

NAUL NEWSLETTER

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Guess Who's Coming to Town Who else but Sinterklaas!

He will be here in Ann Arbor on Saturday, December 3, 2011 and he plans to meet all of us at Gretchen's House, 1580 DhuVarren Road in Ann Arbor. Sint still contacts Ton the old-fashioned way – by snail-mail or telephone. I hope that someone can persuade the old gent and give him some lessons on Facebook and Twitter. Perhaps by next year we can all be his “facebook friends”. If you plan to meet Sint on December 3, it is important that you complete the registration form included in this newsletter. It gives you all the information you need to sign up your kids, grandkids and yourselves to greet Sint and his helpers on December 3. Nanna Fecteau is your contact for registering. It is very important that you mail, e-mail, or call your response to Nanna by the deadline of Friday, **November 25**, 2011. If you miss the deadline, we won't be able to accommodate your children. Don't disappoint them.

Lineke Zuiderweg will coordinate the treats for the party. We can look forward to wonderful bread rolls stuffed with all kinds of goodies. We ask that members bring a sweet or savory snack to share. Beer or wine would also be welcome. Gretchen's House is peanut free – so peanuts in the dish you bring. Lineke can answer your questions – by phone 734-741-1757 or famzuid@yahoo.com. Henrike Florusbusch will take care of the craft activities for the kids prior to Sint's arrival. After Sint leaves, we will have our annual raffle. Raffle donations are welcome: books, CDs, gadgets, etc. Karla Vandersypen will coordinate the raffle gifts. If you have something to donate, call Karla at 734-668-1240 or e-mail vandersypen@spcglobal.net. Sint's helper Sipkje Pesnichak will again provide the music to welcome Sint to our evening celebration. Finally, remember that your dues must be up to date to participate. If you haven't paid your 2011 dues, take a moment to do so now or be prepared to pay on the evening of the party. As

usual, the mailing label on this newsletter will show your dues status.

Getting Ready for Sint!

Now that the ghosts and goblins of Halloween have fled this earthly realm, we can turn our thoughts to that happy holiday season which is almost upon us. First comes Thanksgiving – the harvest festival that is not only celebrated in the US but in Canada, Puerto Rico, Liberia, the Philippines and other countries. Not all Thanksgivings are observed on the fourth Thursday of November as in the US. Thanksgiving in Canada comes on the second Monday in October. Indeed, in other countries around the world harvest festivals are celebrated at different times of the year but always around the harvest.

Many ancient cultures believed that their crops contained spirits causing them to grow and die and that those spirits were released when the crops were harvested. The ancients believed that the spirits had to be defeated. However, in time, it became clear that the harvest was vital for survival through the long winter, so the powers providing the bounty needed to be praised. Not only is the harvest celebrated at different times but also in different ways.

Demeter, the Greek goddess of growth and all life lost her daughter Persephone when she was abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld. Persephone was condemned by the gods to spend half the year in the underworld and half the year on earth with Demeter. When Persephone is in the underworld, it is winter and when on earth it is spring and summer and the earth is bountiful. Mythology tells us that every year after the reunion with her daughter, Demeter blesses the crops.

The ancient Roman legend is similar to the Greek except the names have been changed. Their harvest festival, the Cerelia, is dedicated to the goddess Ceres (aka Demeter) whose daughter Proserpina (Persephone) was abducted by Pluto

(Hades). The celebration remains the same and includes music, parades and a thanksgiving feast.

Sukkoth is the harvest festival observed by Jewish families. Sukkoth begins five days after Yom Kippur. It takes its name from succots, the huts which Moses and the Israelites lived in during the 40 years they wandered in the desert before reaching the promised land. The huts, made from branches, were easily assembled, taken apart and carried. Traditionally on the first two nights of Sukkoth, families ate their meals in the huts beneath the evening sky.

The ancient Chinese and Egyptians also had their harvest festivals. Chinese celebrate Chung Ch'ui with the full moon that fell on the 15th day of the 8th month, which was considered the birthday of the moon. They make special 'moon cakes'. The harvest festival of the Egyptians was in honor of Min, god of vegetation and fertility. It was held in the springtime, the time of the Egyptian harvest.

Celebrations of thanks in the United States were first conducted by the Spaniards in the 16th century. As early as 1607, Thanksgiving services were held in what was to become Virginia and in Jamestown in 1610. The Pilgrims at Plymouth, with the help of Squanto, a Patuxet Native-American, set aside a day in 1621 to celebrate their first harvest.

