

From the Hague with Love

the story of Jan and Johanna Jordaans-Roomberg (1919-2011)

dedicated to the spirit of our brother Rudy and to my sisters Alexandra and Jacqueline



Grathem, the Netherlands

From the Hague with Love

Once upon a time

When does one start to write a biography? Not too soon. And for sure, writing the biography of the marriage of one's deceased parents is an endeavor that requires a combination of time, wisdom and love. Now, being fifty-eight, having come to some wisdom of nonduality, basking in the love of my adorable wife Debbie, and after having practiced writing some other stories, I propose that the time is right for me to write a Tale about my parents – and a Grand Tale it will be. Of course I can only write for myself, so this is the way I personally experienced the marriage and family life of my parents. But I hope to have gone beyond my personal views as well.

“Ir. J.K.H. Jordaans”

This is what I saw when I could read the name on the door of our house in the little town of Brunssum, the Netherlands. It was around 1969 I suppose, for I am born in 1963 and it took me six years to learn reading. In my defense I like to say that being five, I already played the first movement of Beethoven's Mondschein sonata on the piano – and who wants to learn reading after that? But I managed. I learned this piece of music by heart even before I could read the notes. My father played it frequently when he put us to bed in the evening.

So, apparently, in this house some one lived with the name Jordaans, he was an engineer (this is what “Ir.” stands for) and had three first names. They were Johannes Karel Hendrikus, named after his father, who ran a little butchery shop in the Hague. John Carl Henry it would probably be translated in English, although the Henry-part would be too simple, because Hendricus is a latinized version of Hendrik (Henry), which was a fashionable thing to do in Europe since the fifteenth century, especially in scientific and humanistic circles; just like they used to call the French philosopher *René Descartes: Renatus Cartesius*. Which is why we know of the phrase *Cartesian* thinking – a style of science that was invented by *Descartes*. So now we are back to my father, because scientific thinking was one of his strengths.

Contrary to what the door sign promised, John Carl Henry lived there not alone, but with his wife and two children. My dear sister Alexandra (1962) and I (1963). But there were more children involved, because Jan (which is how in Dutch John is written) already had two earlier children in his life, together with the same spouse, Johanna (for short: Jo). Jan, born in 1919, and Jo (1921) were married in 1946, shortly after the second world war had finished. They lived in The Hague, a large city in the Netherlands on the coast of the North Sea, now famous for the world Peace Palace, where international law is judging the behavior of States and war criminals by the International Court of Justice of the United Nations.

From The Hague to The South

The Hague had an unfair share of the WWII atrocities, being occupied by German forces for 5 years from 1940-1945, the last year of which is infamously called “the hunger winter”, for many of its citizens died from starvation and cold in that period. My father had to go in hiding during a part of the war, to prevent being involuntarily recruited by the Germans to work in German war industry. As an enlisted soldier he carried and used the heavy machine gun in the short war that the Dutch bravely fought against the brutal German invasion, that ended swiftly when after five days the Germans bombed and burnt the heart out of the city of Rotterdam. During the war, Jan studied Mining Engineering in Delft, slightly against the will of his father, who wanted him to lead the butchery shop instead. But Jan, now

having to pay for the education himself, insisted, got a side-job and went to Delft. And later, *L'histoire se répète*, for his youngest son (the writer of this Tale) would find himself in similar position when – for different reasons – he had to pay for the Lion's share of his Law study himself. "*In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister*", so it is said in the poem from the year 1800 "*Natur und Kunst*" by *Johan Wolfgang von Goethe* (1749 – 1832), meaning "only in adverse conditions the real Master is revealed". Both Jan and I naturally found a masterful way around this artificial hurdle, like I always found ways to handle the limitations of my health as well. Perhaps Jan, like his father before him, was only testing my resolve to overcome adversities– and this worked out fine.

