9th Year

Geborener Deutscher®

A Newsletter for German-Born Adoptees and Their Birth/Adoptive Families

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The International Scene

Olga and Lloyd Rains' Detective Work Has Paid Off

by Melynda Jarratt

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Much has happened since that Christmas Eve 50 years ago when Canadian Army Pte. Lloyd Rains, and his Dutch war bride Olga, married in the ancient city hall of Haarlem, in the Netherlands.

Little did they know that half a century later, their lives would become inextricably intertwined with events and people they knew little of following the Dutch liberation in the spring of 1945.

In so doing, Olga and Lloyd Rains have become internationally known for their humanitarian work reuniting Dutch "war babies" of the Second World War with their Canadian soldier fathers: and in the process, they established an international organization that has led to many happy reunions for thousands of families around the world.

Olga and Lloyd run Project Roots, a non-profit organization based in the Netherlands, where the couple returned in 1992 after spending most of their married lives in Canada.

Project Roots is dedicated to reuniting the children of Canadian soldiers, whose liaisons with single Dutch women in the aftermath of the Liberation led to as many as 7,000 unplanned pregnancies.

Local women of the Carleton-York and the North Shore Regiments may be familiar with the Rainses, who have written many Letters to the Editor of provincial newspapers, including *The Daily Gleaner*, over the years. As always, the letters are a plea on behalf of these Liberation Children whose aging fathers may still live here in New Brunswick.

Their work has paid off. In New Brunswick alone, at least 100 children and their fathers have been reunited since 1980, from Fredericton, to Moncton and Saint John. "Most of the fathers were from the North Shore Regiment," says Olga, who admits that comparatively, the New Brunswick regiments were very easy to trace.

"That's because they didn't move around as much. When they were stationed somewhere, you could always trace them back to the town where they met their girlfriends."

Now adults with families of their own, these so-called Liberation Children were born at a time when unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children were social outcasts. Many of these children led difficult lives made all the more painful by the fact that they never knew who their fathers were. In their search for an identity, they found an ally in Olga and Lloyd Rains.

The Rainses became interested in the plight of these children while on a return trip to Holland in 1980 to mark the 50th anniversary of the end of World War Two.

As they were taking part in a parade of Canadian veterans, they noticed Dutch men and women, then about 35 years old, holding signs saying "Where Are You Daddy?"

Their interest sparked, Olga and Lloyd searched out some of the sign-bearers. The couple were touched by their stories of a lifetime spent in a frustrating search for the Canadian side to their identities. From such inauspicious beginnings, Olga and Lloyd have been able to reunite more than two thousand children with their aging fathers here in Canada.

They have also successfully reunited families in Britain and the United States, and have had requests from as far away as New Zealand and Australia. A prolific writer, Olga has authored one book on her experiences as a Dutch War Bride, and two others about her work with Project Roots.

One of her publications, *The Children of the Liberation*, formed the basis of an eight-part Dutch television ***(CONT. ON PG. 4, COL. 1)***

The International Scene

Unwed Irish sent babies to U.S., files show

Some 1,500 illegitimate Irish babies were given up for adoption between 1948 and 1962, records show. Many of the babies were adopted by Americans.

ASSOCIATED PRESS — SAT., MARCH 9, 1996

DUBLIN, Ireland—Government files unearthed this week have Ireland re-examining a mournful chapter of its recent history. About 1,500 illegitimate children were quietly packed off to adoptive parents in the United States between 1948 and 1962.

The discovery of the archives has touched a nerve in the devout Roman Catholic country about a period when illegitimate births were covered up. And it has raised hopes among some adopted children, now grown, that they will finally meet the mothers who gave them up.

The adoption issue came to light in the wake of "Dear Daughters," a program on Ireland's RTE state radio last month that described alleged ill-treatment in a Dublin convent orphanage in the 1950s.

During the public discussion that followed, a flight attendant for the Irish airline Aer Lingus called RTE to say she'd seen a well-dressed man taking a baby to the United States.

Other stories emerged—first of hundreds of illegitimate babies going to America, then, after discovery of the archives, stories of several thousand.

The archivist, Caitriona Crowe, recalled seeing a reference to the files in a dossier she had come across three months earlier. She then unearthed 1,479 case histories in the National Archives this week.