The Dutch connection. Many of the pilgrims who migrated to Plymouth Plantation had resided in the city of Leiden from 1609 to 1620 and their births, marriages, and deaths were recorded there in the Pieterskerk. To commemorate this, a non-denominational Thanksgiving Day service is held each year on the morning of the American Thanksgiving day in the Pieterskerk, in memory of the hospitality the pilgrims received in Leiden on their way to the New World.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national day of thanksgiving to be celebrated on Thursday November 26. Since 1863, in the United States, Thanksgiving has been observed annually on the fourth Thursday in November.

After Thanksgiving, our thoughts naturally turn to Sinterklaas and the Christmas festivities. You will recall that last year some of our readers provided us with youthful recollections of their Sinterklaas and Christmas celebrations. We wanted to do the same this year and we have received stories from several members. I am sure you will enjoy reading them as much as I did.

First from Nanna Fecteau Sinterklaas in Zutphen

We, my parents and six children, lived above my father's store, a men's clothing store, in the middle of the main street in Zutphen. Early in the morning on 5 December, we would walk to the IJsel River to wait for the boat from Spain to arrive with Sinterklaas, his two Zwarte Pieten, and his white horse. Many people were there, including the mayor and the local music corps. As soon as the boat, with SPANJE on its front bow, was in sight, the music started playing. Depending on the water level of the river, it was often a struggle to get the horse on the wharf. Sinterklaas mounted the horse as soon as it was on dry land and he was greeted by the mayor and other dignitaries. We were always secretly hoping that the Sint would fall off the horse but that never happened. The entire party started their route through town while the Zwarte Pieten threw candy to the children.

We all would run home to be at the windows above the store. Sinterklaas, the retired principal of the elementary school and a friend of my father's, would make a special stop in front of our house and the Pieten would throw the candy in the open windows. We felt very special to get all this attention.

In the afternoon, the elementary school children met Sinterklaas and the two Zwarte Pieten in a large hall on the edge of town. All received the same gift. I remember that one year the girls received a straw pocketbook and the boys a metal car. In the evening we gathered at home around the dining room table waiting for Zwarte Piet to arrive with his gifts. A very loud knock on the door and my father would go downstairs to meet Piet. No children were allowed; we were all singing Sinterklaas songs upstairs.

When we were older, the gifts that we exchanged had to have a poem attached to the gift. As you can imagine, these poems were not always very kind. This was our opportunity to make fun of each other. In general, the gifts were very practical: hats, gloves, pajamas, sweaters and very often books. My brother would buy a book he liked, read it first and then wrapped it up as a gift for me or my sisters. We did the same thing to him. One year he received three books from a girl's detective series. Unfortunately, he did not think that that was funny.

A few years ago, I was visiting my family in the beginning of December. None of my siblings live in Zutphen but my sister and I took the train early in the morning on December 5th to see if

Sinterklaas still arrived as he had done over 50 years ago. We were not disappointed, the water in the IJssel River was high and the boat still came from SPANJE. It was easy for the horse to get on dry land and Sinterklaas was able to mount without any problem. It was very cold and windy. We were no longer interested in the candy from Zwarte Pieten; we had a hot cup of coffee with a piece of apple pie instead.

From Marjorie Lynn Christmas in El Paso, Texas

My family, especially my father, loved Christmas. We were Southern Baptists and the religious significance was pretty strong for my parents. However, for my sister and me, Santa Claus dominated. On Christmas Eves, we would go out for a drive around the city, El Paso, to see all the lights. The Catholic seminary always had luminaries, candles placed in sand in brown paper bags, outlining their buildings, but many neighbors also used Christmas tree lights much like today. I don't remember my family eating tamales on Christmas Eve when I was a child, but that custom has now been adopted by my sister's family, and I do eat them here, as well.

After the drive, it was last-minute gift-wrapping and sitting around the tree, enjoying our own lights and listening to 78-rpm records of Christmas carols; I most remember Bing Crosby. We left out some cookies and a note of thanks and wishes for Santa. Then, off to bed where we sisters lay mesmerized by the rustlings of "elves."

Up early on Christmas morning, we had to wake our parents before we could go in to see the tree. They dawdled playfully, but finally, we burst upon the joy of the bounty of Santy. We spent the morning opening slowly, then playing with our gifts until Mom and her mother, got up to finish preparations for the Christmas dinner.

My mother's family all lived in El Paso, so we usually joined with cousins for the dinner. We cousins now laugh about the horrible silences that dominated the "kids' table" as we were all so shy and timid with each other at these formal events. Dinners varied among ham, brisket, or turkey, but we always had Southern Boiled Custard with coconut cake. I grew up thinking I could only make custard at Thanksgiving and Christmas, which I still often do. My grandmother, and the grown-ups usually enjoyed "a little flavoring" of Jack Daniels in their servings.

