Good morning.

As you have noticed, the music today is jazz, the music that Siem loved.   
The speakers this morning are four: myself, then Rob, followed by two of Siem's good friends, Frans Roos and Hans Roukens.

My first plan for this talk was to tell the story of Siem's life, because I think that a person's life story should be told at his funeral, but when I started to compose it, I felt that it would be too long and just a list of facts, and that I wouldn't be able to say all I wanted to say this morning. So I wrote the story down in the form of an obituary and printed it out and I hope that you will read it. That leaves me free this morning to speak about some important things that didn't find their way into the written story.

In his obituary I wrote about his childhood but there was no room to mention an important person -- nameless to me forevermore -- who did something that was of great influence in Siem's life. This teacher -- it must have been in the third or fourth grade -- wrote on his report card "could become a professor." From the moment that his parents read this, they were prepared to do everything they could to make sure that their eldest son got a good education.  
 But these four words were thrown back at Siem in the arguments that he had with his father when he got bad grades in high school and was about to fail a whole year, because (I'm quoting his father here) he preferred to hang out with his korfball friends instead of doing his homework. And later too when he was a student at Delft, and went home to Rotterdam every night by train to eat his mother's home cooking and go out with his friends (I'm quoting his father again) rather than studying. When he failed his exams and was drafted into the army, it was hurtful to his father who had organized a scholarship for him through his employer, thinking always of those words "could become a professor." Words that continued to reverberate in his life.

In his final year at that same elementary school there was another teacher who had a tremendous influence. This was the man who stayed after school every day to give Siem extra lessons -- because the curriculum there did not extend to preparing children for the entrance test to the HBS (college prep secondary school). And Siem was the first child from that elementary school ever to pass that test.

His obituary records that he joined a korfball club where he made lasting friendships, but doesn't tell why he chose to play korfball instead of one of the other sports that he liked. The reason was simply that he wanted to meet girls. He had no sisters to bring friends home, and there was not a single girl in his high school class (as you may have noticed on the picture). And at the University of Delft there were only two girls in his year. So he decided to play korfball where a team consists of six boys and six girls. And it was there that he indeed found his first girl friends.

His obituary tells of his military service but not how difficult a time this was for Siem. I never understood why he chose to sign up for the Cavalry. He had no interest in horseback riding and certainly no interest in the elite society that filled the ranks of officers there. He dreaded having to enter the officers' social room, and soon learned not to mention that his father was a factory foreman or that his family read a socialist newspaper. It was torture to him when we had to attend a cocktail party at the home of the Count van Tuil van Seroskerken, or an elaborate banquet with full dress uniforms. It was an immense relief to Siem when his four years were over and he could leave the military.

Siem was much happier when he went to work at the Esso refinery. Of course he did not completely fit into the ranks of management there, because he always stood up for the welfare of the employees. More than once his boss told him it was about time for him to buckle down and "choose the right side" when it came to labor conflicts. But at Esso he found good friends that he has always remained in contact with, and some of them are here today.

Our company Broekhuis Training is of course mentioned in the obituary, but I want to tell you something about how Siem felt about his employees. They were young people, often the age of our children, and the whole staff was for Siem a kind of extended family. He knew everything about each employee, even our freelance teachers: where they came from, what kind of schooling they had, their family circumstances. When his assistant Nancy was due to have her first baby, we were all at pins and needles, until at a given moment the office girls burst into our room shouting "You're Opa and Oma!" Siem dropped everything to go and see Nancy and her baby as soon as possible. She was one of the first but not the last, and so I got to hold lots of new little babies in my arms before I actually became a grandmother myself.

Something else that doesn't emerge from the written story is what a good team Siem and I formed together -- at least I thought so. He was a person who always knew what he wanted. He could make decisions quickly and then stick to them. He always said that when he saw me on the SS Nieuw Amsterdam, he knew right away that he wanted to marry me -- and it happened. But me, I was someone who could never make a decision and was very glad to have a man to do it for me. This was the way it went all our lives -- until, of course, he got Alzheimer's.

And this brings me to perhaps the most important thing that does not sufficiently emerge from the written story and that is the pain that we suffered because of his illness -- not only me, but also his children and his grandchildren and his friends. We had to stand by and try to make the best of things while Siem left us gradually. I'm not going to go into detail here about the progress of his illness. It was long, it was sometimes hard. If anyone wants to talk to me about it -- for instance if you encounter this illness in your own family -- I will be very glad to talk to you, anytime.

What I do want to say here is how thankful I am for the help I have had from family and friends. From family of course -- many were often far away but I always, always felt their love and support. And from all those good friends who helped us in so many ways. His brother Jos who visited him every Friday in the Meeuwenhof to give me a day off, his brother Jan who could suddenly appear with Elly on Sunday afternoons. Harry Jonckheere, who took Siem along to Mercy Ships where the two of them did the finances, even after Siem could no longer do it and Harry had to redo everything. And Frans Roos, who took Siem for rides in his camper, which Siem loved, so that I had time to do some rare shopping. And most of all my dear friend Coccy Roos, who is always willing to hear my story, however painful, and who has stood by me in so many ways that it is impossible to mention them all. And so many others -- I see you all sitting out there. I was thankful for every visit, for every phone call or email; you gave me the strength to carry on.

Those of you who have visited Siem in the Meeuwenhof know that he was a gentle soul, who looked at everyone with friendly interest and who could suddenly burst out in a big smile that never failed to warm my heart. As long as his smile continued to appear I felt that he was contented -- I hope I was right -- and I wanted to keep him with me as long as possible. Last Sunday I had to let him go.

These past couple days I have been busy with Rob and Frits and with Amy in America, looking through the photo books of the last 50 years and choosing pictures of Siem for the presentation that you are watching this morning. It has done me good to see all these pictures of him as he used to be and of our life together. It has helped to bring the old Siem -- the love of my life -- back to me.