

Interview with Reinier and Lenie Muller, November 2006

[Lenie. The Mullers] They came in 1938 with six children, from Gröningen, to this place. There was only the house and the barn, no trees no garden, nothing, only the house. In the whole area there were only houses. Not everyone came: 1937 came some families, 1938, 1940... Reinier's family came in 1938. In 1939 he was born. He is the only one who is born in this house.

[Lenie. The beginning] ...Before they came here, there were the pioneers who dug the canals... It was full of water, and when the water was out, in 1932, on the land they built barns and they grew wheat. The first crop was wheat... [later farm crops] sugar beet, potatoes, flax for linen, for clothes

[Reinier. Earliest memory] I was a little boy. I played next door, outside, in this corner, and then I was four or five years, I go with my father... [Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates] As a boy of five years old he went with his father to the field, to look, only look. No shovel, no work...

[Reinier in Dutch] [...]

[Lenie. The war] This house was built in 1938, when they came here, and in 1945, in April, the German soldiers blew up the dike, and in six hours it was all water, 'til the roof. The whole area was water. Every family went with their horse wagon to the 'old places'. We call this [polder] new land. Over there is old land. People knew already that it was coming. They were talking about it, that the Germans were going to blow up the dike, and you could see it out there, because they were working on the dike. They tried some dynamite, and it happened. My mother had sheets and clothes already done. She said: when we go we have to take this. And [to Reinier] I guess in your place it was the same. But they lived here, and there [pointing out of the window] is the dike, they had to go fast to the dry area. It was the horse, the cow, Reinier's sister, and Bernard... Bernard went with the cow and his brother, and sister. They went walking with the cow along the field, walking to the dike. They wanted to take the cow because it was milk, for to drink, for the children...

[Lenie. Rebuilding the houses] ...That was in April, and in September it was dry again. It was in 1945, and in 1947 they had most of the farms [barns] rebuilt. Not the houses, because the farms [barns] they needed them for the harvest. And the [temporary] houses were Swedish wooden houses, and they lived in there [the Swedish houses were placed inside the barns]. And Reinier's family lived in the barn, and you can still see the marks on the white walls, where the cupboards were, and the shelves. The marks are there still to see...

[Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates. His parents' first car] ...Yes, he knows. They didn't lived here because it was all water. They lived in Niedorp, when they bought their first car, it was a blue Ford, a square car, he said...

[Lenie. The engagement.] We meet each other at the dancing. We had Catholic dancing, Catholic football, Catholic handball, Catholic tournament... Everything was Catholic. And we only went to that place, no other people. And then we meet each other in the dance, in 1960, 1961... 1963, when I went to Canada, just before, we started... We danced more in 1962 already, or 1961, and then I went to Canada. I learned foxtrot, and I thought, I must ask a boy, so I asked Reinier, and then I thought hey! I tried again! ...And then I went to Canada for a year, and we wrote each other. And he wrote a letter: my father is going to build another house in the village. So, I thought he is going to live alone in this farm, and I thought, so fast I don't want it! But it started so, and in 1965 we were married.

[Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates. Their marriage. Lenie moves into the farm] ...When a woman comes in the house it will be always different. Reinier's parents lived here downstairs, we slept upstairs in the big bedroom. [When Reinier's parents went to live in the village] his father came here to work, for little things to do. It was easy for him, so he doesn't have to live only in the village. He had to do some things here...and take care of our children, walking in the fields... And we worked together...

[Lenie. The children] Marianne in 1966 she was born, a boy in 1967 was born, Hans, and Annette in 1970... And we lived here all together, nice time... When I think about it, it was the nicest time. We played and we did everything together.

[Lenie] When the farm was sixty years old, all the Mullers, brothers and sisters, with their children, they came here, and in the barn we had a big party, barbecue, ping-pong time, football time, football out there... Everybody is talking about that party... And now his family says: oh well, it was just one and a half generation, because we are now going, and its over. The Muller's days are over, here...

[Lenie] We have the strawberries, and they still stay in the same place that Reinier's parents had them. That is more than forty years, almost fifty years... Every year a little over, but still the same place. A few years ago came a lady who had been here during the war. She was brought to the farm to eat well. She came here and she said: Oh, Lenie Muller? And the little boy Reinier Muller is he still here? Look! there he is walking, he is coming. So when Reinier came he didn't know her. But she walked over there to the vegetable garden, and the strawberries are standing there, and she said, look! they still stay in there! She said, I remember, the mother of Reinier, when I tried to pick one, she knocked on the window and said you may not do that... She remembered that, and that's very nice...

