



Prominent red letters greet the motorist approaching Gameren along the provincial road from the south, as if to clearly announce: *"This is the Land of the Van Tuyls."*

Chapter 22

Cousins on Two Continents

Coming Home

As I drive along the postwar provincial road in the early evening on my way to Gameren, the village of my forbears, a strangely intriguing sight attracts my attention. There, in the evening afterglow, seeming to float above the flat Dutch horizon, appear seven bright red letters:

Van Tuyl

What makes them so interesting to my American eyes is the sheer novelty of seeing my family name so prominently and brightly displayed. In my home country hardly anyone can spell or pronounce this troublesome name, and though I've seen thousands of family names from every imaginable country of origin glowing forth back home - luminously advertising this or that enterprise or entertainment - never, never, have I seen *Van Tuyl*. But here, the world is turned inside out: it seems that *everyone* must be named Van Tuyl! The local phone book for this tiny village of Gameren boasts 41 listings for *v. Tuyl*, which isn't really surprising considering there are probably well over 100 people of this name living right here today, many of them on the same street from which my infamous ancestor Jan Otten van Tuyl fled so hastily some 330 years ago. As it turns out, *Van Tuyl* is the most common family name in Gameren, and many of those not sporting the name - *Van de Werkens* or *Van Steenbergens* for example - are related to the Van Tuyls. I've come here in search of my roots, with an appointment to meet one of my actual relatives. His interest in me, judging from our correspondence, must be every bit as intense as my interest in him. His name is Rochus...Rochus van Tuyl.

On a warm summer morning I bicycle along the Burgerstraat (the street, I've recently learned, where Jan Otten van Tuyl had lived so long ago), past tidy farmhouses of various vintages - one seems quite old - to a neat brick home sitting in front of an enormous house of glass. This, if I have it right, should be the home of my distant relative, my *achterneef*, Rochus van Tuyl. I enter the greenhouse door cautiously, look around to see a small, intensely preoccupied man animatedly talking to some young workers. As I introduce myself - in English of course - his friendly face breaks into a smile of recognition. Though he doesn't understand my words, he clearly comprehends who I must be: the American cousin they've all been expecting. I ask for Rochus. He motions to himself, says *vader, vader*, and now it's my turn to put two and two together. "Leendert," I say, "I am Rory." We shake hands, then he scurries off to the main house, motioning me to stay where I am. In a minute or two I see a blonde-haired, strongly-built young man coming toward me. He looks nothing like his father. He extends his strong, callused hand, shakes mine and says, "Hello, Rory," in serviceable, if accented, English.

In the cities of Holland, one can always speak English and expect to hear it spoken in return, often with only the slightest hint of an accent. But here in Gameren things are different. Many people seem as though they had just been transported in time from the 19th century, put into modern clothes, given modern cars and machinery, then set about doing their normal business. English is not the language of Gameren, at least for the natives. But Rochus is an exception. He explains to me that most of his spoken English was acquired in an odd way, from a Ghanian man who worked for a time at the Van Tuyl farm. Never much for formal education, Rochus had nonetheless studied English as an adult and was now able to read, write, and speak it well enough. He had actually read the historical novels of American author John Jakes, and through these, it seems, he had developed an interest in America and, with it, a curiosity about Americans who share his name. Rochus van Tuyl, from the time he was a teenager, had developed a voracious interest in his family and its history. He and I had this in common, though we were from different generations and different continents. Through a series of coincidences - and through his correspondence with one Ronald Van Tuyl of Florida, Rochus had obtained Alma Cramer's *Notes*, with its accurate, if incomplete, description of the early American Van Tuyls.¹ The pirate story, of course, fascinated him as much as it had me. Clearly, we would have much to discuss.