The day moved on with the women in the kitchen cleaning up, the men sitting and talking--until we got TV and the ball games, and the kids

playing with new gifts. Finally, all the family guests left or we went home, quiet descended, the craziness of the holiday prep behind, and pleasure in the mood. My father would eke out the joy of the season by staying up in front of the lit tree, smoking his pipe, and listening to Bing until midnight.

From Erik Zuiderweg A Tradition of Sinterklaas Eve Roasting.

When I was a boy, my family had a particularly fun way to celebrate Sinterklaas evening. Ever since we were beyond "believing in Sinterklaas" (like 7 years old) my mom, dad, sister and I would prepare fake packages or "surprises", which, together with elaborate poems, would be a "roast" of the receiver. Over the years these surprises and poems became more and more elaborate, getting more and more personal, and ultimately became the quintessence of the gift, rather than the actual present within. The amount of effort spent making the surprise was a tribute to the recipient.

Starting every year in mid November, the house would be buzzing with secretive activities and be plastered with signs "do no enter" everywhere. Our family would stimulate the local economy with generous purchases of cardboard, tape, chicken wire, wallpaper paste and toilet paper. What we made were constructions such as a complete Sinterklaas effigy, constructed from chicken wire and covered with paper-mâché which would morally lecture, by recorded message, the members of the audience; a cardboard model-car which would lose doors, fenders and tires upon touching, to parody the too-old family car; and a cardboard fridge model full of smelly stuff to roast my mother's habits to never clean out the real one (my dad was for awhile in the dog-house after that).

I remember a few I got myself that left a lasting impression: a paper-mâché model of an angry frog in my image castigating my early puberty tendencies to become rather abrasive upon the slightest setback. One I really hated, happened when I really thought I was going to get a new locomotive for my electric train set. My dear father had made up a cardboard model of one of those desired locomotives, which inside just contained a headlamp for my bicycle. Boy was I ever disappointed! I think I never mounted that headlamp out of spite. I had to visit the psychiatrist ever since.

One year we had a guest, Bob, who was developing as a composer of modern music. My ingenious father, wanting to be of assistance to the way such folks come up with melodies, thought of constructing a cardboard dodecahedron (a twelve-

faced 3D object consisting of attached pentagons). The twelve faces were labeled with the names of the twelve tones of the black and white keys of the piano. Hence, by rolling this twelve-faced die, Bob would be able to obtain a truly random melody, not being biased by any musical baggage from the past. Better than the cat running over the piano keys! Fifty years later, Bob still cherishes his dodecahedron, and enjoys regular visits to the psychiatrist.

All in all, this was great family fun which we extended to our own family. We made it less of a roast and more of a toast. I really enjoy remembering the distant laughter of our kids when they were preparing their surprises in secret, and the anxious expectations of them looking how the receivers of the gifts would react.

Sinterklaas surprise “toasts”, not “roasts”, are well recommended to every one!

From Marjorie Cripps An English Christmas

On Christmas Eve, my parents and I decorated the tree, including any gift small enough to hang on the tree. I also made coloured paper chains which my father strung from each corner of the room to the central light fixture. If we could find a small branch of evergreen or holly for the mantelpiece, that was even better. Nobody bought such things in those days, although we would have to buy a sprig of mistletoe. Mince pies and the Christmas pudding were made some time prior, but everything else had to be made on Christmas morning.

On Christmas Day, I awoke to find a bulging pillowcase at the foot of my bed, as well as one of Dad's socks. The latter always had a tangerine in the toe, and was filled with a bag of chocolate coins, a few nuts and a small toy. Nothing was wrapped in those days, so it really did seem as if Father Christmas had brought them. One memorable Christmas was when my mother knit me a complete set of doll's clothes. They were in pink wool and consisted of a petticoat, knickers, socks, dress, coat, hat and leggings. I spent hours dressing and undressing my doll.

Dinner was soon after noon and consisted of turkey or goose, gravy, bread stuffing, brussels sprouts, roast potatoes and applesauce. The Christmas pudding had a silver three-penny bit inside, and whoever received it in their portion had to make a wish. The pudding was served with brandied white sauce. The whole meal started off by pulling the Christmas crackers and wearing the hat throughout the meal. I spent the afternoon playing with my toys, with a break to hear the

King's speech on the radio. Since my sister was not born until after the War, it was just the three of us unless my maternal grandparents came to visit from Lancashire.

