

In Deo

Kees van de Wiel

(Cornelis Josephus Adrianus, Hermano Waldo)

By Lo Koeleman FIC



Kees was born on 23 September 1938 in Waalwijk, the Netherlands. He made his profession in FIC on 15 August 1959. On 23 October 2021 he died in the MUMC Hospital at Maastricht.

The two men who, after the death of Jesus, become confused, are a bit like Kees – who we are saying goodbye to now – and myself, who lived and worked together for more than sixty years, in Chile and here in Maastricht.

They've lost their way, those two. There are conflicting stories going around, making them uncertain. And they decide to walk off and find their own place.

Then a stranger crosses their path. He reassures them, explains, shows them that all will be

well. From two despondent, frightened people he turns them into happy and free persons.

That is what is remarkable about the life of Kees among us. And I also recognize my own path through life, close to him.

Kees was someone who never put himself forward. He was, as they say in Dutch, 'quiet waters with deep grounds', someone with hidden strengths and abilities.

When you got to know Kees a bit, you would discover he was a very socially committed person: he was always on the side of the poor, encouraged the young people he worked with, he got people to dance and sing. A true follower of our Founder Mgr. Louis Rutten. For more than sixty years, Kees was committed to people. In his very own special way, in silence, never putting himself forward.

He was born in Waalwijk after two sisters, and before his brother Henk whose death touched him very deeply, they were very close always. And whenever Kees went on leave, his family would have a warm welcome for him, in particular his sister Jeanne.

Henk and Kees went to school with the Brothers, and Kees was impressed with the way the Brothers lived. Those were people he'd want to join. So in 1952 he went to the training college of the FIC and Bro. Borgias Schrurs taught him to be a carpenter.

In an interview, Kees said: "Once when I was walking in the downstairs corridor of our mother house De Beyart, I met the General Superior Bro. Avellinus. He stopped me and said: "Bro. Ewald, I'm letting you go on a visit to your parents in Waalwijk. You may ask them if they agree to let you go and work outside the Netherlands for our fellow human beings." Then I found my parents were really pleased for me, that I had been chosen to go and do this.

For me it fit perfectly into my life as a Brother: to go and work for people who aren't doing well, stand by them, give them the feeling they are worthwhile as human beings.

For more than fifty years I've grabbed opportunities to give them this feeling in Chile. Not just in school with the young ones, but in living their rich culture and giving expression to their folklore and giving them concrete help in building a new existence. When, after weeks on a boat, Bro. Aurelius Gilsing and I set foot on Chilean ground in Valparaíso, I felt happy and free. A moment of great happiness!"

Kees' first task was the maintenance of our houses and schools. He made dozens of school desks and school slates (Dutch design of course) which made other schools jealous. Later on, he worked at the technical school in Santiago, where we and other brothers and lay people have been able to do a really good job. In between, Kees went back to the Netherlands to learn car and garage work, then he came back to teach our youngsters the work of car mechanics. Later still, he was appointed head of the technical group at our school.

On the occasion of a festivity, Kees organised a folk dance group with students, doing dances based on the rich traditions of Chile. This led to a big effort for Chilean culture, and Kees helped set up more than 35 dance groups in all of Chile, letting the public as well as the students really enjoy their own culture. It gave them a feeling of pride, something that strengthened their resilience as human beings.

