

Vision



“The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision” – Hellen Keller

I am born in Belgium, in the city of Gent on September 3rd 1970. My father Hugo’s 31st birthday (September 3 1939–December 4 2009). I was his first live born child. My dad told me “You were born in the dark of the night, and I could hardly wait for the sun to come up”.

My mom interrupted: It was very early in the morning when your dad carefully brought you to the window and shouted out “she can see!!!”. “How do YOU know that”, my mom asked him. “Because she is blinking her eyes!”, he replied, as the first rays of sunlight touched my face. He cried with relief and joy. My dad continued; “There was great concern that you would not be able to see or have defective vision.”

Many family members on my dad’s mother’s side are blind or have unusual eye defects. My dad had Microphthalmia, that means from before birth, his left eyeball was not developed and stayed abnormally small and was blind. His right eye was normal size but nearsighted, almost blind. My dad shared: “When I was 2 years old I went with my mom to get my first glasses. I was overjoyed that with the help of those glasses I could see just a little bit farther. Walking back home I was holding my mom’s hand while skipping and dancing!”

My father’s 4 year older disabled sister Caecilia (July 19 1936–2007) was born blind without eyeballs, a condition called Anophthalmia. Only her eyelids were present. Sometimes I asked her if she could open her eyes for me. Then she said:” Mieke, I have no eyes”, which I answered “ I know Sieske, but I meant your eyelids”. While she did her best to stretch her eyelids, I looked very curiously inward and saw that nothing was there, I only saw red tissue. This always fascinated me. Sies, or Sieske as we called her, had more disabilities and extraordinary abilities that I will mention in another episode.

Also my dad’s mom, Maria Jonckheere (May 14 1923–January 8 1998), had Microphthalmia. As a child people pointed at her eye defect. It must have ruined her self esteem! I remember my grandmother wearing a glass

prosthesis to cover up her small eyeball, she didn't want people to look at her eye. When staying overnight at my grandma's, there were 2 jars with liquid on her night stand, one holding her dentures and one holding her prosthetic eye.

My grandmother's brother Karel Jonckheere (Belgian Author*) has one son with Microphthalmia on both eyes (2 small undeveloped eyeballs, both blind). And a cousin of my father was born with this eye effect.

There were valid reasons for my parents to be concerned when I was born! I am very grateful for my perfect vision! I realize now that I not only see very well but also that my perception reaches beyond this dimension and into other worlds as well.

Being born in a family lineage with disabilities brought many valuable lessons and also many questions. Who am I? Where am I and what am I doing here? A quest I began shortly after birth.

* Karel Jonckheere (Ostend, 9 April 1906 – Rijmenam, 13 December 1993) was a Flemish writer. Karel Jonckheere was also a world traveler, he visited Cuba, Mexico, the United States, Congo, South Africa, India, Romania, the Balkans and many West-European countries. His journeys were a source of inspiration for his poems and novels.

2018 © Mieke Benton starshowerusa@startmail.com

(Sharing is permitted when my name and email is included)
(With a simple email let me know if you like to be added or removed from this list)



Mijn vader Hugo De Clercq
My dad Hugo De Clercq
Sept 3 1939 – December 4 2009

Mieke's Voice

- Week 1 – Introduction
- Week 2 – A Rough Start
- Week 3 – Vision