[Lenie. Changes in the land] ...1982, it was the main road. Four lanes... First there were two, and in 1982 there were four lanes road. Before we could cross the road to the other neighbour, but in 1982 it was over, we had to drive with the car, and it's a kilometre longer. We can see from here the lights of the gas station. From Gröningen they bring, with pipes under the ground, the gas to here, and there is a new pump to bring the gas to the other places... And in the corner of our land, of our road, is a [rubbish] ditch for the whole area... and this is also a different place. Our neighbours had their potatoes there, and they had to move them for the ditch, for the garbage they bring there...

[Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates] Renier said: for me is a difference. When I look at the backyard I can't see the neighbour anymore, all I see is the greenhouse. Two weeks ago he walked to the greenhouse, and the neighbour, not the next door neighbour but the one behind him, he also went to the greenhouse, and they met each other under the glass: "[would you have imagined] five years ago that we would stand here under a greenhouse"... First we did hear that this was coming, that the greenhouse was coming, that Agriport was coming, that Instraat was coming... And then we were a little afraid. And then we talked to each other: What shall we do? We stay here some more. And one day Instraat came, the big boss [from Agriport]. He said: I hear you want to stay here. We said: yes. He said: that is good. But, he said, when you want to sell come to me. You make a valuation, I make a valuation, and we sort it out. That is what we were thinking about, nothing else yet. Then, one year later, this real coming and it makes us so unhappy, we ask our lawyer and we said to him we want to sell our farm, can you help us? Because he can better handle it, than we, we are only little farmers... So he came, he made a valuation, he look at this, and this, and this... We ask for a price, and with the price he goes to Agriport, to Instraat. And it was ok. It was done. We sell it, and we may stay there till we want. Until three years later, or something like that. So, we know our price, we know that if we see somewhere to live in the village, and we like it, then we go and we buy it. We said we stay here until we are seventy years old. But it is now so coming and so busy and so... We saw in February, or January, in the newspaper a nice house. I look in the Internet and it was so nice... So we went to our lawyer and we went to look at it and I thought this is my house. So we take to look at other houses to look at something different and to feeling it... And then, we said to the same lawyer who sold *that* [Lenie points out of the window to the land], can you buy *that* [Lenie points to the opposite direction] for us. And so it happened.

[Lenie] Our new house is in the village where our children went to school, where our church is, where our friends are. Our social life is there... It is at the end of the village. It is a very nice bungalow... Three [bedrooms] the children can sleep... I said I want to buy a house that the children can come, that they can stay at our place. We look out at the garden, and there are trees, like here, and then is the landscape. It is very easy, nice to be, same like here... [Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates] ...Oh yeah, we can see the sun going down here, and we can see the sun going down there too. It's just the same. When we are getting old we sit on our little couch, outside, and see... it's the same, eh? Yes, it is good...

[Lenie. The future of the farmhouse] We have heard from this government, the Wieringemeer houses, the farmhouses, must stay here... The farmhouses are Wieringemeer and if they break them up there is no more Wieringemeer. But you never know, they make business...

[Lenie] Reinier, had his brother who was a farmer in Germany, that was in the sixties, but five years later he didn't get it there, and his sister said: Reinier, take your brother to the farm, because it is going bad for him there. So, it was fine, and Bernard came for what we thought a few years, but he stayed here until a few years ago. So Hans [Reinier and Lenie's son] didn't have a chance to grow into this farm. If he is a little boy and he helps his father, then that makes a difference... So, it comes so it comes. They [their children] are happy for us: Pa and Mum, it is good, it comes at a real good time. And they are happy for us. We had a nice, day, weekend in September, my birthday, it was the last week that all the children were here, we took a lot of pictures of us, it was so nice! ...It is good! And they call us every time. How is it, and how is that? It is good... It feels bad to go, but it is good to come there to the new house, eh? [Reinier in Dutch. Lenie translates] He doesn't like it yet... [Reinier in Dutch] ...Oh yeah, that is your feeling? His feeling says it is bad, but his thinking, his mind, says it is good. It has to go.