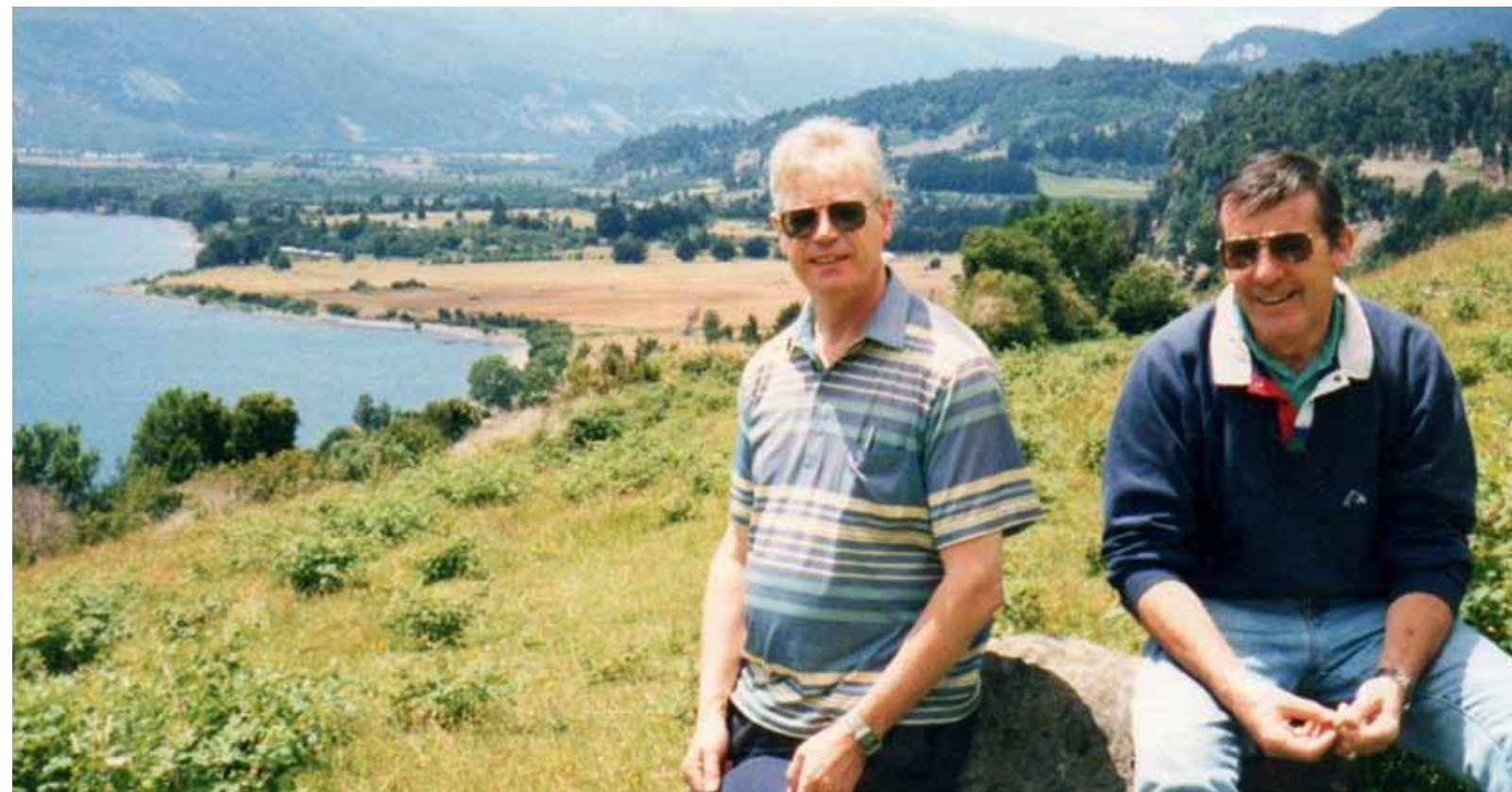
From 2001-2013 Kees worked on a number of projects which benefitted the native peoples of Chile. We were friendly with a Belgian member of the International Construction Order, Felix Rogiers. He led a carpenter's shop for young people and taught them to make furniture, so they could make a living.

Through Felix, Kees came into contact with poor fishing folk and together they taught those people to build their own houses, including bathroom facilities and electricity. Kees even, with his own hands, bit by bit welded together a steel water tower. He also worked on a project for farming folk in the mountains. He taught the women to grow earth worms, which produced humus that could be sold to avocado growers, another way of making a living.

These projects gave Kees a lot of satisfaction. When you saw him with the people, you saw a Brother who was using his talents for fellow humans with few chances in life. He created opportunities for them, and they in turn gave them freedom, peace, confidence.

Looking back at Kees' life, we see a man of much goodwill who used his capabilities in technical, construction and cultural fields to serve others. He has given many people in Chile a happier life.

Kees and Lo in Chile in the 1990s



It also gave them a sense of self respect, of being useful. It is a pity that often Kees had difficulties in communicating about that in his own circle; he often kept quiet about what he'd done for others. When you asked him about it and he felt you were really interested, he'd expand and talk about it, radiant and proud. Then you'd trigger the real Kees, a committed person.

