

Chapter 15. Approaching the Eighties

Re-entry into Edmonton was not particularly difficult for any of us. Mark and Ann entered their last year of high school; Joan went into grade 10 and Elaine into grade 2, all without difficulty, and our first year back home was not an eventful time.



Our family in 1978

In the fall, soon after we were back in Edmonton, we were told that six of our friend-couples were in the process of purchasing 'Jewel Bay', a recreational property near Sorrento, BC. They had camped there during the summer and were told that the property was for sale and that a condominium might be built on it. Idealists that they were, they decided to buy it for themselves, for their own use and for rent to others. Besides the house of the caretaker-manager there were four cabins and about ten campsites on the property. We decided we would like to get in on the deal as a small investment opportunity. The others agreed, we borrowed some money, and we became partners in the venture.

We camped at Jewel Bay for a couple of weeks during several succeeding summers, but did not spend as much time there as the other owners and shareholders. It was a fine place to spend a few weeks during the summer but as a family we also had other places we wanted to see. About 20 years later and after working with several different caretaker-managers the shareholders collectively became weary of running Jewel Bay by 'remote control', and we sold the place. Dave Tiemstra had functioned as treasurer until he became ill and died; I took over his role for the last few years we owned it and until the mortgage was paid out by the new owners. We sold the property for a little more than double the original purchase price, meaning that as a financial investment Jewel Bay had been less than spectacular for us.

In May 1979, Mom Vanden Born wanted to make what would be her last trip to Holland to visit her brothers and sisters. She was not anxious to make the trip alone

so Karen agreed to accompany her. Karen practiced her Dutch with Grandma and the Nijboers for two weeks, had a few scary car rides with *oom* Willem at the wheel, and then joined a group of students for a European tour organized by Gordon College. She discovered that she even remembered some of the places we had visited as a family nine years earlier.

A few months later, Joan went to the Young Calvinist Federation convention in Eugene, Oregon, while Dixie and I and Karen and Elaine were at Jewel Bay for a camping vacation. Partway through that vacation there was a phone call from Oregon one afternoon telling us that Joan was in the hospital in Eugene with acute appendicitis. All was well and under control, though, and the Spaans had taken charge of the situation. For Dixie and me there was only one option—buy Karen and Elaine bus tickets to Calgary, park the trailer, and drive through the night to Corvallis and Eugene. We stayed with the Spaans until Joan was released from the hospital, gently packed her into the van and drove home, picking up our trailer at Jewel Bay en route.



High School graduates 1979

Mark and Ann both had summer jobs and did not come with us to Jewel Bay. I believe Mark was working for someone who was building a small park somewhere in the Norwood area in Edmonton. Ann was working with my technician Ray Schraa, on field experiments in weed control. I had offered her the job without thinking too much about university policy against nepotism. When I was told that hiring her with funds under my control was not allowed, I went to see the department chairman about it but he did not offer much hope, so I made

a deal with one of my colleagues who also had a summer student paid from a research grant. Ann was put on his payroll and his student was put on mine. It got us around the rules, at least technically, but I did not feel good about the arrangement and we did not do it again the following summer. During the early eighties Joan did clerical work in the department on a part-time basis several times but never in a position that was under my control.

During our family's absence in Oregon in 1977-78, the Board of Governors of King's, under the capable leadership of Art Bailey, had decided to open the doors of the college the following year, in September 1979. A full complement of charter faculty members had been interviewed and appointed and Sidney DeWaal had been appointed as the college's first president. Philosopher-theologian Richard Mouw, then still teaching at Calvin College, had agreed to be the keynote speaker at the opening convocation. There was a lot of excitement in the air! Both the 1 September dedication of the Wawanesa Building as the home of The King's College—on 107th Street, not far from the Legislature Building—and the opening convocation in First Presbyterian Church two days later were moving and inspiring events. Mark and

Ann were in the class of ‘charter’ students, all of whom were willing to be in on this brand new venture that included the risk of not receiving academic credit for the courses they were going to take. I was elected back on the Board of Governors and the same month was asked to serve as its chairman for another term.

Over Thanksgiving that same fall, Dixie and I made a fast trip to Randolph, Wisconsin, to visit aunt Jeanette whose husband Frank Fisher had died suddenly of a heart attack a few months earlier, at 64. Any time we were in Randolph, we always would stay at their house and we considered it an important visit to make. Still, driving there in two long days, and two days later driving back in two days—2400 kilometers each way—was a challenge we were not anxious to repeat.

