

Catherine Buis Stuy-Verkijk

March 17, 1930 ~ August 26, 2023

Catherine Buis Stuy-Verkijk was born onto this amazing planet on March 17, 1930. The highlights of her life of 93 years paralleled many great global discoveries that she witnessed or experienced.

Catherine grew up in Haarlem, Netherlands, with her sister, “Nina”. They and their parents lived above their cigar store on a street illuminated by gas lanterns, manually lit each night by a man on a bicycle. In 1939, when she was nine, the first commercial airplane flight flew across the Atlantic. Just a year later, Germany invaded Holland, starting many years of deprivation for her family, friends, and neighbors. The war left an indelible mark on her, and she talked little of her experiences. One, however, was of the “Hunger Winter” of 1944, when she and her family nearly starved. Afterwards, she always ate all the food on her plate and later sewed her children’s clothes to save money. She meticulously saved every penny she could for her family throughout the rest of her life.

In 1949, Catherine met her future husband, Harry Stuy. They married on August 4, 1953, the same year DNA was discovered, revolutionizing science. Two years later, in an effort to avoid any other wars and to provide a safe environment to raise children, they left their families in Holland and moved to the United States. They arrived on July 16, 1955, the same year the polio vaccine was approved. The couple settled in rural Garden Grove, California, and bought their first house.

Catherine and Harry had four children: Brian, Karen, Melissa, and Michael. The couple joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormon) and made friendships that carried Catherine through the rest of her life. In 1969, three years after the birth of their last child, a spaceship flew man to the moon.

In 1971, just as hand-held calculators appeared on the scene, Catherine and her family moved to the Santa Rosa Valley near Thousand Oaks, California, where they purchased a piece of land in “the middle of nowhere” and built a house. Life was idyllic, with lots of open space for her children to explore, and goats, rabbits, bees, and other projects to keep them busy. In 1981, when her children were graduating from high school, the first personal computer was introduced.

Tragedy struck in 1984 when Harry died suddenly at home. With her children off to college in Utah, Catherine stayed in her dream home in Thousand Oaks until 1991, when she sold the home and moved to Sandy, Utah. It was the same year that text messaging and the internet were unveiled. She occupied her time doing genealogy research and various arts and crafts like cross-stitching and Tole painting.

In 1995, Catherine received an invitation from an old school chum from Haarlem to return to Holland to celebrate the country’s 50th anniversary of liberation at the end of World War II. Thus did Dick Verkijk, someone she had known since her early teens, re-enter her life, starting the second major chapter of her life.

Catherine and Dick were married in Haarlem on August 29, 1995, two years after an email was introduced. Their years were filled with grandchildren, new friends, and travels to many countries and around the United States. By 2010, her physical health had begun to decline, and she experienced pain for the last thirteen years of her life.

Catherine lived a life full of excitement and wonder, both personally and globally. She witnessed the advent of air and space travel, the discovery of amazing technological wonders and conveniences, world wars, and global changes. She marveled at them all and at the rapidly changing world around her, but her primary source of joy and pleasure was the time she was able to spend with her family.

Catherine is survived by her husband, Dick Verkijk; her children Brian (Longlan), Karen (Lance), Melissa, and Michael (Cossette); and her twelve grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her first husband, Harry Stuy, and her sister, Klazina (Nina) C M Onkenhout.