Jan and Jo were engaged at the beginning of the war, after being high school lovers, promising to marry as soon as the war was over. So, after liberation, they almost immediately walked down the aisle, and Jan, then 27, got a job in the South of the Netherlands, in the utter South of the county named Limburg. There were only two places in the world Jan thought about to practice his newly found profession: South Africa and South Limburg. So, I almost ended up being a part of the *apartheid*-system in South Africa, living in Johannesburg where the large Gold and Diamond mines were located. But it turned out to be Limburg, the Netherlands, where my cradle was ordained. I don't regret that for obvious reasons.

Jo did, however. Her reasons were obvious as well. Not that she wanted to be a white apartheid-colonist, but she much regretted to have to leave the Hague in the first place, the city at the sea that she was so fond of, where she had an outstanding job as secretary to the head of a ministerial department, and where her father lived whom she loved above all. Limburg is only 150 miles away from the Hague, but in those days shortly after the war, with no or bad roads it was an endeavor to make the trip, so she knew she would not see her father very often anymore. Or her stepmother, who lovingly took care of her after she lost her biological mother who died too young, when Jo was almost nine years old. So, leaving the Hague meant that in one blow, she lost an awful lot: family, city and job, because in those days women were not supposed (and allowed even) to work while being married. But alas, this is how life was meant to be for her, and she followed her dear Jan all the way to Limburg, enjoying her new role as a mother, for soon their first daughter was born in 1947 (Jacqueline), five years later followed by the first son, Rudolph (Rudy). The happy family seemed complete.

Fortune & Fate

The couple fared well, making friends mostly among fellow "colonists", because the mining industry in Limburg was dominated by engineers and managers that all came from the other parts of the country, mostly called Holland, meaning the counties near the North Sea – "above the great rivers". And among some local neighbors as well. But "*Life is what happens to us when we are busy making other plans*", we know this since this sentence appeared in *Reader's Digest* in 1957. Of course the thought behind this saying is much older, for instance from the Old Testament (about 350 B.C.), were the Latin prose reads "*Cor hominis disponit viam suam, sed Domini est dirigere gressus eius*" (the human heart determines his own way, but the Lord conducts his steps). And a Roman saying from 43 B.C. reminds us of our helplessness, when saying "*Homo semper aliud, Fortuna aliud cogitat*" (man wants this, fate determines the other).



In 1980 *John Lennon* used the proverb in his song titled "*Beautiful Boy*" (also known as "*Darling Boy*") where he lovingly serenaded his (and Yoko Ono's) son Sean. And as fated dictated, the song was also applicable to Jan and Jo's *beautiful boy* Rudy,

who was not a healthy boy. He suffered from what is now known as *cystic fibrosis*, but at that time this was not recognized and often mistaken for other diseases that caused the symptoms he developed, mostly intestinal. There was no genetic information known to diagnose the disease. And there were no medicines to treat it, only the simplest early antibiotics, and his digestive problem of not being able to process the fat in his food was crudely taken care of by a diet that consisted mostly of bananas and milk. Although on the surface he developed fairly well on this, sadly he contracted the measles, a disease against which no vaccination was available at that time. With his vulnerable airways, this swiftly developed into a pneumonia and within a few days, he had to leave his body - being only seven years old. Seven turned out not to be Jo's lucky number in life indeed.

His voyage in time and form ended right there, but the spirit lived on as if nothing happened and continued to work his magic in the human dimensions up and to today, and timelessly so. Because his death was more than likely the cause of the second birth-wave of my parents.

Being devastated by the loss of their little son, desperately holding on to each other and to their daughter Jacqueline (then twelve), the wounded family was soon being blessed with the birth of another child. Nothing better could have happened to the sorrow-stricken household, that endured the worst that parents and siblings could ever imagine. So in 1962 the sun started shining again in the Jordaans-residence with the arrival of my other sister Alexandra, in whom father, mother and elder sister delighted no doubt. And seven months later, while the couple was still deliberating whether this new child should have a younger sibling, nature had already taken care of this and secretly I was happily growing in mother's belly. My hide and seek was found out soon. So, by 1963, the family had recovered fully and now consisted of five, Jan&Jo&their-three-children, and the sweet memory of Rudy who watched over this earthly scene of refound bliss. In that, he was assisted by Jo's father, who died the same year that Rudy was born. So, dear Rudy had already worked his miracles before, comforting his mother to cope with the loss of her beloved father Jan. Yes, Jan is a most common name in the Netherlands – even I did not escape it, being named officially Jan Paul.