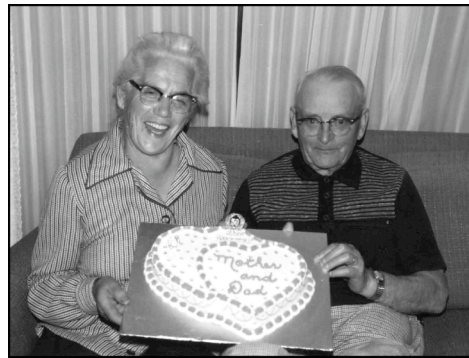


Family dinner 1979

In the meantime I had made plans to attend the conference of the Asian-Pacific Weed Science Society in Sydney, Australia, in November. The plan was that Dixie would go along, as would Bill and Bertha Groot, and that we would start off our faraway visit with a camping trip from Sydney to Adelaide and back, a round trip of about 3500 kilometers, before the conference. In Adelaide we would visit Peter and Anne, of course, whose son Todd had been born in February. And so it happened—we flew to Sydney, picked up our rented camper, and had a most enjoyable trip. In our travels we saw wheat fields waiting to be harvested, we watched a sheep-shearing operation, and we had a tour of an irrigated potato farm. We saw beautiful coastal scenery as well as many dry areas; we tried to have lunch on a beach with a zillion persistent flies; we visited the Reformed seminary in Geelong; we met with Dutch immigrants in the Reformed Church in Sydney; and we had a wonderful visit with Peter and Anne and young Todd. The weed conference was instructive and helpful, but I would be lying if I called it the highlight of the trip. We heard Mendelssohn’s *Elijah* in the Sydney Opera House and saw *On the selection*, a play set on an Australian homestead. On our way to that play I came close to being run over by a bus when I was not watching the left-hand traffic properly. Dixie caught me just in time.

My parents were married in 1930 and logically, therefore, their fiftieth wedding anniversary would be in 1980. On 30 September, to be precise. A family campout at Gull Lake was organized in July to celebrate the event, and a fine occasion it was. A

number of the Van't Land family members were there also for part of the time—*tante* Aal was my father's only sibling in Canada. We presented my parents with a nice lamp, much to my mother's delight—I think Dad was largely indifferent to it, in part because he was suffering the effects of one or more strokes in recent years. Each of the children gave a brief talk and my mother presented the only semi-public prepared talk I have ever heard her give, in English at that. She even talked about her and Dad's courtship days and the early years in their marriage, something we had never heard about before from our parents. In retrospect, it was a good thing we celebrated when we did, because four months later—about five weeks after the actual anniversary date—Dad suddenly died in his sleep, on 9 November, age 77, my age as I write this now. We buried him in the Westlock cemetery. He had continued to write in his diary, though not on a daily basis, until just two weeks before he died.



My parents at their fiftieth anniversary celebration 1980



With *Oom* Cees and *Tante* Aal



Bertha presents a gift from the children

Outings during the summer of 1980 included a brief camping trip with Elaine to Yoho National Park, a trip engraved in Elaine's memory because she was quite sick for a while after eating sandwich meat that had lived past its 'best before' date. Her parents allegedly forced her to eat it. A little later Karen, Herman, Rick Klumpenhower, and I had a serious workout on a 17-kilometer overnight hike to Berg Lake. One day up, one day there, and one day down. It was a very strenuous

hike; for a few days afterwards none of us could walk very well and we definitely could not run. Four years later I did the same hike again, this time with Karen, Elaine, and Helen Groot. Based on our earlier experience, we decided to do each of the up and down treks in two stages, stopping for the night near the half-way point; it made the hike much more satisfying and we did not suffer the same painful after-effects. A few times on the way up Elaine, who was 13, thought she was not able to make it but she persisted and it all went well.



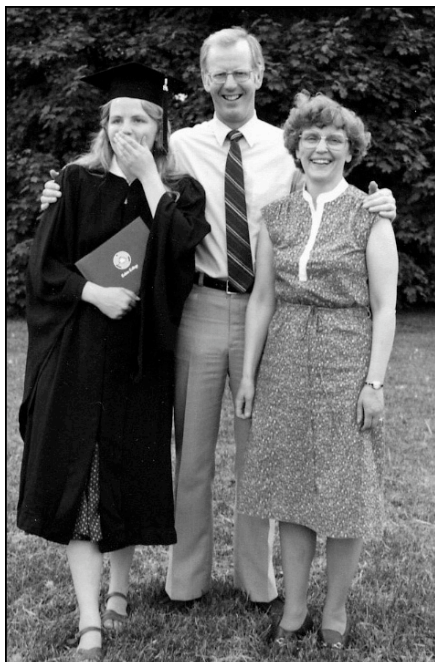
Our family in 1980



In corduroy

There never seemed to be an end to the travelling we did through the seventies and eighties. In June 1981, Karen graduated from Calvin College (as did my brother Jack at the same time, with an advanced degree) and Dixie and I drove there for the occasion. In hindsight it probably would have made more sense to fly but we did not do that so readily at that time, other than going overseas or in connection with my work. In any case, in the car we could bring all of Karen's stuff back with us—of which there actually was not even that much in addition to her books and a bike. The Canada Customs agent did not want to see any of it and we got across the border very quickly. Joan graduated from high school the same month, and Mark and Ann had finished their two years at King's. At the end of the summer, Joan started at King's, and Mark and Ann moved on to Grand Rapids to finish their four-year university program at Calvin College. Karen accepted a teaching position at the Calgary Christian School and, at the time of writing, is still teaching there. Somewhere along the way, she took part of a year off to travel in Australia and New Zealand with some friends, and later she spent a year as exchange teacher at a Christian school in Sydney, Australia.

Work travel took me to the Asian Pacific Weed Science Society conference in Bangalore, India in November 1981, with a brief side trip to Norway to visit some weed scientists there. My two weeks in India were interesting and instructive, especially the time I spent with George Friesen, a Canadian weed scientist who was working in India and whom I knew quite well. I also had a good visit and field tour with several scientists at the big international research station at Hyderabad. When the trip was over, however, I decided that I really had no desire to come back to India again.



