

Long-awaited meeting takes place—in hospital

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ask her was 'exactly when did you and Dad meet?' When she said in 1946, I breathed a sigh of relief and knew it was okay."

Isabella admits she was pretty matter-of-fact about the news.

"It was wartime," she said, "And another time and place. They didn't know if they would be alive tomorrow, so life was different. We can't really judge since we weren't there in the middle of it all."

Isabella said she knew that had her husband George been alive today, he would have welcomed Peter, and try to help him fill in all the blanks in his life.

As soon as Boers had the go-ahead, Linda and Georgina emailed Peter, and he responded with numerous messages. Peter was obviously excited about the prospects of meeting his half sisters and brother.

"It was a very special day, March 2 of 2000," said Peter, "I received good news and bad news from the Association of Liberation Children. The bad news was that my father had died in October of 1985, but the good news was I had three half sisters a half brother and a

step-mother, all living in Canada."

At first Peter said he was crushed with the news that his father was dead, but the discovery of all those siblings gave him some comfort, and the fact they were prepared to meet was even better.

"I was angry with my father for a bit," said Peter, "Why did he have to leave my mother behind? Why did he never contact her? I was so very proud to be the son of a Canadian soldier who liberated my town, but I was so sorry I never had the chance to meet him, to say I was his son. From what I hear from my sisters, he was a good man, but I still wished I could have met him."

"As soon as I got the word, I wanted to fly over to Canada right away," said Peter, "I wanted to meet my new family. But John Boers stopped me, saying 'take it slowly Peter,' and he suggested I write a letter to the family, telling them all about myself. I sent it to Linda, and it was 17 pages long. I was so excited."

They did proceed slowly, getting accustomed to the idea of having family on both sides of the ocean, and in doing so, they got to know each other gradually.



Family members reunited in August in Georgetown as they were interviewed for the story. From left, Linda Wilson, Peter van Daalen, Georgina Beerman, Isabella Nurse and Barbara van Daalen. Photo by Ted Brown

In May of 2000, the biggest surprise was yet to come.

Linda Wilson received a call from a television station in Holland, asking if the station could fly her to Holland to meet Peter in a surprise visit on a television program about Liberation Children in Holland.

"I wasn't about to travel to Holland alone," said Linda, "So I said I'd go only if they'd include my sister and let her come along. They agreed, and I called Georgina to tell her. She had to get time off work, and I told her 'it's a complete surprise- we can't tell anyone.'"

The two sisters arrived in Holland May 3, and were shown around the country for two-days leading up to the meeting on air.

Even though Peter was kept totally in the dark about the meeting, he became more and more stressed about the upcoming program. As a result he wasn't able to be at the historic meeting— he ended up in the intensive care unit (ICU) at the hospital the day of the television program airing, so his two daughters, Barbara and Pamela, met their new aunts on TV. After the program was over, the four traveled to see

Peter in his hospital room.

"As we approached the hospital, it was such a strange feeling," said Linda, "We had no idea what to expect— it's so hard to explain, I knew him, yet I didn't. We spent five hours talking in the ICU, and it was such a great experience."

Peter eventually arrived in Canada, and finally was able to stand over the grave of his father, William George Nurse, where he lay in Greenwood Cemetery in Georgetown.

"It was the most emotional time of my life," said Peter, "Here was the grave of the

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As a community proud of our veterans and our peacekeepers, let us remember and honour them by attending this weekend's Remembrance Day Services in Acton, Georgetown, and Glen Williams.

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