Despite the genetic threat that these two new children were exposed to, all seemed fine and the babies prospered well. For a while they thought that the other part of Lennons's songtext "*Close your eyes, have no fear, the monster is gone, he is on the run and your daddy is here, beautiful boy*" was prevailing. It was not until four years later that our doctor proposed to test me (I probably had some signs of the disease) on cystic fibrosis by performing a sweat test. And much to the terror of my parents, I tested and retested positively. The monster was back again. For Jan and Jo, and for my sister Jacqueline, this must have been a very dark moment indeed, something that I can not even imagine. They already lost little Rudy to this disease only five years earlier, and now the youngest child and brother was threatened as well? I don't know how they coped with this, but they did, each in his or her own way I suspect. And because I thrived reasonably well, new medication was available to ensure a better digestion, and many new antibiotics had developed since, slowly the family started to relax a bit into the new situation and the threat waned. And rightly so, because I am still alive, and did all I could to spare my parents - who died in 1998 (Jan) and 2011 (Jo) respectively – the sorrow of losing yet another child, and my sister(s) to lose a(nother) brother. Even when this meant that at times, I had to isolate myself from the family life to provide some mental and physical relief for me and Jo, who's attention at times felt more like a burden than a blessing, I am very grateful for my longevity, and for being able to carry the baton that Rudy



gave me up until today, keeping us both in this dance of life for so long. “Before you go to sleep, say a little prayer”.

Jan, Father and *Homo Universalis*

Jan Jordaans was a remarkable man in every aspect. He was a Leonardo da Vinci *après la lettre*, a real *Homo Universalis*. There was nothing this man could not do. At an early age, he was a talented pianist and together with my mother, who could even play the piano better, formed a successful high school piano-duo, performing on parties and happenings. As an engineer, he was beyond standards. He was employed by the Dutch State Mines, who were lucky to have him, and within a few years his talents as engineer and manager led to a swift career that culminated in being one of the leading CEO’s of this company, later known by the acronym DSM. Many inventions in the area of coal mining sprouted from his lucid brain, earning and saving millions of dollars to the company. And as a manager he succeeded in both contributing to the rise of the coal mining industry in the Netherlands, as well as to the successful fall of it in 1968, when coal mining became economically impossible and DSM changed



into a petrochemical industry, turning gas and oil into its more useful and costly distillates. So he converted himself from a mining engineer into a chemical engineer without even blinking an eye.

On retirement, the Queen honored him with a high Royal Decoration, *Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau*, for his contribution to the industrial development of the Netherlands.

As a father, Jan was most caring and always trying to think of ways to please his wife and children, teaching them the important lessons of life and spending time with them, notwithstanding his



demanding job. He had a brilliant little trick to prevent him from working too much: he only used the tiniest of planners he could find, a black booklet where he and his secretary wrote down the obligations he had to fulfill. And when the little pages for the day or week were full, he simply refused to take on more obligations, or he ordered the secretary to delete one of the others. This allowed him to make long work days, but in the evening and weekends he was available to his family. And at his best he was in the long summer holidays, taking Alexandra and me on mountain climbing trips in Austria. Jo sunbathed on the hotel terrace, for she had bad knees and could not climb the mountains. Walking and climbing with us, Jan was at his finest, fully relaxed, with an empty mind. His binoculars and altimeter at hand, from his bright mind he taught us the flora and fauna of the mountains, and indeed, the origin of

the mountains and minerals themselves. For as a mining engineer, he knew a lot about geology as well. And Jan spoke his languages with great talent. German, French, Italian, even Russian: when needed, he learned himself to speak these as fluently as was required in the circumstances, and with great talent for pronunciation. And when he talked to foreigners, they were always astonished to learn that he in fact was Dutch, and not one of their countrymen.