Through his involvement in the regional historical association, Rochus made the acquaintance of Jan Groenendijk, a middle-aged professional man. Jan was an outsider, one of those who had moved out of the city and into the village of Gameren, where he could raise his family in relative peace and serenity. Jan's hobby was history, and it didn't take him long to become the local expert on the history of Gameren. Working together, Jan and Rochus were able to solve a mystery in Rochus' family history, the mystery of a missing relative - one who had disappeared without a trace in 1663 [the local records actually made it possible to deduce this]. The missing relative was Jan Otten van Tuyl, who they postulated to be the same "Jan Otto" Van Tuyl that appeared in Nieuw Amsterdam that very year. By connecting Jan Otten to Gameren, Jan and Rochus had also connected his infamous son - Otto Van Tuyl the pirate - to their tiny village as well. Like many of the local historians, Jan was in the habit of publishing his findings in the regional history magazine, *Tussen de Voorn en Loevestein*. So it was that these collaborators came to publish their article *Een Amerikaanse Piraat van Gamerense Origine*.² The editor of the *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record* spotted their article and published an English-language genealogical abstract of it in his magazine.³

So here, owing to a fortuitous set of circumstances was I, standing face-to-face with my more-or-less 10th cousin. He had discovered and published; I had learned of his findings; he and Jan had corresponded with me; and now here I was, standing in his greenhouse. Amazing!

¹ See: *American Van Tuyl Genealogy*.

² In: *Tussen de Voorn en Loevestein*, December, 1989, pp. 73-89.

³ *New York Genealogical and Biographical Record*, April, 1991.

The Other Side of the Ocean

Genealogy can be a fascinating, but lonely, undertaking. Hours spent in darkened rooms looking at microfilm is not everybody's idea of fun. Rochus van Tuyl had spent many hours in this endeavor, as had I. But at some point for each of us the fascination of collecting names gave way to the joy of learning about the history of our ancestors, and, finally, to our meeting, sharing information, and becoming friends. Back home I had made contact with some of my Van Tuyl cousins over the years. Some of them were fascinating characters: others were not. Some were interested in family, many were not. But those who were interested had often been bitten by the bug - as I had been as a child - and had done some research of their own. Among these researchers were Jean Guertler, who helped me immeasurably in my own sleuthing, and Preston Burchard, whose research on the Van Tuyl pirates was probably the most thorough ever undertaken at the time I met him (he had actually travelled to St. Maries island off Madagascar, among other places). Jean shared her cornucopia of notes with me as I struggled to locate the connection with my New York ancestors. Preston had actually been the person who alerted me to Rochus and Jan's publication, and he generously shared his detailed pirate research and family research with me.

One of the most detailed and complete family histories I encountered was that of Charles D. Van Tuyl, Ph.D., M.D., expert in Tibetan and Cherokee languages, and family historian for the Porter, Oklahoma branch of the family. "Cousin Charley" (as I came to know him) generously shared his notes and publications with me and - here was the best part - invited me to his July 4, 1995 family reunion in Porter, OK. This gathering probably brought together for a day more Van Tuyls than could be found at any one time in any small town in the world - with the exception of Gameraen, of course. Over 100 of them, including many non-Van Tuyl relatives, came together near the place where Jonathan Van Tuyl, Jr. had finally settled, deep in the Cherokee Nation. In fact, Charley and many of his cousins are partly Cherokee (through an ancestors' marriage), and thus can probably claim the distinction of being the most "American" of the Van Tuyls.⁴ As in any large gathering of people, the diversity of ages, lifestyles, and personalities was substantial. Here I was, rubbing elbows with tobacco-chewing farmers and computer-literate graduate students alike, with everyone from the very old to the newly born - and they were all Van Tuyls!

All this got me thinking: "wouldn't it be interesting to compare a few of these Americans with a few of their Dutch cousins?" With a bit of prodding, Jan Groenendijk and I were able to get some Van Tuyls - ordinary people with ordinary lives, related through an ancient male line of descent - to step forward into the limelight. What follows are brief sketches of these late 20th century Dutch and American Van Tuyls: *Cousins on Two Continents*.

⁴ Many Americans claim Cherokee ancestry, though only a small percentage can actually prove it. The U.S. Government compiled official lists of Cherokees as part of its settlement for expropriated tribal lands. Charles Van Tuyl and a number of his kin are officially registered Cherokees.

