

From: "Stuart Cook" <jwstuartcook@gmail.com>
Subject: RE: Season Greetings
Date: 29 December 2020 at 19:00:25 CET
To: "'A.D. Dirkzwager'" <djatirot@me.com>

Dear Adriaan

Very many thanks for your email (below) mail along with the two fascinating historical incidents involving you that you relate. I cannot offer you any such stories but I can certainly be impressed.....

Yes, there are a series of restrictions imposed on our daily lives by Prime Minister Johnson and it is virtually impossible to predict when things will change. We did, however, spend Christmas Day with Julian and his family, returning home that evening after an early dinner and then the four of them came here for dinner and an overnight the next day. These small family group meetings are permitted because we (two household groups) are "bubbles" as we are each observing self-isolation. Sadly Alastair, Helen and her daughter Chloe could not join us as Chloe has been working full-time throughout the Christmas period and was thus exposed to possible contact with the virus. This is all very tedious but hopefully things will progressively improve once the vaccination programmes commence and hopefully work.

The weather has been very mixed over recent months – with much wind and rain - so the garden and any attractive walking routes in the nearby farmlands etc have not been particularly attractive. So both Ursula and I have been doing a good deal of book reading and as well as the press, in our case The Times and The Financial Times. Aside from this, Ursula has been very good at recording concerts, past ballet performances from the Opera House and a good selection of other cultural programmes which she can find on the large selection of TV channels that we have on offer. One way or another we seem to keep ourselves occupied.

We now look forward – hopefully – a return to normality in 2021. In the meantime, we send our love and best wishes
Stuart and Ursula

From: A.D. Dirkzwager <djatirot@me.com>
Sent: 23 December 2020 15:44
To: Stuart Cook <jwstuartcook@gmail.com>
Subject: Season Greetings

Dear Ursula and Stuart

How are you faring these days. I take it that your government has discouraged family gatherings during Christmas

in the Netherlands we are not supposed to have family gatherings . The virus is not under control. The health system here can't hardly cope with the swell of new cases of hospitalisation due to the corona virus infections.

The two of us will 'tout seule' holding hands on Christmas Eve. White Christmas is a phenomena of the past like the old man with the white beard.

The Mediterranean plants are still outside on the roof terrace, Temperatures haven't been lower than minus one degree below zero.

When we were young, from the month of December we longed to go ice skating on frozen ponds, lakes and canals.

When I was twelve, sitting on the side of a solid frozen moat and putting on my skates, I heard older girls screaming across the moat. With a skate on I slid to the place of the screaming girls and saw a red jacket floating in the water of a windbreak.

The windbreak was marked by wooden posts. The older girls didn't dare to come close to the windbreak. I immediately went to the side of the hole lying on my stomach and grabbed the red jacket. A four-year-old girl had walked to the hole in the ice and fell into the water and submerged. The air in her jacket floated her to the surface. Turning her on the back I could pull her out of the water and handed the little girl to the elderly girls. I went back to the other side of the moat to put on my other skate to enjoy a couple of hours skating. Pulling the little girl out of the water has been for me a soon forgotten incident in relation to the most enjoyable hours skating with friends. Even at dinnertime I didn't mentioned the rescue to my parents. And afterwards I treated it as an incident not worth mentioning. It has been due to the efforts of the father of the little girl who, with the help of the police, wanted to know who had saved the life of his daughter, that they were able to figure out my name. Four month after the rescue the police came to our house and informed my mom and dad. They were surprised. The mayor of our town reported this, in his eyes heroic, story to the Carnegie 'Heroes foudation' . It was rewarded with a silver cup with inscription. The moral: Without the tough 1953 winter I would have never achieved the distinguished 'hero status'. At my age I loathed winters.

An even more important winter had been the 1936 winter. A 21 year old young man met on a frozen canal a pretty young girl. She was 18.

She had difficulties putting on her skates and he offered his assistance. That was the begin of a beautiful romance that lasted over 71 years.



On a beau être un mythe on n'en est pas moins homme!



KEGGER