

## Creative Creatures

*The ideas and the work of the American and European painters, songwriters, photographers, fiction and non-fiction authors, musicians, film makers, architects, designers, poets, and dreamers I met during my 20 years in America.*

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### # 50 / Ton Haak, émigré, Matfield Green, Kansas

In America, I met with myself too. So how do I define the creative creature that is me? As a two-time unpublished novelist? A non-fiction writer, with 75 essays about the American Southwest, some of which were published, and 36 essays and articles about life in Kansas? A screenwriter, with 11 feature film scripts that never made it to Hollywood? An incidental poet, with two collections: *Abitare Abiquiu* and *Whims and Whispers, Pouts and Shouts*? A contemporary art gallery owner? A networking fixer? A curator-for-hire? An incidental illustrator? An émigré lover of deserts and prairies? A back-country hiker? A five-time designer of desert homes? An art collector? An avid book reader? An eager consumer of excellent brews? A gourmet? A gourmand? A dreamer? A visionary?

I guess I am a little bit of everything, somewhat a multitasker. This explains why my days are so full since I came to America, 20 years ago—there is always a human connection to be made, there is always something to fix; there are endless trails to hike, new projects to initiate, piles of (mostly) non-fiction books to read, abundant tales to tell; there is so much great art to admire and such exotic cuisine to enjoy, yes, even in America... Some “occupations” can be handled in much appreciated solitude; others open up liaisons with admirable human beings, such as the 49 creative creatures I wrote about over the past two years. I know of a few who are waiting to be included; they have to wait a little longer because I need a break before I continue my Creative Creatures # 51 to # 100 (I have to deliver some different writings first). Others will have to wait forever because, whatever they may believe, I don’t think they belong amongst the ones I want to include. Ha! Serves them well...

A number of my occupations date back to my Dutch days. I continued them in America either shortly after my arrival or more recently. Other “jobs” (one year I counted 14 different doings and sources of income) were brand new and came with the area where I settled or with the friendships I built. I had never expected to spend days on end on a noisy, stinking tractor mowing, raking and baling hay in 100 degrees F, or to bottle-feed motherless calves. I never expected to design a house, let alone five of them. *Enfin*, not for a second have I regretted leaving dear old Holland and moving to the new world.

There are a few Dutch things I miss dearly, such as eating raw, young and “green” North Sea herring bought at a stall on a street corner, or devouring a 24-dish *rijsttafel* dinner in the great variety of Indonesian restaurants and *tokos*. American burgers form no substitute, but the all-available Mexican cuisine can be rather delicious and while learning to appreciate tequila all memories of Dutch *jenever* faded away. Dutch healthcare, and the low cost of it, will never cease to be remembered with respect and a feeling of envy, for its easy reach and uncomplicated system are something America cannot even dream of. Oh, also this: after 20 years of experiencing America I am convinced that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century a benign social-democracy combined with a constitutional monarchy, such as in the Netherlands or Denmark, is preferable to a republic under an elected President. After all, Americans *love* royalty; many an old or *nouveau riche* strives to marry their offspring off even to dubious noble title holders as long as it adds luster to their Vanity Fair money-aristocracy. Meanwhile, the time, energy, talent and money wasted during continuing, endless American election campaigns is truly unbelievable; it does not serve “democracy” at all because it only transports (multi)millionaires from one leading and manipulating position, mostly in business or law, to another influencing and manipulating battle station in a state house or in U.S. Congress, or beyond. In comparison the House of Windsor must cost the taxpayer much less than the White House—and offer more fun for the buck. America has plenty of promising dynasty queens already—I myself would prefer Caroline Kennedy over Miley Cyrus.

While living in the Netherlands I was never much of a soccer fan. Nowadays, give me soccer anytime, for there is “no getting away from (American) football. Americans are cursed with it. The quarterback is God, and to stand back there with the ball ... resting easily in your hand, your arm cocked and hell breaking loose all around you, is to know the real essence of the mythical American; a foolish game with no foundation in reality, and yet a childish faith that a man can be a good sport and a winner on the same day” (Hunter S. Thompson, *Gonzo Papers Vol. 3*). I fully agree. Sportsmen, ha! Pumped-up bullies in full body-armor and gladiator helmets who are screamed at through headsets by aggressive coaches to form piles of high-steroid flesh and execute nasty things to each other for 13 full seconds (thirteen!), then really need a rest to be able to drool at high-kicking plastic bimbos while half-listening to more advice—commands—coming from coaches... Now watch soccer: slim-built athletes dressed in thin tees and shorts who work, work, work 2 x 45 minutes and have to do it all themselves: deciding which tactics to apply, masterly controlling the ball, running continuously with no player change for relief--and with only 15 minutes of “tea break” at half time. Grandiose technicians and athletes these soccer-playing footballers are, magicians, elegant as tango dancers. 2014—the World Cup Soccer in Brazil...

Luckily not all American women are plastic. I can assure you that my delicious girlfriends Kate, Elisabeth, Mindy, Cindy, Laura, two Susans (neither of them lazy), one Sally, Julia, Elaine, Lisa and others including of course Iza, are certified originals. As are my buddies Risk, Caya, Anne and... **To be continued.**