Rochus van Tuyl

Age: 27

Occupation: Owner, Flower Growing Business

Residence: Gameren, The Netherlands

Rochus and his brother David, 22, own and operate *Maatschap R./D./van Tuyl Chrysantenkwekerij*, a chrysanthemum-growing business with annual revenues of over 1 million dollars. As a hard-working agricultural business owner, Rochus has little free time, but what time he does have is often devoted to family history research, which has been a passion of his since young manhood. Recently married to Susannah Hoogendoorn, Rochus looks forward to continuing the Van Tuyl family he has devoted so much time to researching. Rochus is devoted not only to his family - especially his mother Neeltje and his father, Leendert - but to his church, a local branch belonging to a 19th century secessionist denomination. Rochus has published his research findings in *Tussen De Voorn en Loevestein*, a publication of the regional history society, of which he has been an officer. It was research undertaken or sponsored by him which led to the discovery of the early Van Tuyls mentioned in this book.



Rochus van Tuyl explains the operation of his chrysanthemum growing business [above]. Below, he stands by the truck which delivers the daily harvest to auction in Rotterdam, where his flowers depart each day for destinations around the world.

Cecil Van Tuyl

Age: 69

Occupation: Owner, Automotive Sales and Insurance Businesses

Residence: Merriam, Kansas, USA

Arguably the most successful Van Tuyl businessman in history, Cecil made the most of the opportunities that came his way in post-WWII America. After wartime service in the United States Navy, Cecil returned to Kansas City, Missouri where he began selling used cars in 1947. In 1952, he opened his own new- and used-car dealership, *Van Chevrolet*, which prospered by selling the most popular car of America's Golden Age of the Automobile: the 1950s Chevrolet. Cecil's business grew to include other auto dealerships, and by the early 1990s he owned and operated [with son Larry] some 27 new car dealerships, 2 insurance companies, and numerous real estate investments from Illinois to California. In the auto business alone, Cecil's dealerships sell about 75,000 units per year; a gross revenue of around \$1.5 billion dollars.

Cecil and his wife Ruby have been married 48 years, and have a son Larry, of Phoenix, Arizona, and daughter Paula Logan of Kansas City, as well as 5 grandchildren. One of 8 children born to enterprising farmer Jesse Van Tuyl and his perfectionist wife, Dollie Weir of LaCygne, Kansas, Cecil is actually one of the Van Tuyls most closely related to his Dutch cousins [he is in the 8th generation].



Cecil Van Tuyl at his office near Kansas City, 1994.

Bram van Tuyl

Age: 39

Occupation: Transportation Company Owner & Manager

Residence: Gameren, The Netherlands

Bram owns and manages, with his wife Aria, *Bram van Tuyl Koel- en Vriestransport BV*, a two-million-dollar-plus refrigerated food trucking business which operates out of the Gameren headquarters of *Van Tuyl Cold Storage*, a business Bram also manages.^{5, 6} After high school, Bram studied management, logistics, and transport business at the *Instituut voor de Autohandel*, an industrial college. Like many Dutch and American families, the Bram van Tuyls enjoy family activities, as well as individual ones. The family enjoys skiing and camping together, and Bram and Aria also like hiking. The kids augment their studies with various hobbies: Hendrik plays soccer; Elisabeth rides horses; Jan enjoys photography and shares an interest in model trains with his brother Hendrik.



A modern Van Tuyl family: Bram and Aria ski the alps; Hendrik, Elisabeth and Jan discover Paris.

⁵ One of several trucking businesses in Gameren, *Bram van Tuyl Koel- en Vriestransport* employs 12 drivers for its fleet of 12 trucks. The trucks travel to The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and France.

⁶ This business is owned by Henk van Tuyl, Bram's father. Its main business is the cold storage of potatoes in its 100,000 square meter Gameren warehouse.