Tea was at 5pm and consisted of bridge rolls with various fillings, trifle, mince pies and Christmas cake. This was a rich fruitcake, covered in marzipan and royal icing, and decorated with a Santa, fir trees, robins, a church, etc. with an elaborate frill round the cake. All day, the sideboard had special goodies that only appeared at Christmas. I remember the boxes of dried figs, dates, a large bowl of nuts, and chocolate bars broken up in a bowl. Obviously, this had nothing to do with hunger – just tradition. In the evening, I remember playing charades and board games. On a couple of occasions, we visited my paternal grandparents in Lancashire, and I have fond memories of a wonderful board game with wild animals. I loved learning the names of all these exotic animals I never expected to see.

On Boxing Day, [Dec. 25] we sometimes went to a pantomime matinee. Since it was only three stops on the London Underground, it was easy enough to go to the Golders Green Hippodrome.

Information

Dutch People Overseas should not be deprived of their citizenship. Dutch Minister Donner wants to take away their Dutch nationality if they have a foreign passport and make it more difficult to recover. Mr. Donner has filed a bill against dual nationality. The expected date of submission of the proposal is January 21, 2012.

If you are interested in learning more about this and sign the petition, please go online and visit <http://nederlandersoverzee.petities.nl>. In the meantime, 10.400 people have already protested. Please let your relatives and friends know about this proposal.

TRIVIA & Other Stuff

Chocolate consumption in Belgium per person per year – 8 kilos. In China – 100 grams.

Nearly one in four people in the Netherlands live in the area of their ancestors. The University of Utrecht and the Meertens Institute in Amsterdam conducted this research.

A recent poll indicated that a majority of the Dutch people polled expect the euro zone to collapse. They believe that the break-up of the euro currency zone is inevitable. Only 32 percent of respondents expect the euro zone to survive the current crisis.

Here are the first results from BVN's "The Big Miss Survey" *What Do the Flemish and Dutch abroad miss most?*

Top Three in Holland:	Top Three in Belgium
1. Family 93 respondents	1. Belgian fries 45
2. Croquettes 65	2. North Sea shrimp 17
3. Cycling 44	3. Flemish humor 13

What do you miss most? Tell your Newsletter editor by e-mail and we will print the results in the next Newsletter.

A farmhouse dating from 1376 was totally destroyed by fire. The house was located in the hamlet of Anderen, near Assen. The farmhouse was restored to its former beauty in 2004. The cause of the fire was unknown.

The Netherlands was the guest of honor at the 18th Beijing International Book Fair. Twenty-five publishers from the Netherlands were represented. There were art exhibitions featuring artist Vincent van Gogh among others. Thomas van Gulik, the son of famous China expert and author of the Judge Dee novels spoke about his father, Robert. There were lectures by 25 Dutch authors, some of whom have been in Ann Arbor.

Events

Sunday, November 20, 2011, time 2 to 4 PM.

Join the Dutch class for the screening of the film ***De Storm (The Storm)***. Place – **Video Viewing Room, #1530 (basement level) North Quad**, Washington & Thayer Streets, (Old Frieze Bldg) UM Campus. This feature film is a dramatization of the January 1953 storm that devastated the Netherlands. It was made in 2009 and stars Sylvia Hoeks and Barry Atsma. Learn more about it on website www.destormdefilm.nl. Please arrive by no later than 2 PM for access to the North Quad Building. Building access is restricted and our NAUL doorkeeper will operate the entrance until 2 PM. The film will begin at exactly 2:10.

From www.goingdutchfoundation.us

Going DUTCH foundation will organize an exclusive gathering to unveil TENTOONSTELLING, a new concept to present art from the Netherlands by showcasing works of the past and present side-by-side in context, and placing them in the trajectory of art history and cultural evolution. TENTOONSTELLING, which is the Dutch word for 'exhibition', is scheduled to take place June/July 2012 at Sotheby's New York

The preview evenings are planned on 13, 14, and 15 May in the breathtaking setting of the penthouse of the former Tiffany building on Union Square. The venue will feature a carefully curated selection of Dutch art, design, and architecture, including both contemporary and antique pieces. Among the pieces on view is a world premiere unveiling of works by *Moooi* and the notable scale models for a dream building in New York by Gilian Schrofer. Guests attending the VIP presentation on May 13th will be welcomed by a unique performance by a Dutch ensemble and will be treated to first-class finger-food prepared by Dutch Chef Sander Louwerens. Authentic Dutch brewed beverages will be served.

Dues Reminder

Look at the label on this Newsletter. If it doesn't show 11 or later, your 2011 dues are overdue.

Family	\$30	Individual	\$20
Senior	10	Student	10
Senior Couple	20	Sponsor	50
Sustaining	100		

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