Deputy Prime Minister Dick Spring said Friday it appears that Ireland sent an average of 110 children a year to the United States between 1948 and 1962, "hopefully to a better life, but at what cost in human suffering, we may never know."

The files contain the names and birth dates of the children, and the names of their biological mothers and adoptive parents. They also contain a declaration by the mother confirming the child was born out of wedlock and giving up all rights, he said.

One of the adopted children, Maggie Butler, made an appeal Friday over national radio to the mother she has sought for 23 years.

"My heart's desire is to meet her," said the 44-year-old therapist, who now lives in Dublin but was adopted by a Boston couple. "I would like to say thanks for my life—and say that I would do nothing, nothing, to jeopardize her confidentiality right now."

Ende

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WILLIAM L. GAGE

Lucky few war babies find their dads

by Almar Latour

From The Washington Times'
National Weekly Edition (Mar. 13-19, 1995)

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All her life, Marianne Meisters of the Netherlands longed to see her father, an American soldier of World War II she knew through a single snapshot and the phonetic approximation of his name.

Than last year, after a search of three decades and with the help of a Dutch newspaper, Miss Meisters found her father—a 72-year-old veteran in Red Bank, NJ.

She is one of the lucky few.

As the 50th anniversary of Western Europe's liberation from Hitler's Third Reich nears, thousands of war babies in the late 40s are looking for their U.S. and Canadian fathers.

"It's the 11th hour for many of Europe's war babies," said Catherine Oosterhoff, director of the Society for World War II Liberation Children in Den Bosch, Netherlands.

"Most of the veterans have already died, but their children never give up hope until they know for sure."

Her organization has helped hundreds of European war babies find their families in North America. With the help of the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs, she tries to find addresses of ex-servicemen or their relatives.

Though no official record has been kept, VA has taken several thousand information requests from European war babies over the past 50 years. Many yielded no results.

"If a person is trying to locate his father, we need certain data—dates of birth, Social Security numbers, military service numbers," said James Fischl, a VA officer in Washington.

"We have [data on] 2 million veterans in our system. We need enough information to ... make a match. Once we locate where the veteran's records are kept, we may come up with an address. But that may be 50 years old."

The Defense Department and the National Archives were sued by European war babies in 1990, leading to a settlement that relaxed Privacy Act rules for war babies seeking information.

Their fathers are sometimes reluctant to hear from or see the children of their wartime flings, and they often have families who are not happy to hear of their husband's or father's premarital or extramarital adventures. In such cases, they turn a deaf ear to VA requests.

"We do the best we can," said Mr. Fischl. His department does, if the contacted veteran approves, forward letters war babies may send.

"But we read them first," Mr. Fischl said. "We don't want any threats to get through. Or any claims on the veteran's possessions."

If VA or the National Archives don't come up with any information, war babies resort to private sources such as Lt. Col. Richard S. Johnson, author of *How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Has Been in the Military* [***See pg 3., Ed.***].

"Most war-baby cases are on the difficult side," said Col. Johnson, who has seen an increase in search requests since last June's 50th anniversary of the Normandy invasion. "But anyone can be found."

U.S. embassies all over the world refer war babies and other searchers to Col. Johnson.

Some war babies run into stone walls despite their best efforts.

Mrs. Oosterhoff of the Society of World War II Liberation Children—a war baby herself—discovered five years ago that her Canadian father's wife had intercepted and withheld all of Mrs. Oosterhoff's letters to the father for more than 30 years.

"He didn't know I existed," she said. Following this discovery, she camped in front of her father's house for almost a week, but his wife would not let him meet his daughter.

"I caught a glimpse of him," she said. "And that was all I needed."

If a sought-for veteran dies before his child can contact him, the war baby often tries to contact direct relatives of the father.

