

# INDEX

- 4** FOREWORD
- 7** 1 IT STARTED WITH...  
9 *FROM MARDINK TO LEEUWE TO SCHROER*  
11 *THE FIRST GENERATION*  
19 *A REAL PRUSSIAN*
- 21** 2 BRANCH GERRITDINA SCHROER  
(SCHOEMAKER)  
26 *MEMORIES AND REFLECTIONS*
- 33** 3 BRANCH LUCAS SCHREUR  
41 *WORKING HARD AND PLAYING TRICKS*  
55 *VELTMAN'S JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME*
- 75** 4 BRANCH DERK JAN SCHROER  
79 *DRAWING, READING AND SINGING*  
84 *DAILY LIFE OF THREE GENERATIONS LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE*  
87 *IF TREES COULD TALK*
- 111** 5 BRANCH JAN HENDRIK SCHROER  
114 *LIFE OF JAN HENDRIK SCHROER*  
120 *THE FOUNDER OF OUR FAMILY TREE: JAN SCHROER*  
126 *A LIFE WITH DIABETES*  
131 *THE HEIRS AND OTHER PECULIARITIES*

<b>135</b>	<b>6 BRANCH HENDRIKA JOHANNA SCHROER (KLEINJANS)</b>
138	<i>HARD WORKERS, SMOOTH TALKERS</i>
142	<i>DAMAGED BY WAR</i>
148	<i>TALKING ABOUT THE LIFE OF A FARMER</i>
<b>155</b>	<b>7 BRANCH LAMBERT JAN SCHROER</b>
158	<i>SHEPHERDING AND EATING CURRENT-BREAD</i>
<b>179</b>	<b>8 BRANCH HERMANNUS SCHROER</b>
126	<i>CAREFREE AND PRECISE</i>
191	<i>A DECISIVE MAN</i>
	<b>THE FAMILY IN AMERICA</b>
<b>193</b>	<b>9 BRANCH AREND SCHREUR</b>
196	<i>MEMOIRS OF EDITH</i>
<b>205</b>	<b>10 BRANCH GEERD SCHREUR</b>
211	<i>THE PIONEERS OF THE FAMILY</i>
225	<i>FROM SCHREUR TO OTTEN</i>
241	<i>A STRIKING PERSONALITY</i>
<b>257</b>	<b>11 BRANCH GEESJE SCHREUR (KLEINJANS)</b>
<b>269</b>	<b>SPECIAL THANKS</b>
<b>270</b>	<b>REVIEWS</b>

# FOREWORD

Who are your ancestors? This question was frequently asked in the past but it is also asked in the present, too. The answer to the question can reveal helpful or interesting information about a person's identity. Knowledge about someone's family and their history creates questions. When learning about each other people often ask: "Who are you?", "Which family are you from?", "How are we related to each other?", "Who were our ancestors?"

Genealogical research is a popular pastime. Archives are searched and complete families are mapped on paper. More important than genealogical research is a search for the own identity: "Who am I?" This question is often asked by adopted children as well as a popular theme on television.

Herman Schroer asked himself the question "Who am I and who are my ancestors?" His quest for the answers resulted in a solid and time-consuming research and a detailed book. Herman calls himself a collector of data, not a writer: he had the opportunity to use the data given to him by others.

This book consists not only of a list of names, places and dates, it also contains stories of the people themselves. These stories are not only historical facts, they feature normal life in the twentieth century in the Northeast of Overijssel. Most of Herman's ancestors were farmers. They worked hard and lived a simple life. Most work was done by hand and proceedings never ended. The farmers were mostly self-sufficient: food was preserved, pickled, dried and salted. A grown pig was slaughtered and conserved. A lot of the farmers were beekeepers. The bees gave plenty of honey and now and then the honey was sold. Nature was important. The results of the hunt were not viewed as illegal but as a gift from nature.

Another important topic was world war II. Fear and euphoria, all felt by the ones who experienced the war and the liberation after that. After the war some family members considered to emigrate (a better life) or not (leaving family and friends behind). A few of the family members did emigrate and as a result a few Schroer family members live in Canada and the United States of America. The Canadian and the American members of the Schroer family will also tell their story in this book.

