



# Harry Toelstra

January 10, 1933 - April 28, 2022

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Queensbury - Harry Troelstra, 89, passed away peacefully at his home in Queensbury, NY, with his wife, Irene and family at his side. He is now reunited with his two siblings, older brother Barth (2022) and youngest brother Frank, who tragically passed away at the age of four.

Harry was born on January 10, 1933, in Ijlst, Netherlands – a small, picturesque town located in the northern province of Friesland. He was the second of seven children to the late Johannes and Grietje Troelstra. His father owned and operated an asphalt roofing factory, and his mother was a school teacher. His work ethic was forged during his early school years as he began working for his father in their factory, all while tending to his studies. A large portion of his childhood was influenced by the German occupation of Holland during World War II. Despite Hollands attempt to remain neutral, Germany invaded the country on May 10, 1940, and repressed the citizens of the country for over five years. During this time, resources were limited and life for the Dutch people was very difficult.

At the conclusion of the war, Harry attended high school and technical school in the neighboring town of Sneek, until 1951. He also proudly served in the Dutch Army from 1952-1954.

In 1956, at the age of twenty-three and newly married, Harry enrolled in a national work program allowing them to pursue new opportunities in the United States. Harry and his first wife, Ellen, emigrated to Massachusetts in the spring of 1956.

For the first several years, Harry worked as an apprentice on a dairy farm. After many lean years, Harry and his wife were able to purchase their own farm in New Jersey in 1960. Never resting on his laurels, Harry commenced a search for a farm in the Glens Falls

area. Claiming “He’ll never be kicked by a cow again,” Harry took on a new challenge and purchased Oudekerks Nursery and Garden Center on Dix Avenue in Glens Falls on April 8, 1967. Harry owned and operated Oudekerks until 1975. While continuing to operate Oudekerks, he simultaneously expanded the business by opening Garden Time, Inc. on Quaker Road. Over time, the Garden Center operations expanded from bedding plants and nursery stock to include house plants, gardening supplies, landscape materials, and full-service landscape and maintenance services. Today, Garden Time has evolved into one of the Northeast’s leading distributors of Amish built outdoor structures including storage sheds, gazebos, pool houses, pavilions, horse barns, cabins, garages, cupolas and outdoor furniture; with additional locations in Wilton and Clifton Park, NY.

Apart from a few years of technical school and military training Harry was mostly self-taught. Prior to starting up Oudekerks and Garden Time, he had no formal business experience to draw from other than operating dairy farms. After several years in the business, he became an accomplished and well-respected horticulturist, arborist, and landscape designer. His reputation for growing the finest quality bedding plants and hanging baskets propelled him. New clients often sought him out to create the latest landscape designs for a new residential or commercial project.

Harry found great pleasure in his work and found enjoyment by challenging himself to learn something new every day. He was a voracious reader of trade publications and was never too far behind the latest industry trends. He was always absorbing. He was a dreamer and visionary. Often his newest idea or inspiration was originated on the back of a napkin or placemat during a family gathering. Inspired by his farming background and love for antiques, he designed and created a one-of-a-kind restaurant and gift shop, The Silo in Queensbury, NY. He tirelessly scoured the local countryside looking for just the right structures to repurpose. An actual silo was transported from a remote part of Saratoga County and the barn was built with reclaimed barn wood to create a unique country ambiance in the heart of Queensbury. The Silo was born in 1982 and has become a treasured upstate New York destination and one of Harry’s proudest accomplishments.

Aside from work, Harry did enjoy some hobbies. In his younger days he was an active tennis player at the former Racquet Club in Queensbury, and he was one of the original members of the Miller Rec Bowling League. In his youth, before emigrating to the United States, he and his oldest brother competed in the annual Elfstedentocht - an iconic skating race held in his native country of the Netherlands. This premier skating event measures about 135 miles and takes place on the canals that connect 11 cities in his native province of Friesland.