Karen graduates from Calvin



Joan graduates from high school

In contrast, my brief stay in and near Oslo in Norway was so nice—seeing such things as the National Gallery, the Edvard Munch Gallery, and the many wonderful sculptures in Frogner Park—that Dixie and I and Bill and Bertha decided to make a three-week camping trip through Scandinavia in June the following year. Just before that trip, Dixie and I and Elaine and Mom Wierenga flew to Ontario for Herman and Kathy's wedding. Elaine had only recently become more mobile again after breaking her ankle when she jumped off a snow bank at school a few months earlier. After the wedding, Mom and Elaine flew back to Edmonton, and Dixie and I went on to Amsterdam.

With near-perfect timing, we met Bill and Bertha at the KLM-counter in Schiphol airport. We picked up our rented Volkswagen camper in Amsterdam, left our emptied suitcases with the Nijboer relatives in Barneveld, and drove through parts of Denmark, Sweden, and Norway for three most interesting weeks. In Denmark, we visited Ole Gottrup (and his wife Annelise), a former graduate student of mine, and we had an unexpected tour of a potato harvester factory. Along the road in southern Sweden one evening we met a local pig farmer who had spent time in Lethbridge on an exchange and who promptly invited us over for a visit. We had to surrender some privacy during the trip because VW campers are not real big, but the weather was good most of the



Camping in Denmark 1982

time and it all worked. The only unpleasant part of the trip was the rough ferry ride from Norway back to Denmark when we could not even play cards because the cards kept sliding off the table and most of the passengers were seasick or nearly so.

At work, in the meantime, we had moved into the new Agriculture Building that would be home to Plant Science and a few other departments. I had served as chairman of our department's building committee during the preceding two years when many decisions had to be made about laboratory and other space allocation, priorities in equipment purchase, and assignment of offices to faculty members. For some of those items I had the authority to decide but my authority always was balanced by opportunities to receive criticism for decisions made. For the assignment of the two nice corner offices that had windows on two walls, therefore, we drew lots among those who were interested in those offices. They were interesting and challenging times.

Administratively, things were about to change again. Peter Walton—who had succeeded me as department chairman in 1975—had, in turn, been succeeded by Bill Skoropad. The latter's 2-year term would end on 30 June 1982, and he was planning to retire then. The search was on for a new chairman, therefore. I was not anxious to do it for another term but I also was not very excited about the lone other candidate who was willing to serve. Some people in the department encouraged me to take it on, and in the end I agreed to do so provided that I could appoint an associate chairman who would take care of some of the administrative work. Zen Kondra was willing to take on that responsibility and I asked him to look after everything associated with the farm. As it turned out, that worked quite well, even though over time I became aware of several things that I would have liked to see done differently but chose to ignore. I did not have to learn many new things about my administrative role, as I had expected, but the stress associated with all the people stuff, in addition to my regular teaching and research responsibilities, did get to me again after a couple of years. I had never been much of a believer in burnout before but someone said that it probably was happening to me and I began to believe it. Fortunately, Malcolm Devine was working with me as postdoc and later as research associate during my entire five-year term. He carried a lot of the mentoring responsibilities with my graduate students and filled in for me in teaching whenever that was required. In any case, I stuck with the administrative work for the full five years, until 30 June 1987, even though that part of my work did not help make it the happiest period of work experience. A fringe benefit was my entitlement to a year of administrative leave at the end of my term—something new and at full salary. More about that later. The fact that I had an excellent team of Ph.D. students and postdoc in Hank Bestman, Chris Hall, and Malcolm Devine made it the single most exciting research period of my career; it more than made up for some of the other stuff I could have done without.

I even applied for the Dean's position during that period—in hindsight probably not the best decision on my part. I had picked up a number of ideas here and there about how a faculty might be run and I thought I would be able to do it. The 'political' situation in the Agriculture Faculty seemed to be such, however, that neither I nor another candidate I knew about even got as far as an interview, and we barely received acknowledgment of our letters of application. I was angry and disappointed

about that poor selection protocol. At the same time I was relieved that I did not get the appointment and life went on.

As part of summer vacation we camped for a while at Jewel Bay; in October we traveled to the same area again with friends and family for a weekend to watch the once-every-four-years awesome salmon run on the Adams River. In between, Dixie and Ann took a photography course together. For Ann the interest in making photographs continued, for Dixie not so much.

The year 1983 was an important one for several reasons. Mark and Ann graduated from Calvin College, and Dixie and I traveled to Grand Rapids for the occasion. Soon thereafter it was time for Dixie and me to celebrate our 25th wedding anniversary. A number of years earlier we had been invited to another couple's 25th anniversary and to me that did not seem to be such a big deal at that time—only 25 years? When it was our turn, however, it suddenly was a big deal, a very important event. On 6 June, our wedding date, we had an open house where we met many well-wishers. We had postponed the actual celebration for a few weeks because Mark was traveling in Europe with some of his friends—one of them was a fellow student named Debbie who a year later became his wife. On the afternoon of our actual anniversary date I was working in my office and received a very pleasant surprise phone call from Mark, from Greece where he was travelling at the time. That was so nice.