"After their death, a taboo has been lifted," Mrs. Oosterhoff explained. "I get more and more requests from half-brothers and half-sisters [legitimate children of veterans] who want to meet their relatives in Europe." ***Ende***

Other Groups That Assist "War Babes"

War Babes
Shirley McGlade
15 Plough Avenue
South Woodgate
Birmingham B32 3TQ (England)

Our Dads Are Canadians
386 Wythenshawe Road
Northern Moor
Manchester M23 9DD (England)

Project "ROOTS"
Lloyd & Olga Rains
Postbus 121
2000 AC Haarlem (Netherlands)

Mea Culpa

It has come to my attention that an error crept into the last issue of *Geborener Deutscher*® (Vol. IX, No. 1, Issue #30, Spring 1996). At the end of Gail P. Miller's "Search Journal" on page 2, I erroneously identified Ms. Miller's state of residence as "OK" (Oklahoma). Ms. Miller actually lives in Englewood, *Ohio*. We regret the error. — ***WLG***

Briefe (Letters From Readers)

February 17, 1996

Dear Bill:

I am writing to share some wonderful news. Last month, I was able to see a dream I've had in my heart for years become a reality!

When I was 29 years old, I found out I was adopted, and I did my search for my biological parents. Sadly, I was two years too late to meet my birth father, who died in 1987. I was, however, able to locate and meet my birth mother. It was a triumphant experience. Thank God we were able to afford a trip to Munich, Germany, to meet her! [***See* GD *#4, #5 and #7, Ed.***]

I realized then that many adoptees are not so lucky or blessed. It was at that moment, nearly seven years ago, that the seed of a dream was born in my heart, a dream to start a charitable fund to assist adoptees and their birth families.

Last month, I was blessed to see that dream come true with the establishment of **Chosen Children's Charities, Inc.** This is a non-profit charity which provides assistance to adoptees who have completed their searches, and where they and their families mutually desire to meet, but they don't have the financial resources to get together for their reunions.

Sometimes, it is only a matter of a hundred dollars or so that keeps a mom from meeting her daughter, or a young man his biological father. Recently, at an adoption advocacy conference, I met a New Jersey birth mother who, after months of searching for her daughter, was finally able to locate her, only to find that she didn't have enough money to travel to Chicago to meet with her! Can you imagine the anguish they must have felt?

I am so grateful to God that my husband and I have the resources necessary to incorporate this charity, and to get together the necessary office equipment (PC, fax machine, etc.), the post office box and phone lines, a vehicle, and all the other things you need to do this kind of work. Also, I am thankful for having the time and support of my family to help others who are less fortunate than you or I.

We are presently in the beginning stages with the raising of money to be able to send some adoptees to meet their birth parents. If you could let your readers know about us, I would greatly appreciate it. Being myself a German-born adoptee, I am most interested in being able to assist other German-born adoptees with transportation costs they may require in order to meet their birth family members.

Contributions are tax-deductible; checks should be made payable to **Chosen Children's Charities, Inc.** and sent to P.O. Box 126, Whiting, NJ 08759. Thank you in advance for any help you can give. — *Paytra Skelly*
Whiting, NJ

I am happy to let my readers know of your new venture, and wish you success therein. Publication of the foregoing letter does not, however, necessarily constitute an endorsement thereof by this publication. — ***WLG***

April 24, 1996

Dear Mr. Gage:

I have enjoyed all the newsletters you have been sending me. It is wonderful to read about all the people and their journeys into the search of their birth parents and/or siblings. I was especially touched by Gail Miller's "Search Journal" in your Spring 1996 issue. I could not believe how parallel Gail's and my lives were due to our adoptions!

Gail and I both began our searches in February 1995, contacted Leonie, and both found our birth mothers in Germany. She and I also had access to our adoption papers, and information about our birth mothers. We were also born in Germany two years apart, blessed with names given by our mothers, placed in orphanages, and adopted by American couples who brought us to the United States. Gail and I both found our birth mothers through Leonie (thank God for Leonie!), and Gail came in contact with her mother in September, and I with my mother in April 1995. I was so happy for her. Everything she wrote I could relate to. I felt I was reading *my* journal.

Like Gail, I too, shared my search with my coworkers and bosses, and kept them informed of my progress. I began planning a trip to Germany for the end of 1996, and started saving for that trip. This would also allow time for me to learn some German, as my mother does not speak English. However, due to the kindness and generosity of my caring co-workers and bosses, my trip to Germany became a dream come true last October. They had surprised me by giving me all proceeds from a yard sale they held (secretly) for my German trip, and then contributed the remainder towards my ticket. I will never, ever forget what they did for me. My trip was absolutely wonderful and I am in constant touch with my new-found family! I was thrilled to read that Gail's trip was also paid for by her bosses. I wish I could have been a mouse in her pocket when her bosses gave her that wonderful gift! I wonder if she cried like I did! I also wonder if she had already made her trip to Germany, and if so, how it turned out.