After the war the Netherlands were confronted with a religious conflict that ripped families apart. After a few years the fierceness of the conflict disappeared, but religion was still very important. Life became strict: Sunday was sacred, potatoes were peeled on Saturday. Looking back at life, the mother tries to put it into perspective: "As parents we did what we thought was best, however, looking back we sometimes were too strict."

These stories make the book interesting to read for non-family members as well. Along with the diversity of illustrations, the stories sketch a magnificent image of normal life in the twentieth century. Due to this book, the descendants of the Schroers can give a detailed answer to the question: "Who are our ancestors" ...? Take your time and enjoy the trip down memory lane.

Klaas Oosterkamp.

(retired teacher, writer, and member of the Hardenberg Historical Society).

## About this book

Over the years, various people researched the Schroer family tree. In 1982, Jan Schroer, oldest son of Jan Hendrik Schroer, started listing the descendants of his grandfather Jan Schroer. This was an immense task because he visited every family member personally. Jan Hendrik wrote down the gathered information by hand. His research resulted in a hand written scroll. Some family members may even have the scroll in their possession. At the same time, in America, Stella Mathison (descendant of Geerd Schroer) and Paul Schroer (descendant of Arend Schreur) did the same research. For that reason, Jan Schroer, Stella Mathison, and Paul Schroer can also be credited as the founders of our family tree.

Jan Schroer died February 17, 1999. After his death, the research ceased. In 2005, I started the research where Jan Schroer had ended. I thought it was a shame that after Jan Schroer did so much research, nothing more was done with the results. I found more data and eventually I published the results on the internet. Since then, I only accessed the data on the website. However, I kept asking myself what life looked like in the nineteenth and twentieth century and what interesting family stories there were from that period of time. I knew, for a fact, that some family members (American and Dutch) had written down some of these stories. I decided to collect these stories, along with new stories. The result is the completed book about the history of the Schroer family.

Most stories were written by the family members themselves. As a result, this book consists of a variety of stories written in different styles. Some stories you will like more than others but I hope the stories will touch you. Maybe you will recognize familiar habits or traits of your own family or family traits of your own. The complete family tree is not inserted in the book. It would take up too many pages and in a few years the family tree would be outdated. However, you can find each generation on the main branch and the most important sub branches, completed with the stories of that specific generation.

# Veltman's journey of a lifetime

*Memories of Luke Veltman growing up in the Netherlands during World War II and immigrating to Canada*

You are going to read about some of the things that happened on the 'Veltman's journey of a lifetime to and in Canada'. Now, when I say the 'Veltman family' I mean Albert Jan and Lubbigie Veltman and their eight children: Fay, Luke, Annie, Diny, Albert, Lubbie, Lambert and Ria. I did not keep a diary so I will have to pick my brain and ask my siblings for input about some of the things that the Veltmans had to deal with after their arrival and during their first few years in Canada.

## **Childhood memories**

I would like to start by telling a few of my childhood memories and what life was like when the Veltman children grew up in Hardenberg, Holland during the late 1930s, the 1940s and the early 50s. All of us survived by being born at home with the help of dad and a midwife. We started school after we had turned six. None of us went to kindergarten. There were no school buses so we walked, rain or shine. The distance to school was about three miles from where our friends had a walk of about five miles. If you owned a bicycle, you could ride that to school. But very few children owned a bike when they started school. I got my first bicycle when I was in grade five. It was a used one, but that was good enough for me. I was happy that I had my own set of wheels.

I do not remember that school was ever closed because of bad weather. We had about six weeks of summer vacation. The special holidays were Good Friday, Easter Monday, Pentecost Monday, Christmas and New Years, and, of course, Queen Juliana's birthday. We did not have a winter or spring break. If a Princess was born during the week, then school would be closed for that day.

We only had recess in the morning. Once we were in the classroom, we went to our seat and we stayed there unless the teacher instructed to do otherwise. We did not get out of our seats for 'this or that.' Everything we needed for that day was already put on our desks. When we had to use the washroom, we needed the teacher's permission. In order to get her attention, we raised our hands. If that happened too often, we did not get permission to go. I do not remember any of us ever going home with homework except maybe to do some reading. All the work was done during school hours with the teacher being present at all times. If any of us got into trouble during school hours, we were sent to the office and the principal would deal with us. Most of the girls got by pretty easy. If they misbehaved. Writing lines or pages out of books was usually the punishment. For the boys, it was a different story.