Although he never spoke about work at home, I remember parts and signs of his successful career, moving to a larger house, the expensive cars that he was supposed to drive as a sign of his status as CEO of a multinational. And I still remember, being only a small boy of about four or five, the brass band of DSM bringing an homage to him, at our house. They marched through the entire village, ending up in formation on our front lawn, playing the *Colonel Bogey March* for him, when he was promoted on the job yet again. Still today, hearing this music brings me back immediately to this moment in time. There is a beautiful rendition of this piece of music [here](#).

The name of the march, *Colonel Bogey*, is probably derived from a high army officer, who played golf, but not too well. And every time he needed more hits than was allowed (“par”) to finish the leg (one more hit is called *a bogey*), expressed his displeasure in a very correct way by only whistling a small minor third, the characteristic musical element that starts the melody of the march. It is very funny to know that later in life, Jan tried to play golf himself. This was not his idea, but Jo’s. She thought that Jan should “socialize” more, in stead of spending all his free time at home, constructing in his little shop in the basement of the house. Jo invented a two stage rocket for this. First stage was that Jan needed to play bridge. So they played bridge with the neighbours, who were very proficient in this card game. Much more proficient than Jan, who thought this was only a stupid card game, and he hated the small talk that went along with these occasions. And losing from the neighbour, who couldn’t even hold a screwdriver in his hands, was an undeserved humiliation in Jan’s book.

The second stage of Jo’s plan of attack was playing Golf. So Jan joined a golfclub, which he hated, because also this game he would not master to his great frustration. I heartily joined in his discontent, for I had to accompany him and I couldn’t get the finesses of the game either. I simply didn’t get why we had to go to the golf court every Saturday afternoon, both of us not liking the game at all. But alas, these were the orders of General Jo, and we – as a simple soldier and corporal – had not option but to follow the orders blindly. Swearing we would walk the course, more of course than on actually, looking for all the balls that went the wrong way in the rough. My father expressed his frustration in more than only a minor third. A whole Symphony of slang from the Hague I learned on afternoons like these, and we had a lot fun like that. And driving home in the white limousine, Jan played the cassette with the Colonel Bogey march. Perhaps he knew exactly where the name came from.



I listened a few times to it this morning, before taking on this Tale. And now, having finished the first draft, I listen to it again. It has the exact right tempo, *Tempo giusto* the Italian's say, and find it even more suitable than ever before to remember my parents by. Optimistic, courageous, dashing and elegant. A strong melody (flutes and piccolo's) takes the initiative, and for the keen listener it is clear that some subtle and well thought counter melodies (saxophones, horns) make up for a good balance and beautiful softening sounds. Harmony on the highest level.

Never (re) tired

After his highly successful career in mining, engineering and management, and despite for having his share of physical impairments that come with ageing, Jan kept developing while being retired. He now trained himself to be a silversmith, to such a high level that soon his teachers sought his help whenever an especially difficult job needed to be done, like the making of a chain of office for the new mayor of the city. And he was interested in art and antiques as well, so much so that the owner of a famous antique shop in the Hague asked him whether he would take over the shop from him after retirement. The esteemed University of Delft offered him the position of Endowed Professor in mining technologies, which he declined. And he had many other advisory side jobs. But in the end, he just wanted to develop his skills in silver work, and he was most happy to reside at home with his tools, constructing and creating what his eyes had seen and what his mind had envisioned. He made barometers, silver nautilus shell cups, jewelry boxes and what not. Nothing in the house and garden stood a chance of being dilapidated, for he had already enforced, improved and fixed it before things could even think of breaking down. I am not clumsy myself, but my eldest sister is even much better at this - and also, just like Jo, she is a great mother of her fine children, my lovely niece Rosanne and nephew Jeroen. But the finer (p)art of engineering skills of my father skipped a generation and ended up with my nephew Jeroen, who reminds me a lot of my father. Like Jan, he also studied in Delft and currently, being an engineer with his wife who is an engineer herself and with their two young children, he is travelling Europe in a self converted firetruck/camper, fixing everything for anyone that his eyes see and his mind takes to. I salute him for carrying this part of my fathers torch.

Besides playing the piano, at 65 Jan learned to play the saxophone as well, because he was fond of the sound of the Italian alto Saxophone player *Fausto Papetti*, and he wanted to play *Schumanns Träumerei* with the *Papetti*-tone. He almost succeeded.

