

Remarks for Stone Laying

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I never knew my grandparents or uncle, but my mother was determined that they would be part of our lives by sharing her many wonderful memories. I'd like to tell you a bit about each of them:

My mother's family lived in Ortenberg Germany since at least the 1600s and they were very well integrated into that community. My mother and her family fled to the Netherlands in 1933 when Hitler came to power. As Doete mentioned, my mother was sent to the US in 1938. My grandparents and uncle were scheduled to sail to the US in August of 1940, but the Netherlands was invaded on May 10, 1940. My grandmother perished in Auschwitz in September of 1942 and my grandfather and uncle died in the Cosel slave labor camp in March of 1944.

My grandfather Arthur Oppenheimer— was tall, played soccer, and was an avid hiker. He joined the army at 17 and became a cavalry officer, eventually earning the rank of Rittmeister. After serving in WWI, he became a very successful entrepreneur as a horse dealer and gave riding lessons in his spare time. My mother said he was quite imposing when he wore his riding boots and black suede jodhpurs. Athur also became an active member of the Social Democratic Party in Germany as a result

of his wartime experiences. He spoke often about the cruelty of the war, in particular, the treatment of civilians in occupied areas. He was highly respected and very active in the social and political life of the community

My grandmother, Sophie Strauss Oppenheimer, was the physical opposite of my grandfather, but equally formidable. As Shakespeare said of another small woman. *Though she be but little, she is fierce.* She managed my grandfather's business and that of her father. In fact, when business disputes arose, she represented the family's business in court and became known as "Sophie the Lawyer". She was also an excellent cook, gardener, equestrian, and raised chickens and geese.

My mother described my uncle Han Joseph as sweet, smart, athletic and a lover of Jazz. Like my grandfather, he loved horses, and was riding and jumping by the age of 5. I brought a photo of him as a 5 year-old when he was selected to lead the parade-- on horseback--at the annual market day celebration. As a teenager in Rotterdam, Hans fell in love with American Jazz music after seeing his first Cab Callaway movie. When he heard that Erskine Hawkins would be performing on Binnenweg Street, he and my mother stood outside the club hoping to hear the music and looking over the café curtains to get a look at the band. After discovering jazz, Hans dreamed of going to America. Doete recently sent me an advertisement from a 1939 newspaper that Hans had placed looking for saxophonists to join his Junior Band.

I would like to say a few words about my mother. Although she suffered guilt as the sole survivor of her family and felt that she was not deserving of that fate, she was, in fact, an amazing mix of her parents and her brother. She managed all of the details of our home life—she was an excellent cook, a gardener, and handled all of the finances. She was also an active member of the League of Women Voters and, with my father, was an early activist in the civil rights movement in the US. She always stressed the importance of being an upstander, not a bystander. She, like her mother and father, was formidable. Like her brother, she loved music and the theater. She was a wonderful mother and a great role model.

Finally, I would like to again express our family's gratitude for this amazing remembrance. It's difficult to find the words that capture what this means to us. But I'd like to end with a quote from anthropologist Margaret Meade, that reflects the spirit of Henk, Doete, and everyone assembled here today.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

Hartelijk dank