Most of us ended up getting the strap. When our parents found out, we would get another portion at home. This all sounds very harsh compared to discipline nowadays but it really wasn't. We were taught from an early age the meaning of words like: yes, no, listen, shame, respect and obey. If we stepped out of line, we were punished for it with no questions asked.

### **Leisure activities**

During our days off and after finishing our chores for that day, we spent a lot of time with our friends. The girls spent a lot of time playing house, skipping single or double rope and playing hopscotch. We as boys spent a lot of time making our own toy guns, slingshots, bow and arrows and then spent hours and hours playing with them. We also went fishing in the canal that was in front of our house and across the road. We made our own fishing poles using a long stick and some strong yarn, a hook made from chicken wire and a piece of bread, rolled into a ball for bait. Did we catch a lot of fish? Not really, but we had a lot of fun trying. We also did a lot of tree climbing, got cuts, broke bones and teeth. The only real sport we played was soccer. Most of the time that game was played wearing wooden shoes. A real soccer ball was too costly for our parents to buy, so we made do with a tennis ball most of the time. If dad or a neighborhood farmer was going to butcher a pig, and we would know about that ahead of time, we would ask if we could have the pig's bladder. A pig's bladder, when it was cleaned and then blown up like a balloon and dried, made a pretty good soccer ball for a while. It never lasted too long for it would be kicked into a sharp object and that would be the end of another soccer ball.

During our summer holidays, if we did not have any chores to do, we spent a lot of time learning how to swim. We had a creek just down the road and a canal running in front of our home so we had lots of water for swimming. Swimming in the canal was not allowed until we could prove to Dad that we could swim across and back without any problems. We practiced in the creek and when we thought we could swim, we asked Dad to watch us swim the canal. Dad was a very good swimmer. He would come with us to the canal, sit down in the grass and say, "OK, let's see what you can do." If we proved that we could swim, our parents would allow us to swim in the canal at any time.

It was in the same canal where my sister Annie, as a toddler, almost drowned. She had followed my sister Fay when she had gone to the canal to wash some of our laundry. While Fay was busy washing, Annie got too close and fell in. Fay was not a good enough swimmer to go after her, so she ran home screaming. Dad happened to be outside and heard her screaming. He knew something was wrong and in less than a few minutes, he jumped in to reach Annie and bring her back to shore. It was a very scary

## Life of Jan Hendrik Schroer

Jan Hendrik Schroer was born in Radewijk on a farm named "de Hanenkamp." He was seventeen years old when he moved to Rheezerveen with his parents, his older brothers Lucas and Derk Jan, his younger brothers Lambert Jan and Mans and his sister Hendrika. His father had bought an old Saxon farm named "Het Egbertjes" or "De Buitenhof." The farm cost his father 2500 dutch guilders. The farm was built in 1793.

Jan Hendrik's father, Jan Schroer, died at the age of 27. At that moment, Jan Hendrik took over the farm. At the age of 35, he married Gezina Overweg, daughter of Geertje Hakkers and Jannes Overweg. Gezina married Jan Hendrik at the age of 24. They were very different in age and personality. Gezina was a devout woman and she talked and acted like that. Jan Hendrik wasn't. However, he had a strong trust in God.

After their marriage, Jan Hendrik and Gezina moved in with Grandma Berendina Schroer-Eggengoor. At that moment, Jan Hendrik's younger brothers Lambert Jan and Hermannus also lived in the house. Grandma had a lot of talents such as sewing and dry-nursing. Once, there was a woman who lived with her family in a houseboat near Rheezerveen. This woman was in an advanced state of pregnancy and all of sudden she was going to have her baby. Berendina helped her deliver the baby. The young mother was very grateful and gave Berendina a beautiful plaque. The family then continued on their journey. Berendina helped a lot of women to give birth. She also did most of the work on the farm herself such as mowing grass and cutting buckwheat with a scythe even though it was considered to be men's work. However, she had to mow because about a hundred pigs and sheep had to eat. Later, she hired a shepherd who lived on the farm. His name was Egbert Kappert.

Jan Hendrik was a well-balanced man and didn't panic very often. However, Gezina was often very worried, especially when Jannes, one of their children, was diagnosed with diabetes. Twice a day he had to inject himself with insulin. During World War II, insulin was difficult to obtain and Gezina was very concerned that at a certain point insulin couldn't be obtained anymore. She regularly prayed that it wouldn't happen and she also asked the children to pray as well.

