



Tineke Bodde Tan

June 8, 1932 - March 5, 2025

Tineke Bodde Tan was born on June 8, 1932 in Roermond, a small town in the south of The Netherlands. She was the sixth child in a family of 10 children and had a happy childhood until World War II broke out when she was almost eight years old. Holland underwent five years of German occupation. She witnessed soldiers marching through the streets, food rationing, bombings, and the arrest and incarceration of her oldest brother by the Germans. The family took in two refugee girls, lost a baby brother, learned of the reprisal execution of a cousin by the Germans, and survived a long, freezing winter without food, running water, gas, and electricity.

After the war Ms. Tan completed high school, learned typing as well as shorthand in Dutch, French, English, and German, and worked as a 4-language secretary in Amsterdam. She also worked as an au pair for a French family in Paris and Algeria.

Eight years later she found herself in need of new challenges and decided to immigrate to the United States in 1960. There she married an American citizen and began raising a family and – unusual for those days - went back to college to pursue a degree. In 1981 she obtained her Bachelor's Degree (Cum Laude) in journalism and health sciences from the University of Maryland, College Park. She worked several years as a reporter for the Montgomery Journal and as a medical writer for the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda. During that period, she earned more than two dozen writing awards despite writing in a language which was not her native tongue.

After 15 years she retired from the Federal Government, and in 1999, at age 67, she obtained her master's degree from the University of Maryland School of Social Work in Baltimore. She subsequently worked as a clinical therapist in local schools on the Eastern Shore.

When she realized there was no organized support for gays in the area, Ms. Tan started an Eastern Shore Chapter of PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), with the assistance of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship at Easton. In the year 2000, Governor Parris Glendening appointed Ms. Tan to his Special Commission to Study Sexual Orientation Discrimination on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Thanks to her hard work and that of other gay rights groups, Maryland legislators passed a bill the following spring (2001), prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation in housing, employment, and public accommodations.

Ms. Tan gave workshops on sexual orientation, transgenderism, and counseling gay, lesbian, and bisexual teens and their parents. Subsequently, she trained in conflict mediation, and volunteered in that field.

Ms. Tan was fond of wide horizons and water scenes, swimming, sewing and gardening. In 1989 she moved from Rockville to Stevensville on Kent Island, Maryland, together with Gerry Tan, her second husband. She has two adult sons who live in Greenbelt and Amsterdam.

Gerry and Tineke retired happily on Kent Island. In the early 2010's Tineke developed Parkinson's disease and progressively worsening dementia. Gerry dutifully and lovingly cared for her until his passing in August of 2024.

Tribute Wall

RM

“ As kids, we always looked forward to visiting Grandma and Angkong at their Kent Island home. Since they didn't have cable tv to entertain us, she kept these "kits" for us filled with stickers, coloring books and other crafts to keep us busy when we weren't swimming or playing at the beach. Whenever we visited, we would always rush to our kits to see what new treats she had added for us. She was always thinking of ways to make things fun for us grandkids- Almost every visit, she would set up the Sjoelbak table (Dutch shuffleboard) and we would play for hours.

I admired her tenacity, and I was so proud of her for pursuing her further education to become a therapist. I remember "helping" her with a class project, where she wanted to learn youth slang and their meanings. As hilarious as it was to teach her all the bad words I could come up with, it was also telling of her natural ability to empathize and relate to others. As I got older, she was there to help talk through my teenage angst and troubling situations, when I felt there was no one else to turn to. She always listened, took my words as seriously as I meant them, and never judged.

I will always remember Grandma as a strong, caring, wonderful woman, full of kindness and warmth. The love that she had for us and our family was palpable. I will miss her dearly.

Rachel Mays - March 14, 2025 at 05:40 PM

BH

Beautifully written, Rachel. Thanks for sharing these lovely memories.

