

Courier News (Bridgewater, NJ)

April 13, 2005

Community people

Author: Millicent K. Brody

Explorations of Holland

Middlesex native pens book on one of his favorite faraway places

Marc Resch has deep roots in Middlesex County, but his love for traveling has taken him to many faraway lands. A part-time historian and business consultant, Resch recently penned a book on one of his favorite spots, Holland.

"I had no idea I'd be writing 'Only in Holland, Only the Dutch,'" he said. "It all came about because of an intense desire to live and work in a European country for at least a year. My goal was to see if I could adapt and assimilate to a different kind of culture in entirely new surroundings. When the opportunity arose to work in Amsterdam, I jumped at the chance. Armed with a suitcase and a briefcase, I looked forward to the challenge."

After picking up a local newspaper and checking with some friends, Resch found an apartment in the heart of Dam Square. "My first intention was to learn the language," Resch said. "I soon found out it was easier to speak English, for the Dutch apparently adapt to many different tongues."

"Going Dutch" wasn't just a catch phrase for the local author, but a way of life. As the dollar was strong and the Euro was weak, he recalled, "I lived like a king. I shopped in the local markets, drank beer and coffee with the locals in the numerous cafes, went to local football games and became as much Dutch as I possibly could."

According to Resch, Holland offers something for everyone. From its enthralling culture, art, tumultuous history, charm and inimitable permissiveness, the book takes an intelligent and often times humorous look into the many unique characteristics and even idiosyncrasies of Holland.

Resch examines such Dutch traits as the reliance on bicycles instead of cars in his book. For instance, bicycles are so prevalent in Dutch society that one cannot walk more than a couple of steps without seeing one locked-up to a lamp post or other stationary fixture. "There are approximately 550,000 bicycles in Amsterdam alone," he claimed, "and 10,000 are in the canals. Once the bicycle has lost its use, it simply gets rolled right into the water."

"Bicycling is a way of life," he continued. "It is quite common to see a cyclist smoking a cigarette, talking on a cell phone and holding an umbrella, while traversing through town," Resch continued.

Regarding political incorrectness, if you ask a Dutch person a question, such as 'How do

you like my haircut?' Be prepared for an honest answer, which might not be pleasant. According to "Only in Holland, Only the Dutch," Dutch people are not ashamed to bluntly tell you that they don't like your tie, or your haircut or your clothing," he said.

"I've also discovered, when in Amsterdam, it is actually the norm for people with birthdays to buy or bake their own birthday cake, and to invite people over to help them celebrate," Resch added. "I am also amazed at their openness towards public nudity, their penchant for tolerance of just about everything, their consensus building decision-making process, and their legendary reputation for frugality. It is indeed refreshing to be in the company of the Dutch."

How strange, he reiterates to go out for dinner in America, and expect your guest to pay for their meal. Not so in Holland. Although a gentleman or lady might buy her friend a small gift or flower, when the check comes, it is split evenly.

Although useful to visitors, this is not just another travel guide. "Only in Holland, Only the Dutch" takes a behind-the-scenes look at Holland and its people. It offers an interesting perspective on the many intricacies and fascinating facets of the Dutch culture. A refreshing change from the numerous travel guides that populate the shelves of the major bookstores, the book is for anyone with an interest in cultures throughout the world, especially unique ones.

Readers also will gain insight into the entire region in which we live. Parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware were once called Nieuw Nederland. In fact, Manhattan was once called Nieuw Amsterdam. The impact of the early Dutch settlers is still evident in the region with Anglicized versions of original Dutch names that include Harlem (Haarlem), Brooklyn (Bruekelen), Hoboken (Hoboken), Wall Street (Vaal Straat), Sandy Hook (Sant Hoek), Staten Island (Staaten Eylandt) and the Catskills (Kaatskill). The New York Knicks derived their name from the early Dutch settlers to the New York metropolitan area.

Even more interesting, is the fact that world reports have consistently ranked the Netherlands as possessing one of the best qualities of life in the world.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION:

WHAT: "Only in Holland, Only the Dutch" by Marc Resch

FYI: An in-depth look at the culture of Holland and its people.

INFO: Cost is \$22. Available online at www.onlyinholland.com.