in Heaven.”*



## IN CONCLUSION

These collections of writings were written mostly by my Dad. He has spent countless hours over many years writing letters, meditations, poems and stories. Mom's sister Fran Kortman and I have helped with the typing and photo imaging.

My Mom and Dad are very spiritual people, and Dad's writings reflect that; I would like to also acknowledge a few of their other wonderful traits.

As a young couple they had very humble beginnings, their first home was just a basement and from that basement Dad built the home they raised their family in. They learned to speak, read and write the English language.

They started a nursery business that provided financially for our family, and because of Dad's influence and help, there are many of us still in the nursery business in one form or another.

Mom and Dad provided for their children a sound and secure childhood. They gave us a Christian education, a great work ethic and a sense of independence. Mom would often say *'You need to stand on your own two feet'*.

They have maintained friendships that have lasted their whole life; they still go out with friends they have known in the Netherlands over 60 years ago.

They have been members of Niekerk CRC most of their married life, and have volunteered for several years at Haven Park Nursing Home providing programs of worship.

Dad enjoyed being a Nurseryman and being his own boss but his hobby and passion is writing. I would like to thank him for opening up his heart and sharing these writings with all of us.

Nancy Ellerbroek  
November 2011





### Pen'man-ship

Most of the stories, poems and mediations in this book were hand written since 1980. When I was in grade school in The Netherlands form 1936 to 1943,I learned to write stories and penmanship was very important. A sample of my penmanship is the 2008 year end letter I wrote to family and friends and printed on the next page.

But in order for this book to become a reality, without the help and encouragement from my sister in law Fran Kortman, Beth Post and our daughter Nancy Ellerbroek the idea of my memoirs becoming a book would have been impossible. Alice and I hope that where ever a copy ends up, the reader in turn finds a way to let their light shine.



Dear Family and Friends - Picture and letter Nov 2008  
It is Nov. 2008 and ready to write a year end letter to Family and Friends. And to begin let me tell you that after listening to different politicians this year we have come to the conclusion what has been promised can neither be achieved or paid for.

And now that the election is past I hope the people of this country will begin to focus more on what is important in their lives and what some of the facts are.

What is important to Alice and me is what our Christian faith teaches. Joshua a leader of Israel said it this way in Joshua 24 vers 15. "As for me and my household we will serve the Lord." But there is a different motto in this country this year.

It is: Change is coming- Change is coming! And come to think of it Alice and I have experienced many changes during our life together. For me life changed when I immigrated to America. Before I left home I was made aware of the temptations I would encounter. And if there was any thing important to my Mom and Dad that day it was my promise I would keep the faith I was taught.

And after living in this country for 59 years and Alice and I being married for 55 year we feel blessed with our off-spring even if we don't agree on what really is important in life sometimes.

And if there is a Bible vers that might give us something think about it is found in 1 Corinthians 1 vers 20 And sais:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

With Love from Nick and Alice

**Nick and Alice Ellerbroek  
Christmas 2006**



Numbers 6:24-26 (NIV)

*“The Lord bless you and keep you:*

*The Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you:*

*The Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace.”*

Numeri 6:24-26 (Dutch)

*“De Here zegene u en behoede u:*

*De Here doe zijn aangezicht over u lichten en zij u genadig:*

*De Here verheffe zijn aangezicht over u en geve u vrede.”*



**Names of Nick and Alice Ellerbroek's  
Great Grand Children born after 2011**

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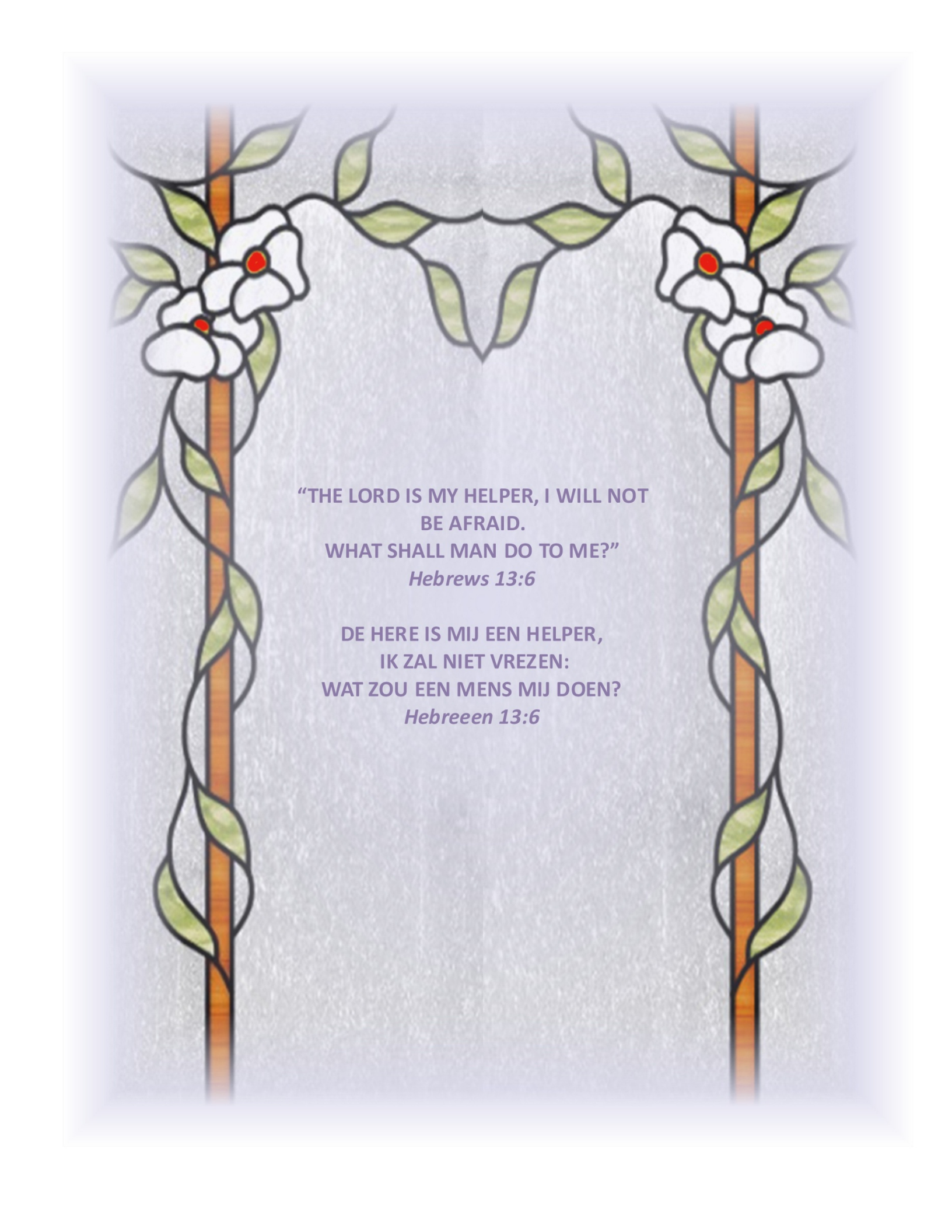
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**“THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT  
BE AFRAID.  
WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?”**  
*Hebrews 13:6*

**DE HERE IS MIJ EEN HELPER,  
IK ZAL NIET VREZEN:  
WAT ZOU EEN MENS MIJ DOEN?**  
*Hebreeen 13:6*