Just like his brothers, Lambert Jan and Hermannus, Jan Hendrik liked to work on the fields. He had a license to shoot harmful wildlife. Gezina didn't mind it. However, she hated it when he went poaching or jacklighting. Jacklighting was a way of hunting, the animal looked into a blazing light and when the animal was blinded it was easily shot.

Jan Hendrik was a farmer. He had a variety of animals that he owned such as cows, pigs, chickens, and sheep plus agriculture. He owned a lot of sheep and for that reason he had a shepherd, Egbert Kappert, who stayed on the



### **The boys are coming**

My parents always had a strong relationship with my mother's family. During birthdays one would say, "The boys are coming." The boys were of course Jan Hendrik, Lambert-Jan and Mansoom (Hermannus) and their wives. Every time the reunion was very happy. Although everything was done by bike, now and then people would drop by. Grandma Berendina always walked. She also walked to the church in Heemse. In the house of family Kleinluchtenbeld at the road called Brandweg she had an entrance, as they called it. Her Bible and foot-warmer were stored there. During the winter, a burning piece of coal was put in the foot-warmer. The hot foot-warmer was then taken to the church under her skirts, while the Bible was put in her pocket. One time, one of the animals had to be slaughtered and grandma came to help my mother. Jan Hendrik was the one who did the actual slaughtering. He started very early in the morning. He stabbed the pig once accurately in the neck so that it bled to death very fast. After that it was cleaned on the ladder and the intestines were removed. The women made sausages and also did the other more detailed work that assured there would be food for a long period of time. Father took care of the farm and he enjoyed his cattle. The cattle had a good life. He often said, "You have to give them what they need." During the winter, the broken potato baskets were repaired and new baskets were made. Father cut the twigs himself. He also was a beekeeper and he made his own beehives out of straw. The activity soon expanded. He started with one row of beehives and soon more followed. . . . In the winter we had plenty of honey, enough to eat and sell. Father was generally very handy. For example, he could resole his shoes. During the summer, the whole family worked on the farm and in the fields. Everything was done by hand, like mowing the grass with a scythe. Later, we used mowing machines and threshing machines. The work became easier. However, haymaking was still a lot of work. It was hard work, but we were content. Mother did the housekeeping and she knitted and sewed. Mother was very skilled. She did much work knitting stockings and socks and sewing her own clothes, father's clothes, the children's clothes and clothes for family and neighbors. Besides all that work, she also helped on the farm.

My father was a quiet, thoughtful man but also a sturdy worker. At the age of four he already was an orphan. His father died first. His mother was left behind with three young children in Heemserveen. It was a difficult time and she couldn't handle the responsibilities very long. Father's sister Jennigje became a nursemaid for a farmer, at the age of twelve. His brother Evertjan became a cattleman, and father was adopted by his uncle G.H. Gerrits from Heemse. He was taken good care of and he felt at home. He lived with them until he married my mother. After the birth of Zwaantje they had two more children; a son, Jan, born in 1917 and a daughter, Dina (Berendina), born in 1921. Two years later they had a stillborn baby son. Finally, they had a healthy daughter called Derkjen. Father and mother had wanted to name their fourth child Derk Jan. However, they had a daughter and for that reason she was called Derkjen Jennigjen."

# Shepherding and eating currant-bread

Lambert Jan Schroer was born October 14, 1983 in Radewijk. The farm where he was born still exists. Lambert Jan went to school in Radewijk until his eighth birthday. After that he moved with his parents, brothers, and sisters to “de Egbertieshoeve” which was a farm in Rheezeveen. From that moment on, he went to primary school in Heemse. He was very young when he started to work on the farm. He had to take care of the sheep. The sheep were housed in a sheepfold near the farm. In that way, Lambert Jan became a shepherd.

He taught himself knitting. At that time, it was normal for boys to knit. He knitted during shepherding to kill time and to do something useful. He even could knit finger gloves with fine yarn; something not everybody could do. He often fished during shepherding. The way he fished was simple. He knotted a thread to his sheep shovel. A sheep shovel was a long stick with a small scoop on the end. With the sheep shovel, Lambert Jan could throw a lump of sand in the direction of a strayed-off sheep to alarm it so the sheep returned to the herd.