I appreciate all that Leonie and my friends did to support my search! I also want to share this with Gail Miller; however, I do not, of course, have her address. If there is a way you could forward this letter to Gail, along with my address, I would be so very grateful. I realize you are not a pen-pal agency, but this is so unique and special to me, I would appreciate anything you could do to help me. Could you please let me know what I can do to help *you*.

— Karin Marusek
San Diego, CA

As you may imagine, I do not give out information about my subscribers without their permission. However, your request certainly constitutes permission in my book, and so I will gladly forward your letter to Ms. Miller. (This is not the first such request I have received.)

Principal among my reasons for publishing Geborener Deutscher *was the desire to illustrate the commonality of our experiences as German-born adoptees. You and all my readers can help me further this goal by writing about your own search-and-reunion experiences for publication herein!* — ***WLG***

The International Scene

Asian American Initiatives, Inc. Seeks to Reunite Vietnam-Era Vets with Their American Children

by Lt. Col. Richard S. (Dick) Johnson (Ret.)

In March 1992, Samantha (Sam) Wright located three American ex-servicemen who had each fathered a child while serving in Vietnam. This was the start of an exciting and rewarding adventure. Since that time, Sam has located hundreds of other Vietnam veterans who fathered Amerasian children during the war. Some of these men had tried unsuccessfully to locate their children. Others had always wondered about their children but didn't even know where to begin looking. All were grateful to be reunited with their children.

Thousands of children now in this country have tried but been unable to locate their fathers. Many have little information. Some only have first or nicknames. Others have Vietnamese pronunciations of their father's name. Many have hometowns, former units, service numbers and names of their fathers' buddies but few know how to locate their fathers with the information they have. They need help.

Even though I use the word, children, the majority of these Amerasians are in their mid-twenties. They have been raised in foster homes or by mothers who were permitted to emigrate to the U.S. Most are making the most of being in America. Many are doctors, successful business people and teachers. Some have married and have children who are now asking about their grandfathers.

I am proud to say that Sam began her effort by using my book, *How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Has Been in the Military: Armed Forces Locator Guide*. With this as her starting point, she rapidly learned the secrets of locating veterans. She was able to make contacts with key personnel in the Department of Defense, the Pentagon and the National Personnel Records Center. With the information from my book, her contacts and her dedicated devotion to her cause, she has become extremely successful. She is locating veteran after veteran and reuniting them with their children.

Sam is an impressive and determined person with a big heart and great goals, which are:

1. to end the search issue for all fathers and children,
2. to bring all of America's children home from Vietnam, and
3. to see America accept full responsibility for children born to American servicemen serving abroad.

Many have opposed Sam's crusade. One Pentagon colonel said, "Vietnam veterans did not want to be found," but in the same breath bragged that not one G.I. who fathered a child in England during World War II had said no to his child. This absurd attitude is shared by many key people in federal agencies. As a result, it is more difficult and time-consuming too for Sam to locate missing fathers. She is currently battling State Department bureaucrats who will not release information from their files about Amerasian children and their families in America and the names of seven to twelve thousand children who are still in Vietnam.

Just for the record, I have been involved in several searches for American fathers of Amerasian children and not one did not want to be found. In fact, each and every one could not wait to be reunited with his child. Sam has experienced these same results.

Sam founded Asian American Initiatives, Inc. in 1992. It operates at no cost to the veteran or child but gratefully accepts donations. It has grown far too large to be funded solely by Sam and her husband and became a non-profit organization in 1995 to solicit tax-deductible contributions and/or grants from the general public.

To continue her important and rewarding work, Sam needs help. She needs a new computer and funds to pay for the on-line services she requires to locate veterans. Without help, she cannot find these people in a timely manner, nor can she handle the volume she wants to. She has a great backlog she has not even been able to begin working on.

If you or someone you know is searching for a child that was fathered in Southeast Asia, contact Sam.