We had hoped to have the celebration with family and friends in our backyard, but it rained all day so the backup plan of the church basement went into effect. A good time was had by all. On the photos from the celebration we all look so young! It was the last time my mother attended a family celebration and, judging by how happy she looks on the pictures, she enjoyed it immensely.



Moms Vanden Born and Wierenga at our 25th anniversary



Celebrating!



Happiness after 25 years



In love in 1983

Just over three months later, a day before her 78th birthday, my mother suddenly died of heart failure. She had continued to live on the farm in Busby for about a year after Dad died and then spent two happy years in Emmanuel Home in Edmonton. We saw her quite regularly during those last two years but I do not recall visiting her very often in Emmanuel Home. More often we visited with her at our home or at the home of Bertha or one of my brothers. I am quite sure that Bertha visited her much more often. We buried her also in the Westlock cemetery. She had long been an emotional mainstay in our family and had remained an important focal person for family gatherings after Dad died three years earlier. Jack read a moving eulogy at her funeral service. It is included in an appendix to these memoirs.



Our family in 1983

During the summer, Joan and three friends had gone on an extended trip to Australia and a couple of places on the way there. When we met them at the airport on their return, Joan was the unfortunate one who was pulled out of the line for a good going over of her luggage. She was not happy. That same summer, Dixie and I and Elaine had flown to Montreal on a red-eye flight—not such a great experience. I visited with fellow weed scientist Alan Watson while Dixie and Elaine caught up on sleep in a hotel room. We then drove a rental car to Truro, Nova Scotia, for the annual conference of the Agricultural Institute of Canada and a couple of weeks of tourist vacation in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Karen flew out and joined us for part of the time. We had bought a fairly expensive light-weight tent for the trip and despite occasional mosquitoes or windy days we used the tent often enough to justify its cost, something we considered important.

In February 1984, Dixie and I flew to Miami for the annual Weed Science Society conference—a good time of year to be in Florida. Dixie's cousin Phil Westra was working in Ecuador at the time, as an agronomist-missionary with the Luke Society, and we had decided to visit him and his family there after the conference. Phil would be at the conference as well. My sister Bertha and her husband Bill came along for the adventure and Mark decided he would like to come also. So it happened. The five of us flew from Miami to Quito and met up with Phil at the hotel he had arranged on our behalf. With the help of Phil's knowledge of the language and the local culture we rented a yellow jeep-like vehicle for the next two



At the equator in Ecuador

weeks and followed Phil in his truck 200 kilometers south on the Panamerican Highway to Riobamba, where he and his wife Karen and their young child lived and worked. We are not sure just how much notice Phil had given Karen of the five house guests who were about to descend on her, perhaps not more than a few days. In any case, she received us graciously.

We spent four days touring around with them and then went on a 10-day travel adventure on our own, covering a total of about 2000

kilometers in that small country. We were able to manage it without major incidents, though I clearly remember a sense of relief when we turned the vehicle in again. I also remember thinking that I really wanted to know more Spanish if we were to make that kind of trip again. As it was, we saw and experienced a lot of things, even if we were not able to have any meaningful conversation with most of the local people who crossed our path. One of the most striking things happened the last day we were with Phil, when we drove up to an altitude of about 12,000 feet where, essentially in the clouds, a dozen or more native farm workers were harvesting potatoes by hand, putting them into bags that donkeys carried to a truck lower down the muddy trail. During the trip we received the sad news that Bill's

brother Clarence had died. On the up side, we heard quite a bit from Mark about fabulous Debbie.

Mark had started law school at Osgoode Hall in Toronto the previous fall (1983), but very soon decided that it was not for him, at least not at that time, and he returned to Grand Rapids to take more courses at Calvin. While there, he spent a good deal of time with Debbie, and they got along so well that they decided to get married. The wedding took place on 21 July 1984 in Grand Rapids, and all of us went there for the occasion. Elaine, unfortunately, had a bad case of food poisoning on the way there and took a while to recover from that. On the trip back we stopped to admire the presidential rock sculptures at Mount Rushmore and we got a small US history fix at Custer's Last Stand.



Mark and Debbie's wedding 1984

We had enjoyed our Scandinavia camping trip in the rented Westfalia in 1982 so much that we decided we should look into buying such a camper for ourselves. The used ones we could find were quite pricey, so in October 1984 we bought the last new one of that model year that the Norden dealership still had available. It was their showroom model and came complete with some nice stripes on the sides and, believe it or not, air-conditioning. Not only that, the long-used air-cooled Volkswagen engine had been replaced by a water-cooled one, meaning that the van now had effective front and back heaters; it also still had



Andy and Joan's wedding 1985

a gas-burning heater that could provide comfort on a cold night or morning without the engine running. What it did not have was a powerful engine or power steering, both of which would have been nice, and something we had become used to in our Ford van. The VW van, nevertheless, became the longest-owned vehicle we ever had—it served us and our children well for 17 years, as second car, as camper, and as moving van.

On 17 August 1985, Andy Geisterfer joined our family, when he and Joan got married. They made a honeymoon trip in our camper. I remember feelings of sadness when I saw this man take off

with my daughter. Some of our children have suggested that I was sad also about seeing them leave with our still quite new van, something I don't remember at all.

