



Stumbling through the tulips: An American Family in Holland

Daniel Paul Martin

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In *Stumbling Through the Tulips* one father shepherds his brood through bureaucratic tangles and grocery-shopping misadventures with the universal cure-all: laughter. For globetrotting businessman Dan Martin, the next step on the corporate ladder entailed moving his wife and three children from New Hampshire to The Hague. The family majority voiced resounding reluctance, but eventually responded to the move with dash and wit. Cheer, affection, and family fun mark this memoir of high spirited, richly descriptive arm-chair travel, while demonstrating how a family can come together in a strange, new, place to discover things about themselves and their culture that they will treasure forever. *Stumbling Through the Tulips* charts every phase of this life-changing journey, from Martin's first delicate family announcement through his frontrunner days finding a home and onto the family's immersion in a world with words that stretch longer than the country, more overly friendly dogs than you can shake a foreign finger at and no discernable ice cream. Along the way, the author paints a vivid portrait of how the family copes with the challenges, the thrills, the excitement, and even the frustration of swapping out everything one knows to relearn fundamentals, from banking to Santa Claus—or Sinterklaas, rather. In the democratic spirit of this family, each member is brought to life, sharing his or her hopes, fears, talents, and special brand of humor. Wife and mother Nazy navigates homemaking with her signature verve, charming friendliness and love of shopping. Nine-year-old Melika, with tulip-decorated glasses and a nose-less Persian kitten named Pinocchio, delivers dependability and wit to keep the Martins on track. At eleven, bassoon-wielding Darius forever sounds in with his uncanny knowledge of pretty much everything (except where he left his shoes, tram pass, homework, coat..) Mitra, a teenager with sequined sneakers and a gold raincoat, effusively keeps morale buoyant by persistently delighting in whatever comes her way. Together, they are game for a good laugh in Holland – a country literally created by the Dutch people. Holland is a beautiful place with tolerant people who get things done even though their language does not contain the verb 'to make a decision'. The nearest equivalent is 'to take a decision' and taking a decision involves time, patience and consensus. It was a challenge for a family that likes to do something (now) while worrying about the details (later). This book describes the time when family spirit was forged and strengthened. Although the offspring have sprung off, The Martin Family-ness continues: they support each other professionally, creatively and in each other's passions and adventures. They are The Martin Family Team. The children who took part in the Dutch adventure have grown up. Independence and tolerance learned in Holland provided a great springboard. Mitra, following her passion, opened the best Tango School in the world. Darius became a college professor in Lebanon with a penchant for seeing all of the most obscure places in the world. Dependable Melika, after climbing Kilimanjaro and partying in Bali became a corporate lawyer in Santa Barbara. Warm-hearted, witty, carefree and full of the gems of an expatriate foray, *Stumbling Through the Tulips* is a merry entrée into a new culture that is certain to move anyone with wanderlust to get packing, simply by taking a joyful journey with the Martins.

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