Elia Van Tuyl

Age: 50

Occupation: Independent Businessman, Student

Residence: Palo Alto, California, USA

Stanford University graduates Elia Van Tuyl and his wife of 25 years, Halimah, have lived since the 1970s in Palo Alto, California, on the San Francisco Peninsula, where they have raised four daughters: Rosalind, Rosana, Nerissa, and Penelope.⁷ The creative and energetic spirits are alive and well in their household. Elia has composed and performed original musical plays and has built instructional musical instruments for use by elementary school students. Penelope has expressed herself as a star of the local children's theatre company. Both she and her older sister, Nerissa, (and their mom) are avid soccer players, and Nerissa has also had an outstanding athletic career in tennis and softball. Rosana, a graduate of the University of Oregon, has travelled in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. Fairfield University graduate Rosalind (who also enjoyed some success in musical children's theatre) is now employed by a major American accounting and management firm. After many years devoted to raising her family, Halimah obtained her teaching credential and now teaches elementary school in Palo Alto. Elia has concluded a long career in real estate appraisal and now devotes his full time to studying for a certificate in guidance counseling.



Elia and Halimah Van Tuyl with daughters [l-r] Rosalind, Penelope, Rosana, and Nerissa.

⁷ The former Stephen Van Tuyl [1.8.3b.1.7.2.6a.2a.3.1.2] and Sara Wolfe Van Tuyl, they adopted the names *Elia* and *Halimah* in 1971. This was a not-uncommon practice at the time for members of the *Subud Brotherhood*, a spiritual organization to which they belonged.

Gijs van Tuyl

Age: 48

Occupation: Farmer & Cattle Breeder

Residence: Gameren, The Netherlands

A hard-working Gameren farmer in the tradition of his ancestors, Gijs van Tuyl runs about 145 head of beef cattle on his land in Gameren's *uiterwaard*. He returned with his wife Adriana van Zanten to his family's village in 1987 from nearby Bruchem, buying the land and remaining buildings formerly belonging to the old Gameren brick factory [see chapter 16]. Gijs has worked hard to upgrade his herd, having started with mottled cows, which he cross bred with Italian and French [Aquitanian] stock. During the flooding of 1995, Gijs took his herd to one of the few scraps of dry land remaining outside the dikes: they all survived. The father of daughters Diana, Geranda, and Wilmanda along with son Gerwin, Gijs van Tuyl supplements his cattle-raising with work demolishing old houses and trading used machinery and equipment.

Events are pressing Gijs van Tuyl: the government has ordered him to vacate his farm outside the dike. He will need to find a home for his cattle within the next couple of years.



Gijs van Tuyl feeds one of his calves at his farm in Gameren's *uiterwaard*.

Bill Van Tuyl

Age: 67

Occupation: Retired Builder, Cattle Breeder

Residence: Republic, Missouri, USA

Fifty years ago, 18 year old Bill Van Tuyl and his 16 year old bride Dorothy launched their long and successful married life by building a house together. Bill, a descendant of carpenter and Civil War veteran Erastus J. Van Tuyl, not only lives in the Southern Missouri area where his great-grandfather Erastus settled after the Civil War, but learned many of his carpentry skills from his dad, in the family tradition of father teaching son. Bill and Dorothy worked together in the construction business for many years, designing and building homes through their company *Associated Builders, Inc.* Along the way they raised four children, and now boast five grandkids. A lifelong resident of the rolling Ozark hills, Bill was never far from his family's agricultural tradition. When he retired, Bill took up 130 acres of beautiful pastureland near Republic, Missouri, where he now lives the life of a gentleman farmer. Bill breeds and raises *Limousin* cattle for fun and profit, while Dorothy keeps an Estate Items Resale shop on their farm.



Bill Van Tuyl feeds his cattle on a winter's afternoon in 1996 near Republic, Missouri.