If you want to help a very worth activity, please send a contribution of any size to my good friend. Or better still, have your employer, church, civic or veterans organization pitch in with a larger contribution. If you have any questions, or wish to help, write to: Samantha Wright, Asian American Initiatives, Inc., 343 Marvin Avenue, Brooks, KY 40109-5229, or call (502) 955-8047. ***Ende***

Printed with permission from a column entitled "Searching" *by Lt. Col. Richard Johnson, USA Ret., which appeared first in the Spring 1996 issue of* Reunions *magazine.*

Lt. Col. Richard S. (Dick) Johnson (Ret.) is the nation's foremost authority on locating people with military connections. For assistance searching, contact him at ***The Nationwide Locator, P.O. Box 39903, San Antonio, TX 78218****. He is also the author of* How to Locate Anyone Who Is or Has Been in the Military: Armed Forces Locator Directory *and the* 1995 Find Anyone Fast. *To order his books, call (800) 937-2133. His Worldwide Web site is:* ***http://rampages.onramp.net:80/~milinfo***

For more on the subject of Amerasian children, see *Vietnamerica: The War Comes Home* by Thomas A. Bass (Soho Press, 1996) — ***WLG***

series which aired on CBC last fall.

Called The Summer of '45, the six-million dollar series aired to wide acclaim in the Netherlands in 1991. Filming took place in the Netherlands, and at several Canadian locations, including Halifax, Ottawa, Calgary and several small towns in Alberta.

And to think it all began innocently enough fifty years ago, when Olga and Lloyd met at a dance organized by Canadian soldiers stationed in her home town. It was only three weeks after V-E Day, and both the Canadians and the Dutch were in a celebratory mood. At dances held all over Holland that hot spring and summer of 1945, young Canadian soldiers and Dutch women gathered to mark the end of five long years of Nazi oppression.

It was at Canadian-sponsored dances like this where thousands of romances were ignited—and nine months later, babies began to be born to Dutch women who had the shameful luck to be unwed, single mothers without a husband or father for their child.

To be fair, many Canadian soldiers never knewabout their war babies, and still others were thwarted by relatives on both sides who sabotaged honest intentions of marriage. Sadly, however, there were many other Canadian soldiers who turned their backs on pregnant Dutch girlfriends only to return to Canada and the waiting arms of unsuspecting wives and fiancees.

While this was certainly not Olga's experience, she doesn't want people to get the impression that the girls who did get pregnant were "loose." Rather, most of these girls came from strict, religious families where sex was simply never discussed. "After the war," Olga says, "it was really a happy time to be free."

The winter of 1944-45 in particular had been terrible for the Dutch. Called the "hunger winter," people subsisted on tulip bulbs and sugar beets dug out of the frozen ground. Disease ran rampant throughout the population, and thousands died of starvation.

In contrast, when the Canadians came, they brought with them medical supplies, food and liberation. It is no small wonder that they were treated as heroes by a nation eager to celebrate—and by adoring young women looking for a little bit of happiness after five long years of war.

Olga, too, had her own reasons for calling the Canadians heroes. During the hunger winter, she contracted diphtheria and was very ill when the Canadians liberated her town in early May. Like thousands of Dutch people, she credits her survival to the Canadians.

"If they had not come, I would not be alive today," she says. "They fed us English crackers with a thin layer of lard to build up our stomachs again for normal food."

Three weeks after the war ended, Olga was strong enough to join a girlfriend at one of the increasingly popular Canadian dances. At one point in the evening, a handsome young soldier by the name of Pte. Lloyd Rains of the Princess Patrician Canadian Light Infantry, came up and asked for a dance. It was love at first sight and within three weeks, the young couple were engaged to be married.

"Language was a problem," Olga remembers. "I knew a bit of high school English and love has a language of its own. We fell in love that evening and fifty years later, we are still in love."

As Olga was soon to find out, however, falling in love was one thing: getting married was another. For a number of reasons, the Army brass did not exactly encourage marriages between Canadian soldiers and Dutch women. In fact, official policy was to discourage such marriages, and any couple applying for permission to do so had to go through a bureaucratic nightmare.

On top of that, Lloyd could be repatriated to Canada at any time. Under such circumstances, Lloyd volunteered to stay on in Europe with the Allied Occupation Forces, and as he moved from one regiment to another, he and Olga waited for the Army's permission to marry.