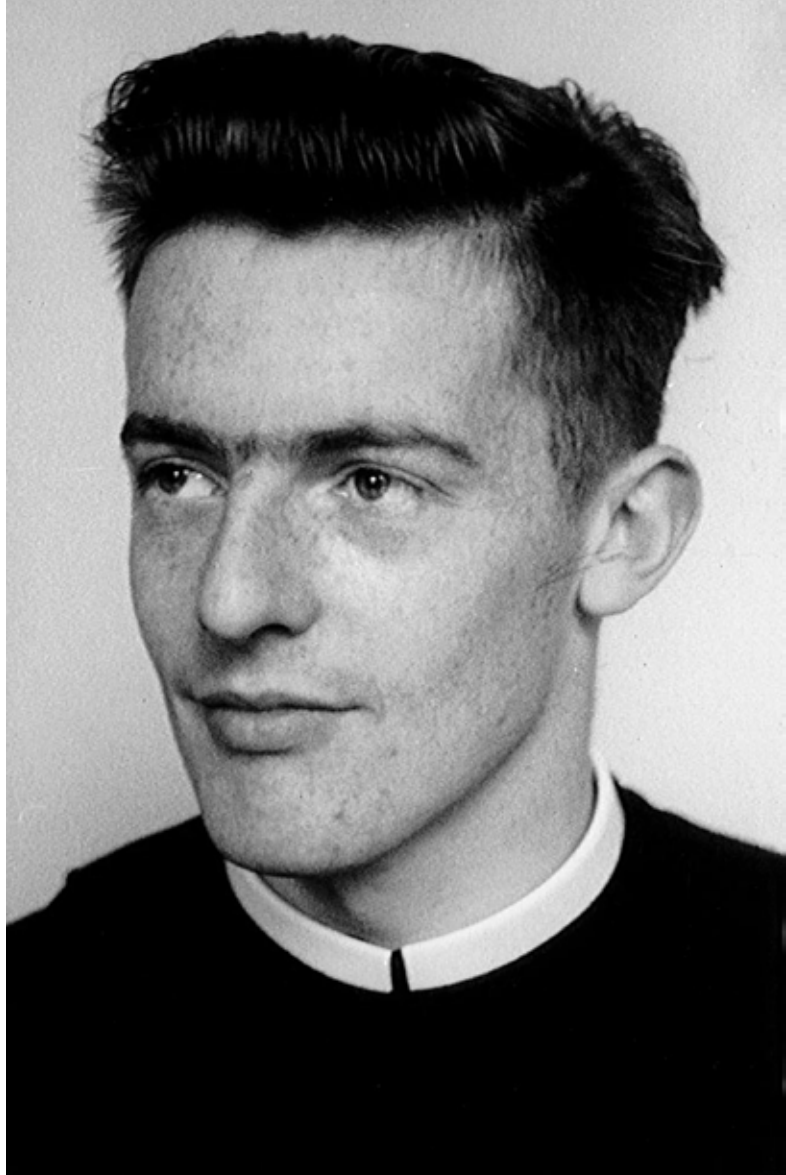
In the last six months, his health deteriorated a lot. It became necessary to take him to the hospital. He did not find it easy to accept his illness, but he was very grateful for the care and attention given him.

He died last Saturday 23 October, in his sleep. His family and fellow Brothers now say goodbye to a man who was ever loyal to his calling. Goodbye to an intensely good man, who was a bit clumsy in his way of communicating sometimes and had trouble making clear what really moved him: to be good and do good to fellow human beings in need.

As a fellow traveller to Kees I, and all of us, can ask ourselves whether he has had a happy life. My answer is, Yes, because he knew he was contributing to the happiness of others. I honestly feel that, in spite of his closed nature, we lose in him a man who deserves a place of honour in the hereafter.

Kees may now rest in peace.
He leaves a precious life.
We are very grateful to him for that.

an intensely good man



Above: Kees in 1961 as a young Brother. In 1962 he left for Chile, where he would live and work for more than fifty years.

