

109 Oshawa Blvd. S.
Oshawa, Ont.
Dec. 13, 1975.

Dear Mrs. Elsdon,

This letter in response, requesting information about my brother Bert. I am sorry about the delay of this letter but because of the mail strike, I was unable to forward it to you. I hope the contents of this letter will be of some help to you in the writing of your book.

Bert Schievink was my oldest brother, his Christian name was Bouke. He was born in the Netherlands in the province of Friesland between the village's of Drogeham and Harkema.

He was the oldest of five children, two sisters and two brothers. I was the youngest, so what I am about to tell you are stories that my father, mother, sisters and brothers have told me and some things I experienced with him when I was a little older. I was three years old when Bert went to the U.S.A. Bert was twenty when he left the Netherlands. Bert's father worked on the roads dept. for the county and later became a foreman in uniform, which at that time was a high position.

We were brought up in a strick Christian family, Bert attended only public school, and after this worked for a farmer in the neighborhood, but he made more money working for a large farm in another provinice, so he took that job. When he came home for visits he was always talking about America and he was saving his money for the trip there. As I said I was only three at the time when Bert left but my mother told me when he left that he was a Christian and that he took a Bible with him. My mother even helped him to save the money for the trip to the States.

My mom & dad where against this move, my dad said he was too young to go that far away. My mother & father always prayed for him, and when letters arrived home from him my sister would read them to us. He wrote and said he was working for a farmer and later worked in a factory, and he mentioned he was making a lot of money. When the depression came Bert travelled with a group of men all over the States and we didn't receive many letters.

One day as I arrived home from school, (I was ten at the time) there was my brother Bert from the States. You can imagine how proud I was, I sat beside him all evening listening. He said he hadn't brought me anything but that didn't matter, he was home that's all I cared about.

I asked him to stay home always so my mother wouldn't have to cry about him anymore, he just laughed and hugged me. I told all my friends and my teacher about him, but Bert told everyone that he came home as a Stowaway on a boat and people started to ask me questions about him that I couldn't answer. My father asked Bert to send the money to the Holland American Line for his passage on the boat, Bert did have the money but refused to do so. My father and him argued a lot about this.

My mother cried a lot in those days about Bert because he told her he didn't believe in God anymore, I use to cry a lot at night in bed because it upset me too to see my mom and dad upset this way.

Bert travelled in the Netherlands at this time, he was gone sometimes a week at a time.

You mentioned in your letter that he felt like the "black Sheep" of the family, I know what he meant, he was different, when he was at home he attracted people like a magnet especially with his stories about his travels in America. Bert was different in a sense that he was self-educated and he looked down on those who did not have the knowledge he did. He studied the stars a lot, I remember he carried me out of bed one night and showed me a certain star. We were behind the house, he had a lantern hanging on a chair and a book of stars lying on the seat.

Then the time came again when Bert was going to leave and go back to America. I remember my other brother Marten and a friend had his suitcases on their bicycles and as he left for the train station we were all crying.

I should tell you a bit about my other brother, who was twenty at the time. Bert and Marten got along very well, Bert was a sports minded person, he taught my brother about boxing and ~~then~~ taught me a little too. Boxing was a strange sport in those days in a small village and it drew a lot of attention from people plus the bad talk that arose.

My sister always answered Bert's letters ^{from the} ~~for the~~ States because my mom and dad had a hard time to write a letter. When Bert was home he had a good friend and wanted this friend to come with him to America but a year later this friend married my sister and Bert didn't like this at all. My brother-in-law asked me to write to Bert from then on which I did.

The letters we received from Bert after that were very scarce, once maybe twice a year. My mother asked me to write and ask him to turn back to God, he never answered that and his letters were only a few sentences after that sometimes only six or seven lines.

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I went in the army, and then came the war in 1940. In 1945 we received a letter from Bert which I answered and later he sent clothes and some cigarettes, then the letters became scarce.

When I wrote to him that I was moving to Canada in 1951, he never answered my letter, also the letters I wrote to him when we arrived in Canada he never answered. My wife sent him Birthday cards every year for years and my daughter (now Mrs. Rupke) sent him numerous letters but we never got an answer back. The letters and cards were never returned to us so we didn't know what to make of it at all.

In 1968 my wife and I went to see Mrs. R. Voorthuizen in Chatham Ont. and I asked her to write Bert a letter, he answered her and she also went to see him in California. She promised Bert she would not tell anyone of her visit to him, she stayed there two days with a neighbor of Bert's. Now after his death she tells me about this, I don't know what to make of this, why she promised him not to tell anyone or why he asked her to do this, maybe you could find out from his neighbors if this was true. Mrs. Voorthuizen is from the same neighbourhood in Holland as we are from, but she was not living there the time Bert came back to visit. Her address is now Mrs. R. Voorthuizen 30-7 St. Chatham Ont. Canada. In the event you would like to write her maybe she could give you some more information about Bert.

Well this is about all I can tell you about my brother Bert it seems more like a dream to me than a reality.

There are so many unanswered questions, like why he never answered my letters, was it maybe because we believe in God and he didn't or that I moved to Canada instead of California. I told you all good and bad things about him, it would be unfair just to tell you all the good and not the bad about him so you can use what you need for your book.

If it is possible my daughter and I would like a picture of his shack that he lived in so many years whatever the cost we will forward it to you.

I hope this information will help you, if there ~~as~~ is anything else please feel free to write and I will try to clear anything up for you. As far as I know Bert was never married, not in the Netherlands anyway.

I have a few questions maybe you could help us with. How did he actually live, Mrs. Voorthuizen was telling us that in order to reach his cabin she had to wade through the water before she could get there.

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We asked our minister who is from California to see if he could find him around Oceano but he couldn't find out anything.

We wish now that we had known you before Bert's death maybe we could have done something for him.

Could you please write us back and tell us a little about yourself if you are a writer , and what brought you to the idea of writing a book about Bert.

We will keep in touch hoping you will too. Thank-you very much, hope you will receive this before Christmas, wishing you and yours a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Yours truly,

Hank & Tina Schievink