

Change of jobs

by Frans Hommers

The biggest change in my life happened on the 21st of January this year. It was the day I had to give my wife in the hands of an elderly home. Alzheimer made an end to our unity that lasted 60 years.

A love relation begun in May 1940 during a holiday trip by bus with some young workers of the Verkade company. She was working there since 1947 as a coming secretary; I came some months later as a fellow worker in the administration.

I liked the work at cook company Verkade. But I decided in 1952 to look for another job on behalf of a quarrel between the Chef and the Chef de Bureau. I was afraid that this quarrel would have a bad influence on my career. Together we experienced the following employments that influenced our lives.

From gingerbread I went to preserves. The Docter Preserves company was searching for a head sales administration. The son of the owner told me. After a conversation I was accepted.

What a change! Verkade had been a big and dignified company with on the top Mr. John, Mr. Ko, Mr Arnold and Mr Tom Verkade. Docter was middle big company for preserves where vegetables and fruit were preserved in tin, glass and vessels; owner-director was Mr John Docter Sr. The company was dependent on the harvest. Sometimes quiet, sometimes hectic.

I experienced three nice years; a good cooperation and well managed by senior and his right hand Brinkman.

My fianc'e and me travelled in between by bicycle or by train to Zaandam and Velsen Noord. A summer house in Wijk aan Zee was very attractive but not allowed by the Beverwijk administration. We did not have an economical bond with Wijk aan Zee.

In 1954 Docter decided to remove the company to Zaltbommel. That meant for me: move to Zaltbommel or the search for another job. I had my doubts about the the policy in the future. So I decided to stay here. Docter Sr did not like my decision.

In 1955 I applied for a position at building contractor company Van Hattum en Blankenvoort. On the 1st of May I became fellow worker on the business economical department. My qualifications that I obtained in evening studies. The small department had to make the financial reports of the activities and the annual report of the company..

From the preserves to the building world. A change again and a family company again. Two families this time: Van Hattum (dredging) and the family Blankevoort (concrete). A company with impressive activities in the Netherlands and in other countries. They started the Delta works. Here was work for many years.

Several head executors and administrators lived on boats and took their house with them to the different places where they had to work. We decided to do the same. We found a birth in Uitgeest, just outside the village with a free view in the polder. We ordered a houseboat 12 m long and 4 m broad. On the border of a wide polder landscape, a real windmill and farmers with horse and carriage coming for milking, mowing and haymaking. Our daughters grew up with life belts.

I got more interested in my work. And on behalf of my knowledge I became more involved in the account of the company. I made my first travel to a foreign country to Nigeria. In 1962 was offered the function of financial director of our settlement in Nigeria. Sickness and death of my father and mother in law were the reasons not to accept the job.

Van Hattum en Blankevoort merged with two other companies under the name Stevin group. I was appointed as staff director of the concrete and water building division. Big projects in foreign countries brought me to the Middle East, Africa, England and Germany. An important part of my work was estimating the functional course during the implementation. In 1978 happened a second fusion with dredge company Adriaan Volker. Volker Stevin was born. It was not a happy fusion because an end had come to the big harbour projects. The market was satisfied. A very expensive new dredge ship had been bought with a loan. This investment was a financial disaster. It is 1981.

After 27 years I decided to leave the company. I became the member of an accountant partnership. I did not like the job and after half a year I changed the job for another. I became head of the administration of a whole sale house in the Zaanstreek. In 1983 I got the opportunity to return in my speciality: head administration of the Van Oord group. A dredge company with its office in Odijk. It was again a family company where I worked some 9 years. Also in this company I experienced the ups and downs in the dredge industries, together with my boss Koos van Oord.