Some time before that I accompanied Joan to the university campus because the Faculty of Education was unwilling to give her credit for a math course she had taken at King's, a course that was taught by a U of A math professor! We talked to a lady at the Education Faculty office who was less than helpful. When we asked to see the Dean, she told us it would not do any good. We did get to see the Dean, however. I identified myself as a faculty member [who knew something about the university] but Joan did the talking. The Dean almost immediately told Joan that if she got a letter from the Math department that identified the course she took as equivalent to a university math course, she would get the credit. Success! Joan got both the letter and the credit.



Our enlarged family in 1985

Ann had been working in Ottawa for a couple of years after graduating from Calvin—Joan had been there for part of the time also—but she was not very happy there. In April 1986, Dixie and I visited her, saw where she worked, and took a trip to Chalk River with her to see the places where we had lived for three summers when we were first married—and where I did most of the research for my Ph.D. thesis. Ann's emotional state was quite fragile at the time and did not get any better after that, to the point where later that year or the following year she quit her job. Mark flew to Ottawa and drove her and her car back to Edmonton. She moved to a co-op house and had no trouble finding employment again but her emotional struggles continued for a number of years and she was hospitalized several times. It was a time of much stress and concern for our entire family. Eventually, in the early nineties, special treatments and medication began to make it possible for her to

resume a more normal life, including going back to school and becoming first a library technician and then, in 1999, a full-fledged and well-educated librarian.

Mark and Debbie, in the meantime, had lived in Toronto for a while where Mark was studying towards a master's degree in history. He also had reconsidered his earlier departure from law school and decided to go back to that study, this time at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. Until he called and told us that we had had no real expectations of seeing them move to Edmonton and we were happy to receive the news.

I continued to do quite a bit of traveling in connection with my work. The February 1986 annual meeting of the WSSA was in Houston, Texas, during a bad ice storm that left the city cold and the traffic messed up. Dixie was along on that trip, as usual during these years—that is how she got to like staying in nice hotels. She had to make the trip home by herself, though, because Malcolm Devine and I took off for Quebec City for a chemical-company-organized information session, along with a one-day ski excursion in the nearby mountains. A month later I travelled to Hohenheim in Germany for a European weed conference and a one-day visit to the BASF research facilities about an hour's drive from there. August was vacation time, and Dixie, Karen, Elaine, and I drove our camper to Vancouver for a visit to Expo '86.

I had begun to look forward to the end of my five-year term of administrative responsibilities, including my entitlement to a year's leave to follow immediately afterwards. The stress of the work was getting to me again and my service on the Senate of the Institute for Christian Studies—during a tension-filled time for that institution—as well as my continuing active involvement with The King's University College and my work as council chairman in church did little to mitigate it. Some physical activity did help, no doubt. For several years, Gordon Pols and I played racquetball early in the morning once a week. I had played at the sport just once before, with Hugh Knowles, a colleague in the department. That time I actually managed to whack myself on the head and had to get stitches put in the cut that resulted. Gordon and I were about equally matched though neither of us was a star player. For my part, I discovered that when I played John Kuspira, a university colleague a few years older than me. He simply took up a position near the middle of the court and waited for the ball to come near him while I wore myself out chasing the ball all over the court and achieving very little.

I also had a regular running routine that I had begun some time in the seventies. During the sixties I had worked at what was then called '5BX' exercises that included jumping and running 'on the spot' but I got tired of that and took up daily running instead. Nothing really serious, and totally without marathon goals, and a maximum of about 5 kilometers. I usually would run outside early in the morning during the summer and on the inside track in the Butterdome during the winter. I was able to keep up the running until about 2006, after which I dropped down to walking speed for my exercise.

In January 1987 I decided to audit an evening course in music appreciation taught by Kobie Kloppers, professor of music at King's. Ann was living in 'Kabode' at the time, a co-op place, and she took the course with me. We heard a lot about the

mathematical aspects of music and about how closely music at different times in history was linked to other forms of artistic expression. Unfortunately, for me at least, much of the material did not get anchored well in my memory bank and I now remember very little from the course.

On 1 July of the same year I started my year of administrative leave from the university, a leave period that was something between a reward for services rendered during the previous five years and an opportunity to catch up on scholarly things for which there was not enough time during those years. My plans for the leave period included, of course, the necessary reading and writing of scientific papers and the updating of course materials but they also included some travel plans. I had made arrangements to attend the Botanical Congress in Berlin in July and to visit colleagues at eight universities and research stations in the midwestern and southeastern states in the fall.

The first five weeks of my leave were used for a trip to Europe with Dixie and Elaine, including the Berlin conference. On the day Keith Briggs took over my chairman responsibilities, Dixie and Elaine and I flew to London, found our rental car, and spent three weeks travelling through England and Scotland, staying at B&B's and seeing the sights. Our visit to Stonehenge was a bit disappointing because we could not walk right up to and around the huge stones anymore and had to stay behind a fence—not nearly as nice as our visit there in 1970. A memorable event during the trip was seeing Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* at Stratford.