Bruce Haase - April 18, 2025 at 04:58 PM

MB

“ I did not know your mother, Bruce, but I do know you. And I can see now how she inspired your kindness and empathy, your open mind and your smile that says "I'm really really listening to you". In that, and I so much more, she lives on in you. I expect she is proud of the human that you are and I am proud to call you my friend. My condolences to you and your family. with much love. Maria

Maria Boulos - March 14, 2025 at 08:15 AM

BH

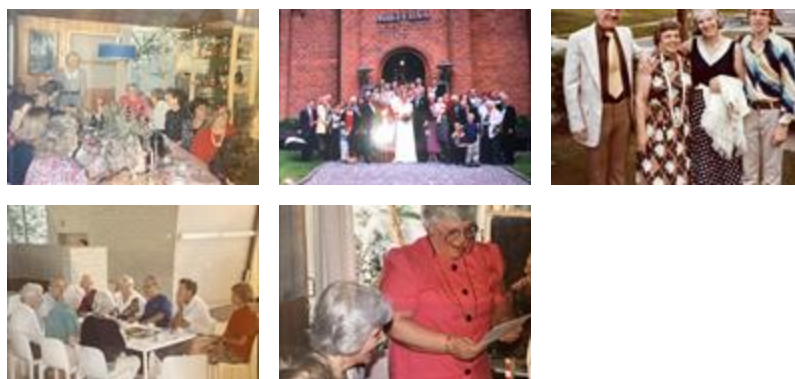
Thank you so much, Maria. Your words brought tears to my eyes.

Bruce Haase - April 18, 2025 at 04:59 PM

JE

“ I wanted to share some photos of aunt Tineke and my mom Truus from various celebrations. My mom's 60th birthday in 1991 where Tineke shared some beautiful words and many of their siblings were present as well.

Also a photo from when Jan and I got married in 2001 and Tineke, Gerry and Bruce came to Copenhagen to celebrate with us. I'm very grateful for the many big milestones in life that we have celebrated together - I will always cherish these memories ❤️



Jette Efsen - March 13, 2025 at 12:52 AM

VT

“ The first thing that comes to mind about Tineke is her unwavering dedication to help. She has helped so many people who were in need over her lifetime. Some of the examples that come to mind are taking in a young man who had been defrauded by his family's chicken business totally bankrupting him. This young man lived in Tineke's and her husband Gerry's house for many years until they went to assisted living. Tineke invited young victims with history of HIV infection to their house for sharing meals with the whole family. She had a family of five stay at their home for months after their house had been repossessed. These are only some of the examples of her drive to assist people who needed help. She just did not only donate money, but she also actually offered her house as a last refuge for many people in desperation.

I remember fondly how Tineke taught me about the Christmas traditions from her home country, the Netherlands. She said that every Christmas stocking needed to have an orange in it to ensure that Santa would come to the house. The tradition stems from a time when Europeans were hungry during WWII and oranges were a luxury item. I learned to be grateful for the things that I had from her experiences in difficult times.

I not only learned about oranges from Tineke but also about pickled herring. She liked this food because it was eaten commonly in her home country. I think I liked the oranges better!

Tineke taught me so much about giving to those in need, about her passion of keeping tradition alive, about eating a fish I did not like, about oranges I did like and about being grateful for life. Tinekie, we will miss you!

Vangie Tan

Vangie Tan - March 11, 2025 at 01:31 PM

BH

Thank you for your lovely words, Vangie, that really captured the essence of who Tineke was. X

Bruce Haase - April 18, 2025 at 05:03 PM

RE

“ We have many fond memories of Tineke. My favorite was that she always had two or three flavors of ice cream when we came over for dinner. She was a wonderful person. She was truly a blessing to my dad. We will always thank her for that. We will miss her dearly. Our condolences and prayers to Bruce and Ken. With sadness, Renet, Mikaela, Benben, Leah, and Bernard



Renet - March 10, 2025 at 02:05 PM

BH

Thank you so much Renet and family,

YES, she had quite a sweet tooth and, indeed, she always had ice cream in the freezer. Thank you for being a part of her life.

Bruce Haase - April 18, 2025 at 05:06 PM