Manja, Jo's stepmother

No Tale about Jan and Jo and our family would ever be complete without honouring this special being in our lives. We did not accompany Jan and Jo on all of their holidays. When we were too young, we



stayed at home and had our own little feast. Which was a big feast actually, because on those occasions, Manja would come and take care of us. Manja is the name we called Jo's stepmother, who actually was named Agatha Isabella van Gaalen (1908-1998). She selflessly came to the loving rescue of the young grieving widower and his little daughter to take care of Jo and her father after Jo's biological mother died in 1929. Manja and Jo's father were married until his death for 20 years. She always spoke the world of both her husband and Jo. They were the love of her life, and her grandchildren were that as well. Widowed on her 44th, she was always prepared and delighted to make the trip from The Hague to Limburg and look after us. Mostly

she did not only stay for the two weeks that Jan and Jo were abroad, but for quite some weeks after

that as well. Until my father jokingly “revoked her residence permit” and she returned to her little house in the Hague again – only to return as soon as possible for a birthday, Christmas, Easter or yet another holiday. I always adored Manja, attributing that at first to her great sense of humor, the sweetest character and the delicious French Toast (in Dutch called “Wentelteefjes”) that she taught us children to prepare.



Manja emanated the *Buddha-Nature*, for she was an enlightened being no doubt. At that time I didn’t know what this was, but intuitively we connected on this level and it was the most wonderful kind of selfless and unconditional love I had experienced so far in life. After this, earthly love just felt incomplete to me and unconsciously I was in search for this feeling to repeat. But this is not an experience that is to be found in the world outside, it only comes from within by liberation. In my first marriage that lasted twenty years I was not unhappy by any means, but only a few years after my divorce, when meeting Debbie this level of awareness was uncovered again, and now permanently. By then, Manja had already died, but the connection I have with her is timeless and beyond form. Since that time, I don’t miss her anymore, for she is with me always. I inherited a little clock from her, and every 15 minutes it chimes the time. Then, silently, I always here me say: “Yes, Manja? I am with you”.

Jo, loving mother and commander in chief of the household

When not on holidays, Jo took care of the household, and having two babies in her forties was by no means an easy job in those days. Of course, she was an experienced mother by then, and she ruled and took control over the household and the children with a lot of determination. I clearly remember her standing by me, when I had to be hospitalized for the first time. She was not going to let her 5 year old boy alone, so she arranged for us to have two beds in the hospital room, and never lost sight of me, apart from the operation itself. Later, when I needed ENT surgeries many times, she drove me to the hospital herself time and again. In her old car, an *Opel Kadett* 1963, the speedometer changed colour depending on velocity. Above 66 miles an hour, it turned a beautiful ruby red, indicating that this was risky driving. Knowing that I as a boy of about 10 delighted in driving fast and seeing that happen, she always sped up the car beyond her own comfort zone and we unsafely broke all the traffic laws in doing so.



The second class of primary school I spent at home, to avoid the many airway infections that attacked me at this age. Jo arranged for one of her friends to teach me at home. Aunt Iepkje her name was, and she made sure that after a year I was even ahead of my class when returning to school. That year I became to know my mother very well. I saw her sowing our clothes, taking care of the garden, cleaning the house, we played the piano together and went shopping in her little car. I was there when her girlfriends came to visit and listened to the conversations. It was a great time and only reluctantly went back to school after that.

I also witnessed how Jo, if she thought she was right – and this happened remarkably often – never gave up always found ways to get her right also. Then she picked up the phone, and I listened with admiration how she would convince the person on the other side of the line. And if this didn’t work,

she demanded to speak to the supervisor and eventually the director, or the medical specialist in case it concerned my health. From her I learned that it is no use negotiating with subordinates in cases like these, and that I always should try to talk to the highest authority available. I remembered this lesson recently, when trying to speed up the introduction of Kaftrio in the Netherlands. I wrote [a letter](#) to the Minister of Health, and set it up to be delivered by the director of the National Cystic Fibrosis Society. Within a week of writing my letter, the deal was done. Jo had stricken again!

