

Invisible Hand

My parents truly longed for a place of their own, a place to call home and raise their children, a domain with privacy to do what they wanted without the overseeing eye of my grandmother. With the help of family members and friends, they build their own beautiful home. We called it "Leiepark", after the street name. My mom was 6 months pregnant with my sister Kathleen and wanted to move in the house before the birth. We moved in around Easter 1973.

It was a great place to grow up. It was a cul-de-sac, no through traffic, many children our age all playing together on the street, till late at night. Behind our home were grass field pastures with cows and a pond. A perfect place for children and teenagers to grow up! My mom was usually very busy at the store and my dad accompanied her, or stayed at home with us kids and the animals. We had lots of animals. There were times it looked like an animal farm. We had a dog, a donkey, peacocks, sheep, goats, chickens, rabbits, birds and a cat. When my grandfather got older he lived with us at the house. He created a beautiful large vegetable garden in our large yard and created vegetable gardens for the neighbors as well. Many times we found him planting vegetables in the neighbors gardens in his underwear. When we commented on this he called them his shorts. He didn't care.

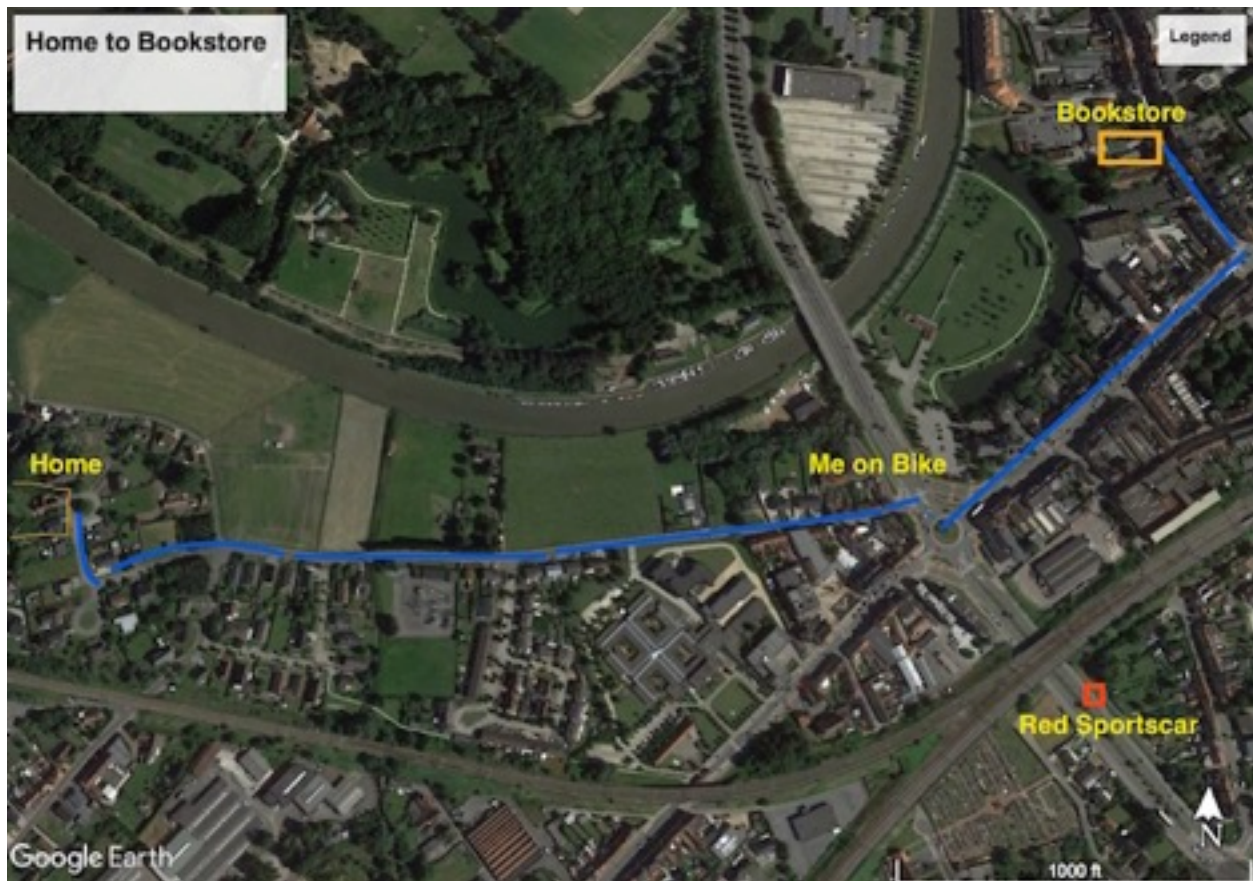
I loved the freedom I had of being able to ride my bike from our house to the store and back. This was about a 15 minute bike ride.

I will share what happened on one of those trips from home to the bookstore. It was a beautiful day, I took my bike out of the garage and headed to the book store. The Machelenstraat connected our street Leiepark with the major thoroughfare. There were no traffic lights in 1981. This would not be possible today. I was about to cross the 4 lane thoroughfare and was looking for cars coming from each direction. I had made this crossing safely many many times. I first looked to the left for upcoming traffic. I didn't see any cars coming my way and I peddled to the left turn lane and stopped. Then I looked for oncoming traffic from the right coming in my direction. In the far distance I saw a red car but decided it was still far away. I figured there was plenty of time for me to cross. I mounted the seat and started peddling. What I didn't realize as an eleven year old was that it was a red sports car approaching me at full speed. I was peddling and focused on where I was going and wasn't paying attention to the car anymore. Now I was in the middle of the two lanes with the sports car

approaching me at high speed. I had no idea. I wasn't prepared for what was to come next!

Suddenly, the breaks of my bike were engaging by themselves. All of a sudden and completely to my surprise my bike stopped. I almost flew over my handle bars. At the same moment the red sports car zoomed by about an inch in front of me. I heard the sound of a very fast car passing by. I found myself with feet solidly on the ground and my hands firmly holding the handle bars. I was completely baffled. I knew in that moment that some kind of invisible intervention had taken place. If it hadn't I would have been dead. I was still alive! Something happened beyond my comprehension. I remember speaking out loud. "Well, I am not supposed to be dead, there must be something important I have to do in life." I wondered what the reason was for this intervention. It made me quiet inside. What just happened?

A few seconds later I decided to mount my bike again and peddle. I wasn't sure if my breaks would still be engaged or not. They were not. I rode to the book store totally stunned by what just happened. I remember telling my mom, but she was busy with customers. How could she possibly comprehend this anyway? I didn't understand myself what just happened! I did realize that it was an extremely out of the ordinary experience. Somehow it wasn't my time to die!



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Mieke's Voice

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