Antonis “Toon” van Tuyl

Age: 44

Occupation: Organic Produce Grower

Residence: Gameren, The Netherlands

Like his cousin Rochus van Tuyl, Toon owns and operates a million-dollar-plus greenhouse in Gameren. He has taken the pioneering step of converting his 24,000 square meter operation to exclusively organic farming. “My Paprika’s [sweet peppers] are grown without pesticides, which means healthier conditions for my workers, and a healthier product for the consumer,” says Toon. “Although I get 2 cents per kilo premium on the price due to the organic farming, I think this could - and should - be more if dealers would make consumers fully aware of the environmental and health benefits of chemical-free produce.”

Toon enjoys reading for relaxation with his wife Jannie and their family. He also serves in Gameren’s volunteer fire brigade.



Toon van Tuyl examines his pesticide-free pepper plants.

Steve Van Tuyl

Age: 38

Occupation: Farmer

Residence: Coweta, Oklahoma, USA

Steve and his wife Jill own 500 acres [200 ha] of Northeast Oklahoma farmland, and Steve farms this plus additional leased land for a total of 3000 acres [1200 ha] in production. The Van Tuyl farm produces wheat, soybeans, hay, and pecans, and Steve grazes cattle as well. Like most American family farms, the acreage is large, but the revenue is small compared to the Dutch glassed-in farms such as those run by Toon and Rochus van Tuyl.⁸ With family income enhanced by Jill's employment as a data programmer, the Van Tuyls live a fine traditional American life. Family activities include baseball, softball, and hunting. Steve and his kids hunt deer, quail, and raccoon in Oklahoma, and Steve travels to Colorado to bag elk. He's particularly proud of his hunting dogs (as was the unknown Van Tuyl ancestor who put them on the family coat-of-arms). Steve Van Tuyl has lived virtually his whole life in the house where he was born - the residence on the family farm his dad Donald Van Tuyl worked before him.



Steve and Jill Van Tuyl in front of their Coweta, Oklahoma corral with son Rodney, 8, and daughters Natalie, 15, and Kellie, 13.

⁸ Steve's 3000 acres yield yearly sales of about \$200,000, whereas the Dutch greenhouses' cash crops yield 4 to 5 times this revenue on 6 acres of artificially-heated glass-covered farmland.

Anna Catherina “An” Gieles-van Tuijl

Age: 37

Occupation: Wife, Musician

Residence: Zaltbommel, The Netherlands

Like her father Goosen van Tuijl, “An” Gieles-van Tuijl is an accomplished church organist and pianist.⁹ After high school, she studied organ at conservatories in Utrecht and Zwolle, and presently accompanies three choirs in the *Heilig Hartkerk* [church] in the village of Vught. Since 1993, she has studied piano intensively, and expects to receive a government certification that instrument in 1997. An’s husband, Arthur Gieles, is active in local politics, serving as chairman of the Christian Democratic Party in Zaltbommel and board member of the party’s Gelderland section. An’s musical interests have led her to serve on the Bommelerwaard Musical Society board of directors since 1995.¹⁰ She also enjoys local history, serves [since 1990] as a director of the regional history society, and member of the editorial board of its magazine: *Tussen de Voorn en Loevestein*.

An and Arthur enjoy reading, walking, making music, and visiting museums together.



Two generations of Van Tuijl organists: An Gieles-van Tuijl and her father Goosen van Tuijl together at the magnificent 18th century pipe organ of *Sint Maarten's Kerk* in Zaltbommel.

⁹ Modern Dutch women typically use both their married and maiden names: [first] [married]-[maiden]. In this case, *An van Tuijl* married Arthur *Gieles*, thereby becoming *An Gieles-van Tuijl*.

¹⁰ This society was founded by her father, Goosen van Tuijl.

Suza Van Tuyl, Ph.D.

