

News from Nan

GENEALOGY, FAMILY HISTORY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, TANTE BETS!

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I wish I had known my Dutch grandparents, but due to the fact I was their very youngest grandchild, we were “like ships passing in the night”: as they exited this world, I came on the scene!



Tante Bets in Downey, California, 1958



Tante Bets in Marysville, Michigan, in the 1940s. Her house, in the background, was where my parents met. My mother was boarding there the year she taught at Marysville High School.

My beloved “Tante Bets” – my dad’s oldest sibling – came to my rescue. She played the grandmother role well, and because she lived with us on and off when she came for long visits to our new home in California, we had lots of time to get to know each other.

Her birthday was January 8, and I always think of her when the Christmas rush is over and the new year begins. Here is a little birthday tribute I wrote about her in 2018.

Materfamilias of the van Raaphorst clan



Tante Bets and her youngest brother, John, Port Huron, Michigan, 1980

If you were a 15-year-old girl who had already raised five younger brothers, and your mother told you that yet another baby boy had joined the family, and “why don’t you come and take a look?” – what would you say?

My tante Bets absolutely refused to look and gave (in Dutch) as her reason, “I don’t even want to see him; he’ll just grow up to be another *straatrovers* [hooligan, mischief-maker, mugger] like all the others!”

There was certainly no shortage of *straatrovers* in the van Raaphorst family!

But in spite of her lack of enthusiasm as a teenager, Tante Bets continued to be the devoted *materfamilias* to the whole gang, and was especially fond of her littlest *broer*, as you can see in the above picture, taken when she was almost 100. It was the last time they saw each other.

Happy 137th birthday (January 8, 2018), Tante Bets! I’m glad you had some energy left over after trying to civilize all those boys to play substitute *oma* to me!

◀ 2024