

Memorial to My Wife by Dr. Walter Zander

Gretl Zander

February 23rd, 1905 - July 4th 1968

It is customary in Holland at funerals that the main mourner says the last farewell. Knowing how deeply Gretl was attached to the country of her youth, I shall try to do so.

I shall not be able to speak of our grief and sorrow: the grief of a man who has lost his wife; the grief of children who are bereaved of their mother; the sorrow of friends. The depth and tenderness of love are beyond the scope of my words.

But I can speak of the all-pervading radiance of a heart which at our wedding day was described in the Biblical words—"strength and beauty are her clothing and she laughs at the times to come."

I can speak of a great love to human beings which enabled her to build most wonderful friendships in many walks of life and many lands' friendships which are a precious heirloom to her family to preserve and develop.

I can speak of visions clear and far-reaching—visions which sometimes proved to be more realistic than the worldly wise among us thought possible.

I can speak of a rare nobility of character which could not harbor one ignoble thought and which recognized nobility in others wherever it was present, in king or beggar. There was a child-like confidence in love—and most wonderful of all—a supreme innocence, an innocence of the soul which no evil could touch.

I could speak of the courage of a woman who in war, in a new country with four little children, without means, the husband interned, became the inspiration of a village. And I must speak of sufferings and anxieties born in difficult and complex conditions in agony.

But ultimately the suffering was overcome and transformed into a state of contentment and peace. During the last months this transformation reached its summit and the radiance of her youth returned—more beautiful than ever.

When on the last evening we walked together hand in hand like children we realized that we had reached the fulfillment of human happiness. We dreamed and hoped that we might be given to live out this blissful state for a few more years together, as the crown of our life.

This was not to be. But the happiness we had tasted was timeless.

During the same night, in your sleep, you left us. And when I recovered, I experienced in the grief over your death a strange mysterious joy. This joy was created by your life and the joy over your life was greater than the grief over your death. And now I know that the sorrow of the parting will be overcome by the gratitude for all you have given us, the gratitude for what you have been.

Farewell Gretl. We thank you. Your memory is a blessing.

These words were spoken by Dr. Walter Zander at the funeral service of Gretl Zander on Wednesday July 10th 1968.