As a child I adored her to pieces, and after discovering the difficult truth that human beings are all destined to die, as a little boy I envisioned to build a mausoleum for her entirely made out of glass. And I am sure her love for the children was of the same intensity. Her drive to take care of and please us was limitless, so much so, that later in life, when my sister and I were ready to take care of our own lives, it was almost impossible for her to allow the birds leaving the nest, which caused me and my younger sister a lot of sorrow, troubles and hardship to say the least – and my parents as well. But nevertheless, we had a great time before that, and nothing was lacking in care, attention and (s)mothering love; and we as children loved them back in the same manner. It is only understandable that Jo was taking control too much, having lost her own mother at eight, her city and job at twenty-five, her dear father at thirty one and a seven year old son at thirty eight. Sometimes life was simply too harsh for her and it deeply influenced her behaviour. And being under the threat of losing yet another child to the same disease, she left nothing to chance anymore and fiercely held on to her dearest possessions.



Only, children are not possessions - which was a very hard and cruel lesson for Jo to learn, and to his dismay Jan found that this was the one thing in life even he could not fix, despite of all of his smarts, charm, erudition and abilities. My mother ever only understood this shortly before dying, when for a few sweet weeks her mind became ever more transparent. And she came to experience and emanate her true childlike love again that had all the time stayed alive, untainted, even when buried beneath this crippling crust of grief and conditioning. And this clarity will stay with her timelessly now. I am grateful that Debbie was present in my life at that time already, so she could love Jo for the being she really was. She did her utmost and that was a lot. We are eternally in Jo's debt, and in that of Jan as well. They were the greatest parents they could

be and a child could have wished for. Jo's never ending sense of caring and helping went to my younger sister Alexandra as well, who also is a fine mother for her three great children Tom, Jannick and Fleur. And she has the creative skills of my father too, making elegant jewelry herself.

The Art of the Piano

Most grateful I am to Jan and Jo for teaching me one of the joys of my life, the love for music and piano playing. All of their children have musical skills, Alexandra being a good flautist and Jacqueline these days plays the accordion – which in a way is a crossing between the flute and the piano – very skillfully. But I took to music more fanatically, and Jo and I played quatre mains together, Diabelli and later Fauré and Debussy, for she started to take lessons at the music school again when I threatened to get the better of her. The beautiful start of Fauré's suite [Dolly for piano quatre mains](#) we played together I still find to be one the most beautiful melodies in this genre.

No matter our difficulties later, we always found moments of peace and joy in music. I made a poem about this titled "*Impromptu*", you can read [here](#) (in Dutch). It is about Schubert's [third Impromptu](#) opus 90, which I love to play, and it never failed to move Jo to tears hearing it. But she never forgave me for playing Bach using the sustaining pedal, and she was in good company with this, for even one

of my great piano idols and Bach-expert [Glenn Gould](#) would scorn me for that. But I don't care, for I am just as stubborn and determined in my choices as Jo was. No wonder we clashed so many times. Sorry mum, it couldn't be helped, this was supposed to happen from the beginning. It was beyond both our powers.

On Jo's funeral I didn't play Bach – I wouldn't have dared. But *Mozart* (always fine), *Schumanns Traumerei* (Jan's favorite) and *Grieg's Arietta* (which I played for Jo often as well) were very suitable too. This morning I searched YouTube for a good quatre mains rendering of the waltz *Espana* by Emile Waldteufel, that Jo and I performed together many times with great success. I didn't find it, but what I found was very applicable too. A very special animated short movie that offered exactly the right Gestalt that I try to show in this Tale. Elegance, Tragedy, Love and Music. As far I know there is no sequel to this little movie. But on itself, it is already on lonely high level in the world of music animations, I think. [Click](#) here and enjoy!