Our travel plans after England still had a few gaps in them, such as how we were to get from London to Amsterdam, from where we were planning to take the train to Berlin. Fortunately, we were able to find a cheap flight on short notice, reached Amsterdam, and soon thereafter were on a very dirty train to Berlin. Crossing part of what then was East Germany (DDR, for *Deutsche Demokratische Republik*) was an adventure in itself, with armed, unfriendly-looking and intimidating customs people with big sniffing dogs, and with strikingly colourless and drab houses and other buildings in the landscape. Our Berlin stay was fine and included a one-day conference bus excursion to Dresden in East Germany, an old city that had been bombed heavily during World War II. On a short walk by ourselves after lunch on that tour—very poor food—we promptly lost our way back to the bus and the rest of the group. A couple of friendly middle-aged women, fortunately, were able to make sense of my German and escorted us back to where we were supposed to be. In Berlin we saw the infamous wall, complete with graffiti and with armed guards and watchtowers on the opposite side. It would be two more years before the wall came down.

One night, after I came back to our hotel from an evening conference session, I foolishly suggested that we take the subway to the wall and have a look around. We were on the train for a while, first got off at a completely abandoned-looking wrong station, quickly got back on the next train, and then a bus. The bus driver promptly informed us that it would not be a good idea to go where we had planned at this time of the night—close to midnight by this time—so we heeded his advice, got off the bus and went back to our hotel the way we had come.

Another significant event took place after Sunday morning church in Berlin. Dixie needed to use the toilet and promptly found herself locked in when she was finished. Elaine and I were waiting outside in the meantime, wondering what took so long. The problem finally was solved when the preacher had to go also; he was able to get the door open. Such relief for all concerned.

Friday 31 July 1987 was Black Friday in Edmonton, with the tornado that struck that day. We learned about it the next day from the attendant at a car rental agency in Amsterdam, when she found out where we lived. It was in the Dutch newspapers, of course. It shook us up because we had no idea where in Edmonton it had struck, and because of the time difference we could not very well phone home until later in the afternoon. When we did phone Karen, she told us that things were fine at her end of town. She was in the basement when the tornado struck and had not even noticed what happened.

The next learning event was a two-month trip in our Westfalia camper, aimed at connecting with fellow weed scientists at eight universities and research stations in North Dakota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. We left Edmonton on 22 September and returned on my birthday, 17 November. In between the scheduled work visits we spent time sightseeing and visiting a few relatives. The first bit of family excitement during our absence from Edmonton happened just two weeks into the trip, on 7 October. We phoned home from a campground in northern New York and found out that Mark and Debbie's son Lucas had made his appearance. Our first grandchild, and we were on the road! We did not see him until about six weeks later.



Visit to the Hershey chocolate factory

In mid-October, Elaine flew out to Philadelphia to meet us and to travel with us for a week. She came with minimal luggage, without money, did not know where we would be, and had no means of contacting us if we were not there to meet her at the airport. All went well, though, and the week went by quickly.

Early in the trip we had a potentially very dangerous experience. After cooking supper in the camper on a stormy evening

somewhere west of Toronto—we were on our way to Brampton—the wind blew out the propane stove burner without us realizing it. We stayed with Dan and Leida Van Beilen that night and next morning could not figure out why it smelled so bad in the van. We thought it was a cooking smell from the night before so we simply left the windows open for a while to air it out. We stayed with Dan and Leida a few days and then drove on to Ottawa where we stayed with Herman. When we were getting ready to leave Ottawa again, I checked the stove and found the valve turned on and the small propane tank empty! Clearly, the bad smell we had noticed earlier was

from propane that flowed freely through the camper and could have had very explosive potential. We thanked God that nothing more serious had happened to us.

Apart from a small problem with the latch on the sliding door and a flat tire a few hours before we got back to Edmonton, the trip went very well. The camper was comfortable and we slept in it most nights until we reached Saskatoon on the way home. Fall had changed to winter by that time and we needed a warm place to sleep. Sometimes, if it was cool at night, we turned on the gas heater for a while to warm the place up before we went to bed. On a few occasions we even left the canvas-sided top of the camper down to allow less heat to escape. One snowy and cold evening in Lafayette, Indiana, we sought refuge in the local public library for a while before settling down on our campsite. That worked also.

Shortly before we had left Edmonton on our trip, Karen and three friends had left for a trip of about six months to Australia and New Zealand. She saw many things and met many people in her travels, and when Dixie and I spent time in New Zealand several years later we visited a couple of families in Auckland and Dunedin with whom Karen had had close contact.

In late August, Andy and Joan had left to spend most of a year in Lyon, France, where Joan had a scholarship to study and where she also had a part-time tutoring job (English!) in a local high school. Andy learned a good deal of French during their stay and he also found some tutoring work; Joan became fluent in French. They had many interesting experiences with people and accommodation along the way; they acquired a 75 per cent four-cylinder car (i.e., it had three functional cylinders) and with minimal funds managed to travel to many corners of Europe in it during the summer of 1988. Dixie and I had the pleasure of visiting them for a week in May that year and we saw a little of what their life there was like. At the end of our stay they drove us to Paris where we met up with Maarten and Ruth Pereboom and where we, after Andy and Joan went back to Lyon, did some art gallery sightseeing—Musée Rodin, Musée d'Orsay, and the Picasso Museum.

The year's administrative leave went by only too quickly, and I was back to my regular work responsibilities, one of which was to start thinking about my next and probably last study leave period! I made an ambitious first proposal that involved quite a bit of travel and would have taken me to places in Africa and perhaps South America but that plan did not meet the faculty committee's approval. So, back to the drawing board. Some time earlier I had received an inquiry from Roger Field at Lincoln University in New Zealand about the possibility of him coming to work in our lab for a while. He opted to go to England instead but, since he and his students were doing some of the same kind of research as I was, I wrote to him and began to make plans to go there. That happened in 1991 and I will write about our stay there in the next chapter.