When permission finally came through six months later, on December 11, 1945, Lloyd was in Belgium where he was stationed until December 22. Initial plans to marry on December 22 were dashed when they were told too many couples wanted to get married that day.

"We were told that we had to wait until December 28," recalls Olga. But she and Lloyd did not want to wait that long and they refused to give up. "Lloyd had to sail back to England on January 4, 1946. What were we to do? With cigarettes and other goodies Lloyd had bought, we went to the city hall in Haarlem and we asked to speak to the clerk who performs the marriage," Olga remembers.

Thus armed, the couple sweet-talked the clerk into marrying them on Christmas Eve—even though the city hall was officially closed that day. With visions of chocolates and cigarettes in his head, the clerk promised to make an exception, if they would pick him up from his house on their way to City Hall.

It must have been quite a sight that Christmas Eve when at 10 a.m. four horse-drawn carriages arrived in front of Olga's parents' house: one for her grandparents, one for her parents, one for the witnesses and one for the happy couple.

From there, they drove to the beautiful city hall, a 16th century castle which is located in the center of Haarlem. Along the way, the entourage picked up the city clerk, who was smartly dressed for the occasion in formal black jacket and pin-striped pants.

After five long years of war, few Dutch brides wore white on their wedding day, and Olga was no exception. Using material and accessories sent by Lloyd's sister Edna in Canada, Olga looked radiant in a green dress, fancy shoes and purse—to match Lloyd's green uniform, of course.

Olga's wedding ring, a lovely gold band with white gold forget-me-nots, also came from Canada. Lloyd's ring was made from a gold coin left to Olga by her other grandparents, who had died during the war. After the ceremony, the entire wedding party went by the same horse-drawn carriages to a cafe where the reception was held.

Even though seven months had passed since the Liberation, food was still very scarce in Holland. The chef improvised with army rations brought especially for the occasion by Lloyd's brother Les, who was stationed in Germany, and Olga's cousin, Augusta, who was stationed in England with the RCAF.

Olga remembers the ham salad, made with sliced SPAM fried in canned army butter, the egg-powder omelettes and canned sardines on toast. Lively accordion music was supplied by an old music teacher and vocals were by Les, who sang Canadian country songs.

"It was a great day," Olga says sentimentally, "and the next day was Christmas." But their happiness was short-lived, for only twelve days later, on January 6, 1946, Lloyd was repatriated to Canada along with the rest of the regiment.

It took seven long months before Olga was able to join him in Canada.

For most of the past fifty years, Olga and Lloyd lived in Peterborough, Ontario, where they raised a family and operated a successful printing business. A modest and diminutive couple, they were probably unprepared for the media attention they received after their first successful reunions in the early 1980s.

Now they are well-seasoned media veterans. They know how important the press can be in their search for clues that inevitably lead to a reunification, or another disappointment for these children who are driven to find and meet their fathers.

Over the past fifteen years since they began working on Project Roots, Olga and Lloyd have appeared on innumerable television programs in several countries, they have been featured in countless newspaper articles worldwide, and they have been interviewed on radio shows too numerous to mention. And all for the same unwavering goal—to discover one more clue that will lead to another successful reunion of father and child.

On the eve of the television series broadcast in Canada last fall, the Rainses' telephone in Haarlem rang off the hook from children of Canadian veterans who read about the series or learned of their father's liaisons from old letter or snapshots.

"They were looking for half-brothers and half-sister," an excited Olga said in an interview with Canadian Press at the time. "We are going to work on it at this end."

After travelling back and forth overseas these past 15 years, Olga and Lloyd decided to settle permanently in Holland in 1992. Now they spend their days looking for leads full-time in the most rewarding detective work imaginable.

In a way, the couple have come full circle. In early December, Olga and Lloyd came back to Canada to celebrate their fiftieth wedding anniversary with their son Ross and his family in London, Ontario.

As they marked their anniversary Christmas Eve, this remarkable couple could sit back with confidence knowing they had given a whole new meaning to Christmas for thousands of families around the world.

Olga and Lloyd Rains can be reached at their address in Haarlem: Project Roots, Postbus 121, 2000 AC Haarlem, The Netherlands, or by telephone at 011-31-23-533-1125. ***Ende***

The foregoing appeared originally in The Daily Gleaner, *Fredericton, New Brunswick (Canada), of Thursday, December 28, 1995.*