## **Do you want a slice of currant-bread?**

Once a year, Lambert Jan had to deliver money that was for the farmer who had lent money to his father, Jan Schroer, the money to buy the Egbertieshoeve. It probably was either interest or the repayment. Lambert Jan actually didn't know he was delivering money. A pouch was hung around his neck and put under his shirt. After that he got a strict command to walk to Gramsbergen at once, not to play with other boys, and especially not to wander. He walked to the farm where he was directed to go and when he arrived, he was asked in the house by the farmer and his wife. In the kitchen, he gave the pouch to the farmer. The farmer and his wife went to their living room with the pouch to check the contents of the pouch. When they came back to the kitchen they said, “Tell your father it's settled. Do you want a slice of currant-bread?” And of course Lambert Jan wanted a slice of currant-bread. Currant-bread was always a nice treat. In the following years, his younger brother Hermannus took over the task. And he was bold enough to tease his older brothers with the words, “Ha, ha! I received a slice of currant-bread!”

## **Disappointment and nice stories**

It wasn't always harmonious in the family. Once, Lambert Jan and his younger brother weren't allowed to go to the wedding of their half-brother Lucas. Lucas was married to Annegien Willink. Their oldest half-sister

Andrew's grandparents, on his father's side, were called Arend Schreur and Gertie Kuiper. They also emigrated (May 6, 1866) from the Netherlands to America and lived in a small town called Holland, Michigan. They had ten children of whom some were born in the Netherlands. A few years later, the family moved to the hills. They lived across from a track, nearby Vriesland. They lived in a small stone house and earned their money as shepherds. They were poor, too. Grandpa Arend Schreur often told Andrew and his brothers and sisters that he went to bed with a feeling of hunger. Grandpa Arend Schreur cultivated celery and onions. They had to dig the holes for the celery and onions by hand and after that they also planted the crops by hand. The family helped each other with the different activities, without expecting payment in return. After Andrew and Gertie were done planting their crops they would help their sons Arie and Dick with the work on their farm.

### **The family of Gerrit and Jennie**

Andrew was the sixth of nine children. The four oldest children went to the Indian Creek School until the Beaverdam Christian School and the Christian Reformed Church were built. From then on, all nine children went to school there. Andrew's grandfather, Gerrit Gelder, was one of the men who thought it was a good idea to build a Christian School and the Beaverdam Church. He was involved with the construction of both buildings. Andrew was both christened and confirmed at the Beaverdam Church, in the church his grandfather helped build. During his marriage he continued to go to the Beaverdam Church. His daughter Marilyn was also christened there. His father Gerrit often played baseball with his neighbor and the children. They often played at the house of Grandpa Schreur. Andrew liked to play with them. He even played in the Beaverdam baseball team when he was young.

### **Childhood memories**

Andrew had to walk a mile to school every day. None of the children were given a bicycle, thus walking to school was the only thing they could do. Later on, Andrew told that he was pestered as a child by his brothers and sisters. He was often blamed when something happened such as when the children were fighting, or when something was broken or lost. However, when something really bad happened, his brother John often was blamed but he often avoided punishment. In his younger years, Andrew liked to go fishing with his friend Don Huizinga. However, they had to travel a long way to the lake. Often, they could hitch a ride from railway personnel when they refueled their cars. In colder periods, Andrew liked to gossip with his neighbors. The roads were often closed as a result of snow because nobody came to plow the snow. If they wanted to travel, they had to push the snow away with a snow shovel. Often about

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## We'll see what we can do

*Fanny Smith:*

*"Almost everyone who was born in Pease had Mrs. Dena Otten as a midwife. She was a mainstay and had a good character. It didn't matter if it was day or night when she was called. The first thing she did was kneel and pray. When she then stood, she always said, "We'll see what we can do for you." Some said Mrs. Otten was better than any doctor they knew. With one glance at the mother she knew what had to be done. When something was wrong, she immediately knew and she knew what to do as well."*

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## A fatal injury

*IX.157 Lena Schutte Otten; April 1, 1897 – October 6, 1930 and Jan (John) Schutte; February 7, 1890 – November 3, 1927.*

November 2, Wednesday morning a serious accident occurred at the Ted Hannenberg farm in Bogus Brook. Jan Schutte was building a barn, when the rafters of the new barn suddenly collapsed. He fell to the ground from a distance of about 37 feet and he was rushed to the hospital in Princeton. He had his left leg broken, severe bruises on his head over his left eye and internal injuries. His back also was injured. Nothing could be done to relieve the internal injuries which appeared to be very severe and he passed away on Thursday afternoon, November 3, at 2.30 o'clock.