In our church community, lots of stuff was happening also. The congregation had been growing rapidly during the late seventies and early eighties and had outgrown the building we were in. Splitting off a group into what became Covenant CRC helped, as did having double Sunday morning services for a few years, but neither of these things provided a good solution. A piece of land north of the existing church, that belonged to the city, came up for sale and after a couple of difficult

congregational meetings and some controversial negotiations our congregation bought the property. The old building was sold to the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) church on the condition that we could share the facilities with them until our new building was completed—the SDA worship services are held on Saturday. It was an exciting time of planning the new facility and raising the needed funds. The controversies surrounding the initial purchase of the land gradually faded away and the beautiful new facility became our congregation's centre for worship and other activities in early 1991.

Part of the new property had been sold again in the meantime, to a group of people who wanted to build a shared-ownership seniors' home. The plans of that group had a few hiccups also and the building became what is now the co-operative 'Summit Village', where the residents pay 'rent' that actually constitutes a share of the mortgage payment and relevant operating costs of the building. Summit Village was completed in 1989 and Mom Wierenga became one of the charter residents. She lived there happily until February 2007, when her health reached the point where she could no longer take care of her needs and she moved to Emmanuel Home.

In May 1989, Dixie and I flew to New York for a week's visit, with Wilco and Audrey. We saw the sights, went to museums, theatres, and a concert, and simply enjoyed the week. For Wilco and Audrey, it probably was their first significant time away from home since Brian, their oldest son, had died—in January 1987. It was also the first time the four of us travelled together, and it worked out very well. So much so that in later years we repeated the experience several times, once in France, and three times in Arizona.

During the latter half of the eighties, we had gradually begun to acquire more pieces of art to hang in our home. The acquisitions probably started as early as 1970 when we bought two typically Dutch paintings in Amersfoort. They gained some momentum, at least of intent, during our 1977-78 stay in the Orzech home in Corvallis, where the walls held many beautiful pieces of art that we learned to like very much. So much so that soon after our return to Edmonton we purchased a print of Daphne Odjig's *Folk Singer*, very similar to one of her prints in the Orzech home. It graces the wall in our kitchen and we never tire of looking at it. In early 1989 we went to a fundraising art auction by the Edmonton Art Gallery—now renamed the Art Gallery of Alberta—and came home with two very fine paintings. One of them we purchased, Euphemia [Betty] McNaught's *Monkman Pass*—she of Beaverlodge and Peace River region artist fame. The other one (*View from Banff Centre*) we won as a door prize, a painting by well-known Louis Muhlstock of Montreal. When we left home to go to the auction, we fully expected to come home with nothing. Instead, we came home with two large paintings. The McNaught painting has hung on our living room wall ever since. In August of the same year we drove to Grande Prairie to see an exhibition of a large number of McNaught paintings; we actually were able to invite ourselves over for tea to the artist's mobile home near Beaverlodge where we saw more of her work. She was in her late eighties at the time and we had a very nice visit with her.

Three other important things happened the same year. First, the end of May marked the fortieth anniversary of the Vanden Born family's emigration from the

Netherlands to Canada and we decided to celebrate the occasion at a family get-together in the partly emptied machine shed on the family farm near Busby. As it happened, a nasty May snowstorm made things a bit messy on the farm but it was warm inside and a good time was had by all. Each of the six surviving siblings did some reminiscing and I read a free translation of parts of the first several letters my father had written to people in the Netherlands after our family's big move. Some of the older children of the next generation found that so interesting that they asked me to translate all of Dad's early letters for them (they were written during 1949-54). That was a bigger challenge than I was prepared to undertake at the time, partly because my Dad's idiomatic writing did not translate easily; that was especially true when he was describing his personal feelings about the emigration transition and all that it involved for him.

About 18 years later, well into my retirement, I decided it was time to put into printed form a major portion of the handwritten diary Dad kept (in Dutch, in half a dozen small notebooks) during all his years in Canada, up to two weeks before his death. First I read through all of the material, and as I read I became more and more fascinated by the things he wrote about as well as by the things that were conspicuously absent from the diary. I also was struck by the gradual change in content during the latter years of his life.

Typing in Dutch was more difficult for me than typing in English but I managed. I left out most of the routine farm stuff but included almost everything else and ended up with a manuscript of 85 pages, copies of which I gave to each of my siblings who was interested and who was able to read it. When I finished that project, I felt ready to tackle the translation of the 21 letters Dad wrote to friends and acquaintances in the Netherlands during the first five years of our family's life in Canada. I completed that project in 2009.

The second major event during 1989 was the purchase of our current home in Edmonton's Valleyview district (14011-9A Avenue) and the sale of '9520' in Crestwood. For several reasons, Dixie and I had been looking for another house for about a year. Initially I was not very excited about the idea of moving, simply because I thought we were doing fine where we were, but eventually I was persuaded—which, in the end, was a good thing. One of the reasons for moving was



Our new home in Valleyview in 1990

that we had tried to sketch out several possible ways of expanding or renovating our Crestwood home but could not come up with something that showed promise of working well and that would give us more kitchen and living room space and a better front entrance.