Age: 49

Occupation: School Administrator & Counselor

Residence: Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA

With degrees in Education and Counseling from the University of Tulsa, Suza [Su-zay] Van Tuyl¹¹ began a long and successful career with the Tulsa Public Schools in 1968. She progressed from classroom teacher, to counselor, to administrator over the years, taking time off in the interim to be a full-time wife and mother. After her 1987 divorce, Suza undertook part-time study and research in the field of *Applied Behavioral Studies* while working full time and raising her three children. Now the Principal of a school for children with severe behavior problems, Suza Van Tuyl has recently earned the Ph.D. from Oklahoma State University. She and her children Jason, Colby, and Travis Hicks enjoy water skiing as a hobby, and Suza haunts local antique fairs in pursuit of Delft china, which she has collected over the past decade. She and her kids enjoy a close relationship with her parents, Jay and Marie Van Tuyl.



Dr. Suza Van Tuyl directs her attention to one of her students in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

¹¹ She uses her maiden name: her children Jason, Colby, and Travis Hicks all have *VanTuyl* as a middle name.

Evert van Tuyl

Age: 38

Occupation: Engineer

Residence: Gameren, The Netherlands

Evert van Tuyl has helped build and protect the postwar Netherlands as a construction engineer on some of the most important waterworks and roadway projects of the 1980s and 90s. After his 1976 graduation from technical high school, he took evening classes at the *Institute for Roadmaking and Hydraulic Engineering*. Before 1989, he worked on construction of the Zeebrugge harbor in Belgium, a dam in England, and the enormous storm barrier in Zeeland (*Oosterscheldedam*), one of the 20th century's true engineering marvels. From 1989 to 1994, he worked for the Public Works Department in Limburg on construction of Highway A73, and since 1994 has been engaged in planning, control, and administration for the East Netherlands Public Works Department on the new bridge project at Zaltbommel.

As an engineer, Evert seeks technical solutions to The Netherlands' water management problems. But he points out that although dikes and other waterworks help reduce risks, the real problem with the Rhine Delta is caused by increased river flow from Switzerland, Germany, and France.



Engineer Evert van Tuyl on the under-construction Zaltbommel bridge [1995]. The aesthetically-designed structure carries auto traffic across the Waal at Zaltbommel.

Rory Van Tuyl

Age: 53

Occupation: Engineer

Residence: Menlo Park, California, USA

Like his father before him, Rory Van Tuyl is an engineer working in the high technology industry of his time. Now in the fourth decade of his working career, Rory has seen amazing changes during the final decades of the technological 20th century. He has designed electronic test equipment, developed microelectronic circuitry along with the technology to manufacture it, taught university courses, and helped develop new technology applications for his employer, Hewlett-Packard Company.

He and his former wife, Patty - a business executive - are the proud parents of Jocelyn Van Tuyl, Ph.D., a college professor, and Ian Van Tuyl, book author and computer software developer. Rory has always pursued interests unrelated to his work, including carpentry, gardening, music and musical theater performance, and - more recently - family history and writing. In 1984 he took a 6 month sabbatical to travel around the world, visiting Europe, the Middle East, India, and East Asia. He has also travelled extensively in Africa. He has a keen interest in the past and high hopes for the future, in which he hopes will dwell Van Tuyls interested in those who came before them.



Rory Van Tuyl and one of his students test a monolithic microwave integrated circuit [MMIC] at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 1989.

Goosen van Tuijl

Age: 72

Occupation: Retired Musician

Residence: 's Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands

The son of Azverus van Tuyl (reputed to have been Gameren's last traditional basket maker), Goosen van Tuijl began his musical career as a young boy enthralled by his grandfather Timmer's harmonium playing. After WWII he studied piano and organ at the *School of Music* and the *Conservatory of Amsterdam*, and continued his studies under Jeanne Demessieux in Luik, Belgium, where he was awarded the *Premier Prix* in 1956. Returning to Gameren in 1959, Goosen founded a music school: *The Peter van Anroy School of Music*, which attracted students from the Tieler- and Bommelerwaards (some 2000 of them were enrolled at the time of his retirement in 1984). He also founded the Musical Society of the Bommelerwaard in 1964.