When Jo and Jan were married for 25 years in 1976, my father presented her with a beautiful miniature Grand Piano, made completely out of silver, ornamentally crafted by hand. It is not only decorative, but also functional, because it holds a little music box. When operated, it sounds the waltzing melody of "[Aufforderung zum Tanze](#)", the opus 65 Rondo Brillant for piano, composed by the first romantic German composer *Carl Maria von Weber* (1786 – 1826), pupil of *Michael Haydn*, the younger brother of *Joseph. Von Weber*, who's cousin *Constanze* was married to *Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart*, died – like before him his one year old sister *Antonetta*, and his mother *Genofeva* – of tuberculosis, aged only 39 years old, just like *Frédéric Chopin*. *Von Weber* is best known for his operatic work and the composition of the opera "*Der Freischütz*". But he also was an accomplished guitarist and composed intimate piano music, like the Rondo of the little music box. This piece of music he wrote in 1819 (only exactly 100 years before Jan was born), and he dedicated it to *Caroline*, whom he had married a year earlier.



Life is a Dance



"The Grand Piano" –
© Paul Jordaans (2014)

This little piece of music history shows that my fathers gift almost comprised the entire scene of classical music, dancing, romance and tragedy in one – a perfect metaphor for his life together with Jo, and I am sure he knew this from researching carefully before making this very choice. And to completely get the picture, you first have to understand that, although in English the composition is often called "Invitation to the Waltz", this is a mistranslation because although it is indeed a waltz, it should be properly called "Invitation to the Dance". And secondly you

must know that my father and mother were very good classical dancers as well; I forgot to mention this earlier, there is simply too much to tell about them. When on holiday, after diner when they started dancing, the dance floor of the hotel would gradually become emptier and eventually fully free for them, the other couples humbly making place to watch them perform this noble art of moving. I remember that seeing them dance together more than anything else made me feel very proud and romantic, watching them in awe as well. Both of them had the grace, beauty and musicality to make the audience sigh and swoon in admiration. They were really at One joined like that, and after Jan's death in 1998 Jo was like amputated, a half of the couple not being able to dance anymore.

Perhaps it were these dancing scenes that made me so fond of the three movies about the Austrian empress Sisi, where *Romy Schneider* was almost as elegant as Jo and *Karl Heinz Böhm* played the role of white-horsed prince like I envisioned Jan. Only Jan drove a white limousine, which I liked even more. But wondering what happened to society in only one hundred years time, I was sure that I was born too late. Fortunately, at the right time in life I found my Debbie, who in my eyes is even more pretty than the perfect mix between my mother, *Romy Schneider* and *Audrey Hepburn*. When we got married, my sisters were so darling to present us with this little silver Grand Piano. And since we dance through life together, silently singing the melody of "*Aufforderung zum Tanze*" and thinking of the elegant couple that so graciously paved our way.



The Torch of Romance

Coming to the end of this Grand Tale is the time to relate that Jan was a very romantic man as well – have you noticed? I am sure of that. And when I got the musicality of Jo, I surely got the romantic heart of my father. So, to illustrate Jan's great sense of romance, I want to share something very intimate that relates to me, him, Jo and music in the very way that they lived, and loved every thing they did.

I still have a piano book holding the score of *Chopin's* famous 24 piano Preludes opus 28, that my mother practiced when younger. They belong to the pieces of music I cherish most and play myself as well. I use a newer version to practice, but kept the older one pristine for a special reason. This book was apparently a gift from my father to my mother, for he inscribed and dedicated it thus (dated 18 January 1947, being married for only three months), in a beautiful handwritten calligraphy like this:

*“Bien Aimée,
En les jouant, te souviens de Moi
et de mon amour éternelle” .*

Translated it reads: “Dearly beloved, while playing these, think back on me and on my eternal love”.

These days, Jo and Jan long being together in Oneness again, when playing one of these Preludes I can't help thinking of this beautiful dedication, and I even imagine that some of it now pertains to me. Now, will someone please tell me: where does one still find a man of this passion and style nowadays? And his wife as such a graceful recipient?

“Amour éternelle”, bien sûr. I hope to carry this torch even more than any of the others that Jan and Jo entrusted to me. May the world and Debbie be my witness.



Jan Paul Jordaans & Debbie Parkins

Grathem, 22.02.2022

More Tales? [look here](#)

Grateful? [go here](#)

The End



- for now -