Another important reason was that, financially, it made sense to

invest our savings in a bigger house rather than simply having it sit in the bank. So, with the help of a friendly real estate agent, we started looking. We did not see all that many houses, though, and I had a hard time remembering details of the ones we

saw. Most of them did not appeal to us, except for one on which we actually made an offer, even though it was well beyond what we had planned to spend. The offer we made was quite low, however. We received a counter proposal and had another look at the house but we decided we did not really want to live there.

On a Friday night some time later we came past a house on 89A avenue that had just been listed for sale. On Monday we had a look and we liked what we saw, so we made an offer—at the same time as three other offers were made! The owners made us a counter offer, we had another look at the house, and we promptly accepted. Suddenly we were the not-so-proud owners of two houses. We decided to sell our Crestwood house privately, without the aid of a realtor, and that took about three weeks. Several times during that period we were tempted to call a realtor because we were getting impatient but then a drive-buy couple saw our sign and came in to look things over. They were interested and bought the house and it all came together for us. In July 1989 we said farewell to the house we had lived in for 26 years and we moved to our present home. The move was more difficult for our children than for Dixie and me, mainly because the old house was the only home they had ever known. For some time to come, therefore, the new place was going to be no more than the place where Mom and Dad lived, rather than ‘home’. Elaine was the most heartbroken about the move and for several years she begged us to buy the old house back. Mark still needs to drive past the old place from time to time to remember and to see what it looks like now. Karen, Ann, and Elaine stopped there once to ask if they could have a look inside. They actually were allowed to come in and walk around, albeit only on the main floor. For that matter, Dixie and I still drive by the house occasionally to see what the current owners have done to it (outside only). We have been known to drive down the lane and to take a peek over the fence also.

The third event during the same year was Elaine’s graduation from high school. She was the last of our children to celebrate such a momentous event, one that requires a decision about the next steps in life, whether that be further education or taking a place in the work force. In our family there had always been an unspoken understanding that university level education was a given, and Elaine followed through on that understanding, at The King’s University College and The University of Alberta. She graduated from King’s in 1993.



Elaine's high school graduation 1989

In 1990 our travels took us to several different places again. In May, Dixie and I drove our camper to Fort Collins, Colorado, to visit cousin Phil Westra and his wife Karen. After his work in Ecuador, where we visited them in 1985, Phil had been able to get a weed science position at Colorado State University. The first day, driving was a real struggle because on the way south in Alberta there was a constant strong side wind that pushed the light-in-front VW around. On the return trip through Wyoming a

strong headwind dropped our maximum speed to 80 km/h and forced us down into third gear several times. That part of the trip was not so nice but we managed, and apart from it the trip was very enjoyable, including many sights and stops along the way in such places as Jackson Hole and Cody in Wyoming.

A few months later we flew to Europe where I had signed up—foolishly perhaps—for three back-to-back conferences. I went alone first and flew to Hamburg for a conference with a focus on herbicide chemistry. From there I flew to Budapest for a small conference on surfactants (wetting agents or detergents used in herbicide formulations). Dixie flew directly to Budapest, via London, and was scheduled to arrive there about the same time as I was. I landed in Budapest and proceeded to await Dixie's arrival but not much happened. When I began to ask around I was told that her flight would arrive at a different airport about 10 kilometers away! Fortunately, her flight was delayed and I managed to find a taxi to take to her landing spot just before she actually arrived—she without any idea of just where we were going to stay for the conference and with only a telephone number for one of the local conference organizers. It all worked out again and we had an opportunity to experience a bit of Hungarian culture in addition to the science things I picked up at the conference.

The third conference was in Cognac, France (near Bordeaux), and dealt with the physiology of translocation in plants, something my students and I had been studying in connection with herbicide movement in weeds. Our plan was to travel from Budapest to Paris on the Orient Express and then on a French train to Cognac. We had purchased a Eurail pass that worked fine except for the difficult part of actually obtaining reserved seats and berths on the train. It meant standing in line for what seemed like a couple of hours in Budapest but we did get seats and a berth. The Orient Express experience was not the most exciting but we made it to Paris and then to Cognac. There we had a fine time, including the opportunity to enjoy the smell of cognac on the streets, a day-long bus excursion to the beautiful Dordogne valley, and a very long and late-night conference dinner in an old castle—dessert was served around midnight.

Then it was back on the train, this time to Amsterdam for a few days there and then a few days at cousin Wim and Hennie's place in Terschuur to renew our family acquaintance. The leg from Paris to Amsterdam was an overnight trip for which we did not take a berth. We settled in a first class compartment that had room for six, pulled the curtains and thought we had it made. Soon, however, the door opened and a shirtless, luggage-less, and tough-looking young man marched in and proceeded to make himself at home. He appeared to speak no English or Dutch. We did not trust him at all and we certainly did not both want to go to sleep with him around. At the Belgian border he was unable to produce a ticket and was marched out briefly by the train conductor or customs official but, unfortunately, he came back again. At the Dutch border he was marched out again and then he did not return. We were much relieved, of course, but by that time it was early morning and we had but little time left to sleep before we got to Amsterdam. We saw the sights in Amsterdam, visited with Wim and Hennie a few days, and then it was time to head home. Four months later we left again, this time for an eight-month stay in New Zealand.