In 1962 Goosen was named official organist of St. Martin's Church, where he performed regularly until 1990. In 1984, Goosen van Tuijl travelled to Connecticut in the United States at the invitation of his friend Theodore Tuttle, a retired Yale University music instructor. During this visit, Goosen van Tuijl was named an *Honorary Citizen of West Haven, Connecticut* in recognition of his lifelong musical achievements. He continues to play the magnificent 17th century organ at St. Martin's Church in Zaltbommel. "Each time you play his works, you discover new aspects of a composer's music," he remarked last year while introducing his performance of the music of Olivier Messiaen and Cesar Franck, two composers whose works he had been playing for over forty years.



Goosen van Tuijl [left] receives a proclamation of honorary citizenship from West Haven, Connecticut's mayor during a 1984 visit. His longtime friend Theodore Tuttle [right] looks on.

Marian Van Tuyl

Age: Died 1987

Occupation: Dancer, Choreographer, Publisher, and Leader of the Arts Community

Residence: San Francisco, California, USA

Perhaps the most famous of the 20th century American Van Tuyls, Marian was not actually born into the family, but obtained the Van Tuyl name through adoption. She loved the family name, which she used professionally throughout her life, even after marriage. A multitaled and dynamic individual, Marian fashioned for herself a long and successful career in the arts; as a dancer (with Martha Graham and others), choreographer (Marian Van Tuyl Dancers), Professor of Dance at Mills College (she founded the Dance Department there in 1941), and film maker. During the 1950s and 60s, Marian devoted much of her time to raising her three children - two of them adopted - while editing and publishing *Impulse*, a dance magazine. In her later years, she served on various committees and boards associated with dance. She became the *Grande Dame* of the San Francisco Bay Area dance scene during the 1960s and 70s, was awarded the John D. Rockefeller Award from the American Dance Guild in 1971, and was inducted into the Bay Area Dance Coalition Hall of Fame in 1986. Her dance films are preserved in the New York Public Library.



Marian Van Tuyl as a dancer and choreographer during the 1940s, and a San Francisco arts community leader later in life [Courtesy Gail Campbell].

A Small World

Like most Americans long removed from their immigrant ancestors, I never gave much thought to my cultural heritage. Like most Americans, I knew nothing of The Netherlands. People would inevitably say, "Van Tuyl, is that Dutch?" And I would always reply, "yes" without a second thought. All this changed after my first visit to Holland in 1984. I saw Amsterdam, a hodge-podge of ethnic groups from around the globe, a city of high culture and low morals - not unlike New York City, for example. I got a glimpse of the Dutch countryside with its expanses of green grass covered with grazing cattle tended by conservative farmers in trucks (not unlike the heartland of America, albeit somewhat miniaturized). And here was the Bommelerwaard, filled with a cast of Van Tuyl characters as individualistic and varied as any I'd met back home, even though they were fairly closely related to one another. But there was something - real or imagined - quite familiar here. I had the feeling that if you could substitute the Gamerense Dutch for Texas-Oklahoma English, the Dutch Van Tuyls could fit right in to that Van Tuyl reunion in Porter, Oklahoma, and no one would be any the wiser.

A study of the Dutch census done in 1947 revealed 174 Van Tuyls in the Bommelerwaard, 122 of them living in Gameren, where they constituted the largest family of the village. In the Netherlands as a whole at that time there were 1189 Van Tuyls altogether, though many of them may have been entirely unrelated to the Gameren branch.¹² Due to intermarriage within the village of Gameren, it is probably difficult to find any of the locals *not* descended in some way from Jan Sandersz van Tuyl, the founding father who moved to Gameren some 400 years ago. In the United States, there are presently about 250 Van Tuyl/Tyle telephone listings, implying perhaps 500 to 1000 people of that family name, all presumably descended from Jan Otten and Geertruyd van Tuyl. From these numbers, it's possible to estimate that the total number of Americans descended from this couple - through mixed matrilineal & patrilineal lines - could be of the order of 500,000.¹³

When you realize how many early Dutch immigrants there were, and how many arrived during the 19th century, it's not hard to imagine that a sizable fraction of today's U.S. population is in some way Dutch-descended, and that most of them are unaware of the fact. By tracking the progress of

¹² Information based on research by ir. J.C.A.M. Bervaes, Zaltbommel; chairman of the *Historische Kring Bommelerwaard*, based on the population census of 1947. Unrelated Van Tuyls (especially in Brabant) could well have been from other unrelated families who moved in the 16th and 17th centuries from Tuil.