Harry and Irene enjoyed traveling together and with family and close friends. They frequented Europe as often as they could to visit family. They also enjoyed trips to New Zealand, Alaska, Croatia, several national parks, Florida, California, and Las Vegas just to name a few. Harry also enjoyed boating on Lake George and sailing excursions through the canals of Holland with his brothers. His other interests included carpentry, masonry and taking cuttings of his favorite plants. In his later years, he enjoyed watching tennis tournaments.

Harry was extremely proud of his parents who recently were posthumously bestowed the Yad Vashem Award – one of the highest honors from the Israeli government. Yad Vashem is a research center and memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust. Through Yad Vashem, the State of Israel honors non-Jewish men and women who have rescued Jews, often at the risk of their own lives and families. Harry's parents and family were recognized and nominated for the award by the family of Truus Querbach (pronounced Auerbach) Prince. Truus and several other families were ultimately spared persecution by the Nazi party during WWII as a direct result of the actions taken by Harry's parents Johannes and Grietje. The Yad Vashem Award was presented in February 2022 by the Ambassador of Israel to Harry's family in Sneek, Netherlands. Despite Harry's failing health, he was so grateful to be able to watch the ceremony remotely by video. The event really lifted his spirits at the time.

Left to cherish Harry's memory include his loving wife of 29 years, Irene, his former spouse, Ellen, and their four sons: Frank (Becky) of Queensbury, Frederick (Denise) of Queensbury, Eric of Queensbury, James (Laura) of Queensbury; his ten grandchildren Benjamin and Amy (Frank and Becky), Anneke and Johanna (Fred and Denise), Emily, Jacob and Amanda (Eric and Henriette), Adam, Justin and Nicholas (Jim and Laura); three great grandchildren Willem and Elsalina (Lodewiek and Amy) of Glens Falls, Jackson (Kevin and Emily) of Virginia; his brothers Max (The Netherlands), Theo (Germany); his two sisters Mea (The Netherlands), Christine (Spain), and many nieces and nephews. He was predeceased by his parents Johannes Bartholdi Troelstra and Grietje Wierda Troelstra, brothers Barth (The Netherlands) and Frank (The Netherlands). The family wishes to extend their sincere gratitude to:

Dr. David Sugarbaker and the staff at Brigham and Women's Hospital

Dr. Michael Adams

The doctors, nurses and staff at Glens Falls Hospital and Hudson Headwaters

Drs. Josh and Michelle Antiles

Dr. Brian McDermott

The staff at Sunnyview Rehabilitation Hospital

Sean Campanie, N.P., Hudson Headwaters Homeward Bound

The caregivers at Here For Your Loved Ones Home Care Services

The staff at High Peaks Hospice

The staff at SAIL (Southern Adirondack Independent Living)

The numerous loyal employees and patrons of Garden Time and the Silo.

Calling hours are scheduled from 3:00 to 6:00 pm on Monday, May 2, 2022 at the Singleton Sullivan Potter Funeral Home, 407 Bay Road, Queensbury.

Funeral services will be private and at the convenience of the family.

# Previous Events

## Calling Hour

MAY 2. 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Singleton Sullivan Potter Funeral Home

407 Bay Road

Queensbury, NY 12804

[info@sbfuneralhome.com](mailto:info@sbfuneralhome.com)

<https://sbfuneralhome.com>

# Tribute Wall

TL

“ I can honestly say I would not be where I am today without Harry’s presence in my life. As a 15 year old kid Harry hired me and worked me hard. I weeded, I lifted I mixed dirt and I learned. He instilled in me a work ethic but more importantly taught me business. After I graduated from college and moved on to IBM to an amazing global career - it was Harry’s work ethic and knack for learning that was my North Star. When he showed up at my Dads wake in 2015 it touched me. I am forever grateful for his presence in my life. My condolences to his family and friends who knew him and learned from him.  
He grew more than plants. Thank you Harry for a life well done!

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**Tom Linton** - May 02 at 09:16 PM

JB

“ Our condolences to Harry’s family.  
Thanks for your hard work and vision to create great businesses. Have many memories visiting them. Rest In Peace

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**Jim Blau** - May 02 at 01:05 PM