

We can only imagine...



GRETA ALLEN

We can only imagine the mixed feelings of joy and fear which Rebecca and Abraham Matteman experienced on the birth of their baby daughter, Greta, a sister for their 4-year-old Vera. It was May 1942 in Holland and Jews were desperately seeking hiding places, to avoid being sent to Nazi death camps. In any hiding place, a baby's cries would put the whole family at risk. Rebecca and Abraham made the heart-breaking decision to give baby Greta to a non-Jewish family, in the hope that they would all survive. Only Greta did.

When she was 7 months old, they gave her to Filippus and Anna Juch, who loved her as their own. When their neighbour was arrested by the Gestapo, the Juchs feared that, under torture, he might reveal that Greta was Jewish. They sent her to Jacqueline Reinink, a widow, with 7 children of her own. When she became ill, she gave Greta to Francis and Lewis van der Meulen and she quickly became their loved 5th child. Here Greta stayed till the end of the war.

In 1946, Greta came to Australia to become part of a 5th family, that of her uncle, Appie van Rooijen and his wife, Joyce. It would take until she was an adult to piece together the story of her childhood and to understand the courage and sacrifice of the Juch, Reinink and van der Meulen families.

*Courage to care*