¹³ We know that living American Van Tuyls range from the 8th to the 12th generation descended from the immigrant pair. For estimation purposes, assume all descendants are in the 10th generation, which allows for 1024 lines of descent ranging from all-male [i.e. named Van Tuyl] to all-female [descended from the 3 daughters and 13 granddaughters of Jan and Geertruyd]. Assume 500 males named Van Tuyl/Tyle today, and that on average, equal numbers of males and females breed per generation [this may underestimate the total, because there were 13 known granddaughters, but only 8 known grandsons of Jan and Geertruyd]. This places the total number of descendants living today at order $500 \times 1024 = 512,000$; roughly 0.2% of the U.S. population descended from the fugitive emigrants Jan and Geertruyd.

just a few of the many lines of just one of these families - the Van Tuyls of Gameren and their American cousins - we've been able to uncover many interesting stories. It makes you wonder: "How many more stories are out there, just waiting to be told?"¹⁴

At the end of a visit to Gameren, as Jan Groenendijk drives me to Schiphol Airport, I reflect on the amazing fact that with late 20th century tools - the phone, the FAX, the personal computer - I have been able to communicate with, befriend, and work with a few people in a tiny Dutch village who happen to share an interest with me - an interest in the Van Tuyl family. And because these people are now my friends, I worry about their precarious position, living as they do beneath walls of water that threaten their way of life. It occurs to me that the state of the Bommelerwaard could, in fact, be a metaphor for the state of today's world. Since the time of the first known Van Tuyl back in the Middle Ages, mankind has increased in number from some few hundred million to about 6 billion individuals. Nowhere in the industrialized world is this more evident than in The Netherlands, where, it seems, every square meter of land is put to some use, and large tracts are being reclaimed from the sea to meet the ever-increasing demand for arable land. But as population problems degrade the quality of life in developing countries, more and more emigrants pour into the U.S. and Western Europe. The once-isolated and now overpopulated Dutch villages are today experiencing something their American counterparts faced in the 19th and early 20th centuries: a huge influx of ethnically or racially different immigrants. But the lives led by today's Van Tuyls - despite the threats and changes they face - are far and away more comfortable and secure than those of their forbears. Today's Van Tuyls have the luxury of growing flowers instead of food. Today's Van Tuyls can attend almost any school they want. Today's Van Tuyls can accumulate wealth and possessions that would be the envy of the old pirate Otto Van Tuyl, and they can take their places in the professions, in sports, and in artistic endeavors in a way that was simply not possible for their ancestors.

But who knows how long this will last?

Whatever the future may hold, if the past is any indication, there is ample reason for hope. For, as we've learned by examining the lives of Van Tuyls through the past 650 years, these people were survivors. They endured war, pestilence, flood, disease, poverty, deprivation, religious persecution, and sinking ships - and as a family, they survived it all. They were ordinary people who solved life's problems as best they could. They were generally people who looked to the future with hopeful optimism, believing that hard work and perseverance would see them through. And today's Van Tuyls - in their original homeland as well as their new one - seem to share this trait: they, too, are survivors. All this bodes well for the future, it seems. For - likely as not - the future of mankind will be shaped in some small way by men and women named Van Tuyl.

¹⁴ According to 1980 U.S. census data, 1.4 million Americans claimed pure Dutch ancestry, while an additional 4.9 million claimed partly-Dutch heritage [Allen, P., and Turner, E., "We the People, An Atlas of America's Ethnic Diversity," pg. 59]. In fact, given the generally low level of genealogical data possessed by most Americans, many must be partly Dutch-descended who are unaware of the fact.