Jan Schutte was married to Lena Schutte-Otten, daughter of Gerhard Otten and Dena Otten-Schreur. Jan Schutte was born February 17, 1890 in the Netherlands and he was 37 years old at the time of his death. His sudden death was a severe blow to the family and other relatives and friends.

Lena died three years later at the age of 33, at her parental home. The cause of death was a brain tumor, which she had suffered from for a while. In addition to her parents, she also left four children behind: Anna, Dena, Richard and Gerrit. She also left behind four sisters: Jennie, Minnie, Dena and Sophie and three brothers: George, John and Henry.

A special fact about Lena and Jan was that they lived in a cave-like dugout until they could build their own house.

## Overseas letters

*The letters below were both written by John Schreur (IX.194) during WWII when he was stationed in Europe. John was an instrument panelist for aircraft during the war.*

*May 21, 1945*

*Dear Folks,*

*At our noon formation today we were told we could write home and tell all about the time and places we'd been overseas as the censorship has been lifted. So I'll just begin with Laurel Mississippi and try to give a brief review of the past events. Whenever this gets too boring you can stop as it's not compulsory to read it.*

*When we were in the woods in Mississippi, we knew that we were slated for overseas duty. The big question was: when? and where? We began to crate all our equipment and finally on Monday afternoon July 26, 1943 we got on the troop train at the Laurel Air Base. After several delays we were finally on our way. We slept in day coaches. The next morning we were still in Alabama. By nightfall we were in North Carolina. The morning of Wednesday July 28, we got a glimpse of Washington D.C., the Potomac River, Washington Monument and Capitol Building. The city looked clean and attractive. There we changed trains and had a swift ride to New York City. The "Normandie" was still lying on its side in the Harbor. From N.Y.C. we made our way to Camp Shanks, New York. There we were given the usual "overseas dope", physical exam, shots, encouraged to take maximum life insurance, issued new clothing, etcetera.*

*On Saturday night we got a pass to nearby New York City. Kerr, I and some other fellows took one of the camp buses and went to see as much as possible in so short a time. I saw Broadway (in the dim-out), Times Square, Stage door Canteen and other things. Yes, we rode the subway. An old colored gent showed us how to crash the gate fast and two could get through for a nickel. I guess we didn't have enough experience, at least we weren't successful. I'll never forget how that subway was crowded with soldiers; most of us had our newly issued clothing to wear. A few seats down and facing us a smartly dressed and sophisticated looking young couple were watching us and visually criticizing our uniforms with a look that said, "dopes and suckers, very inferior to us."*

*On the night of Tuesday, August 3 we left Camp Shanks by train while the band played "Over there" and other selections. All the curtains in the passenger cars were drawn down. We stepped out of the train, walked up the*

## Review by Lynda Van Driel

*Like Branches of a tree, our lives may grow in different directions.*

*Yet our roots remain as one.*

*Russell M. Nelson*

As a child and an adult, I have always wondered about my ancestors. My parents shared what they knew but most of the time they had the same questions I asked. What were our ancestors' names? Where did they live? What did they look like? Did they live in a city or in the country? What was important to them? What were their life stories? Sorrows? Joys? How are we like them and how are we different?

Whether you currently live in Holland, America, Canada or elsewhere, Herman Schroer from Hardenberg, Holland has created an amazing book of the Schroer family history from the late 1800's and beyond. The family tree he has tended and preserved portrays family data and details that are extensive and incredible.

The photographs are clear and fascinating. They preciously convey so much more than words can ever express. The personal family entries written by family members share a wealth of rich stories, interesting facts, key beliefs and strong values. All is with warmth, humor, wisdom, and the "faith of our fathers" passed on to each generation.

I have read the book many, many times. Each time I learn more and ask even more questions. There is an intimacy of strength and faith in the book that will move your soul and touch your heart.

The book will be rare gift to share with your children when they ask, "Who are our ancestors?" It is a legacy to pass on to them and will also provide the opportunity to record more details of your specific family tree branches for future generations.

The book From Mardink to Leeuwe to Schroer is truly a family treasure to hold and to share.

"When our hearts turn to our ancestors, something changes inside of us.

We feel something greater than ourselves."