Below: Kees in 2012 in Maastricht

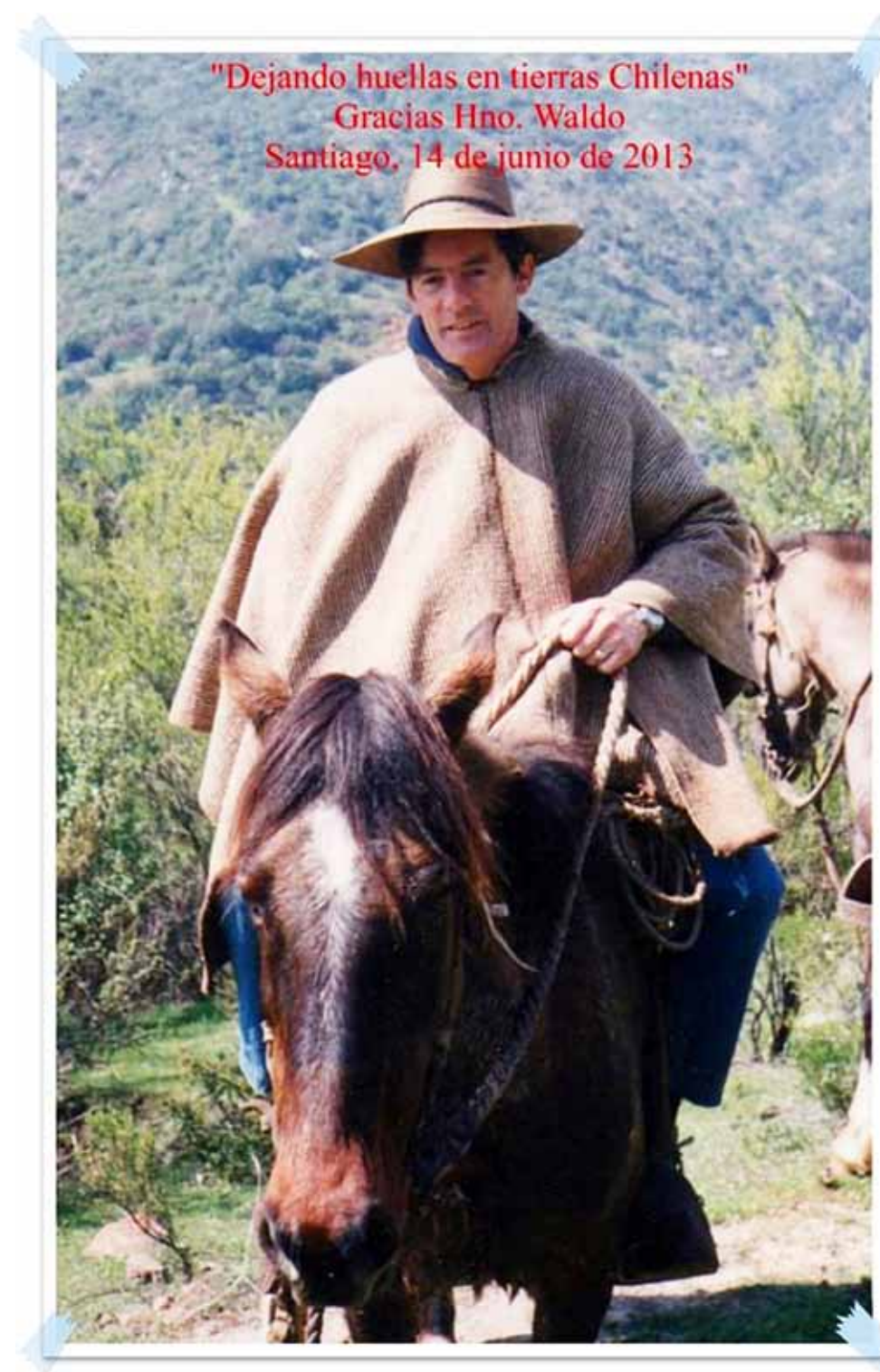


Smile *Amigosfic Chile*

"The land and people of beautiful Chile
I always carry deep in my heart with me."
That is what Waldo (Kees) once said.

Quiet hero, farewell!
Thank you for your testimony of love,
especially for the humble and the oppressed,
with your dedication, generosity, loyalty,
discipline and tenderness.

*"Your absence hurts
but your memory will always
make me smile."
(Edgar Jackson)*



Thanks for life

*I give thanks for life and all it has given me.
With my eyes when open, as I face my life,
I clearly distinguish between black and white;
And see that the night sky is all strewn with stars;
And find my beloved even in a crowd.*

*I give thanks for life and all it has given me.
The sounds of my voice and the gift of language
To utter the objects of thoughts and emotions:
Mother, friend and brother and light to illumine
The spiritual path of my well beloved.*

*I give thanks for life and all it has given me
From the lift of laughter to the depth of weeping
I can tell the difference between joy and grief
Opposite emotions that inform my song;
And the songs you sing which are the same song;*

And the songs of all which are also my song.

Violeta Parra,
<https://lyricstranslate.com//cidiaz71>

*Here a translation of parts
of Kees' favourite song,
Gracias a la Vida.
Also on these pages,
images from his
beloved Chile*



Above: Kees with people he'd helped to build greenhouses.

Below: with people from Colliguay he helped set up a regional museum.

Gé van Vugt: "Something Kees enjoyed was going up into the mountains, researching, meeting people. Kees worked with the people to help create jobs to make a living. I remember Kees didn't want them to know he was a religious Brother..."





At the technical school where Kees worked for many years as a teacher of car mechanics, they held a church service to commemorate him. The celebration took place in the patio he helped design. They also hung a commemorative plaque

Below, his former colleagues at the school



Above: Kees with his beloved folklore group he accompanied to show

Middle picture: Kees with fellow Brothers Patricio and Eko



Above: Kees in Maipú with the friends where Willy Diependaal found a home

Right: Kees with colleagues at the school

Below: Kees receiving a keepsake from the school director, one of his former students



Left: the technical school in Santiago helped the project for handicapped children in Buín