

## SIPKJE PRUIS (VAN DE KROL)

Born: 3 November 1910

Second child of Willem Myndert Van de Krol and Antonia Wilhelmina Christina Majjer.

### Holland

At an early age Sipkje found herself looking after her older brother (Wim, my father) and younger sister (Katrien, my aunt) and often had to help her dad cleaning the workshop, polishing shoes etc. This activity set the pattern for the rest of her life. She was always busy and at the age of eighteen she commenced her own dressmaking business in the front room of her home and had up to eight seamstresses working for her at any time. Her professionalism was well known and she and her team made dresses for ladies from all walks of life.

Sipkje married Cornelis (Cass) Pruis on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May 1937 and nine months later was she the proud mother of Willem and Haye (Bill and Harry) the twins.

Then came the war in 1940. This made life very hard, especially in winter with a young family and no heating. Sipkje made many trips to farms to swap paper note pads that Cass made at work from offcuts for eggs, butter etc. She rode an old bike with wooden wheels and sometimes took seven days to get home. Like most Dutch people they took many risks during the war, particularly by hiding a Jewish family for over a year. Cass was in the underground army, which meant many nights away from home printing false documents in a darkened factory, putting more pressure on Sipkje.

Antonia (Toos) was born in 1942 and the war continued. Sipkje got through these hard times due to her parenting skills.

### Indonesia

After the war ended, the Pruis family decided to look for greener pastures and in 1945 Cass found a job in Djakarta, Indonesia. He left on his own, leaving Sipkje three months pregnant and with three young children to look after. After Lucia was born, Sipkje and the children travel to Indonesia too.

Life in Indonesia was very hot and humid but they all adapted very well. Sipkje continued her dressmaking career and amongst her many clients was the wife of the Dutch consul as well as other ladies from the consulate. When dresses had to be fitted, a consulate car used to pick Sipkje up and take her home and all the Indonesian children from the kampong across the street would come out to look at the flash car.

Sipkje had five housemaids. Once, when one of them was away for a few days, Sipkje asked why and was told that she was very sick. Sipkje got a taxi and went to find her in a kampong where the Dutch were told not to enter but she found

the girl in bed with very large ulcers on her legs and receiving no treatment so she bundled her up, put her in the taxi and took her to the hospital at her own expense. A large crowd tried to stop her but this is how she dealt with the situation.

## Australia

When Cass's contract was up after five years in Indonesia, the family decided to move on. They considered returning to Holland or moving to Canada but Cass thought that as they were already half way around the world, they may as well keep going, so they set off to Australia and settled in Brisbane, Queensland.

Sipkje once again opened up a dressmaking shop, this time in Sandgate, a suburb of Brisbane. They stayed in Brisbane for six and a half years but as work opportunities were better in Melbourne, they decided to move 1850kms south. In Melbourne, dressmaking took a backseat to Sipkje's love of plants and gardens. They bought part of a berry farm and Sipkje started a plant farm and nursery called "White Star", named after her favourite plant, the Star of Bethlehem. Many of her trees were purchased by Dutch nurseries in the Mt Dandenong hills. People from Melbourne would drive to the hills to buy tulips and Sipkje's plants as well. She was well known in the horticultural circle and won many first prizes in the shows.

When they sold the nursery they moved into a land next to a council playground. When the council decided to sell it, the family bought the land to retain their beloved view of the Dandenong hills.

Sipkje and Cass joined garden clubs, business clubs, the Dutch club and retirement clubs during their time in Melbourne. Sipkje enjoyed her weekly night out at the poker machines at the local club or casino. She liked her card games at home. Once, when her son Bill discovered a homestay boarder was regularly cheating in those card games, she threw the young man out at 1am. When he protested asking where he would go at that hour of the morning, she said, "I don't care, but you are not sleeping in my house!".

Sipkje designed a card game and spent nearly AU\$10,000 to produce a sample. The family tried to market the game but at a projected manufacturing and distributing cost of \$21 per game and a profit of \$2 per game sold, it didn't go into production and went no further.

Lucia followed in her mum's footsteps and did a horticultural degree at university.

Sipkje's husband passed away on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1989 aged 76.

Sipkje was able to live in her home until the age of 89 before moving to an aged care home where she passed away at the age of 90 on the 11<sup>th</sup> of April 2001. She and Cass are buried in the Lilydale Cemetery.

14 photos below



Figure 1 Sipkje's father, Willem Myndert Van de Krol



Figure 2 Sipkje as a card player



Figure 3 Figure 4 Sipkje's parents, Willem Myndert Van de Krol and Antonia Wilhelmina Christina Van de Krol



Figure 5 Sipkje as a young employer of dressmakers



Figure 6 The Sunshine Family Card Game



Figure 7 Sipkje with her grandmother



Figure 8 Playing the Sunshine Family Card Game with her children



Figure 9 Cass and Sipkje at their 50th wedding celebration with their children Harry, Joyce, Lucia and Bill.

Figure 11 Sipkje's order of service

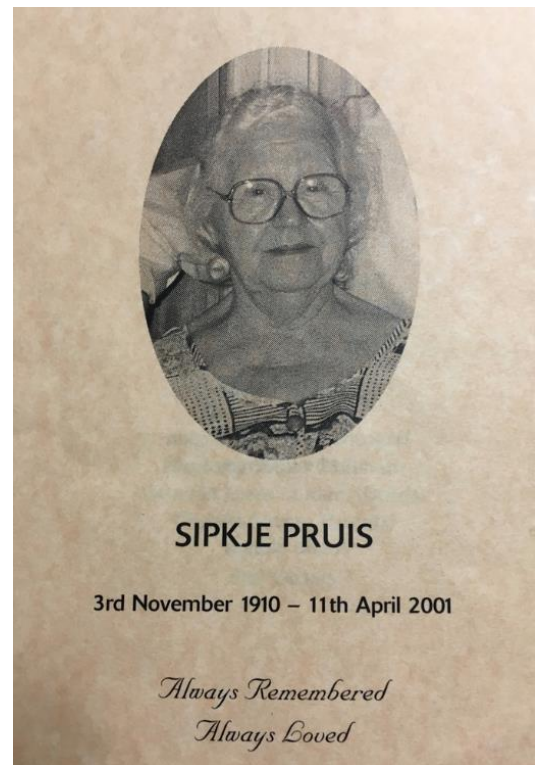


Figure 10 Cass's order of service

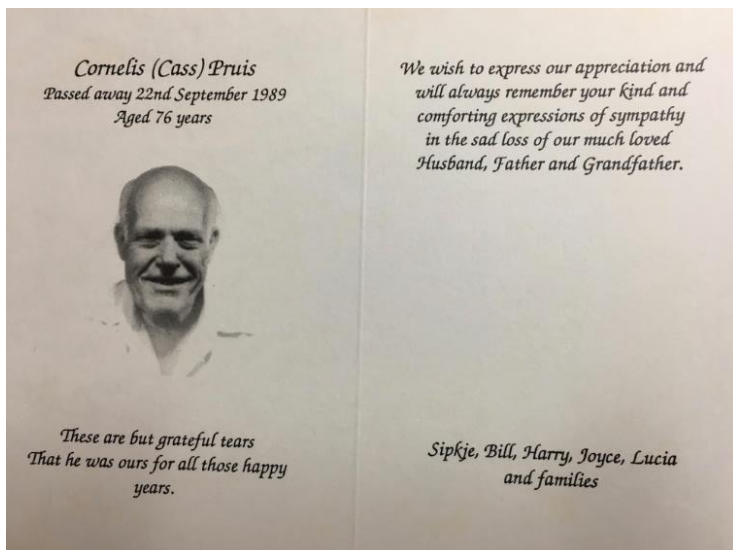




Figure 12 Sipkje Pruis



Figure 13 Birthday calendar



Figure 14 Cass and Sipkje's wedding day



Figure 15 Sipkje's children on the Sibajak to Indonesia