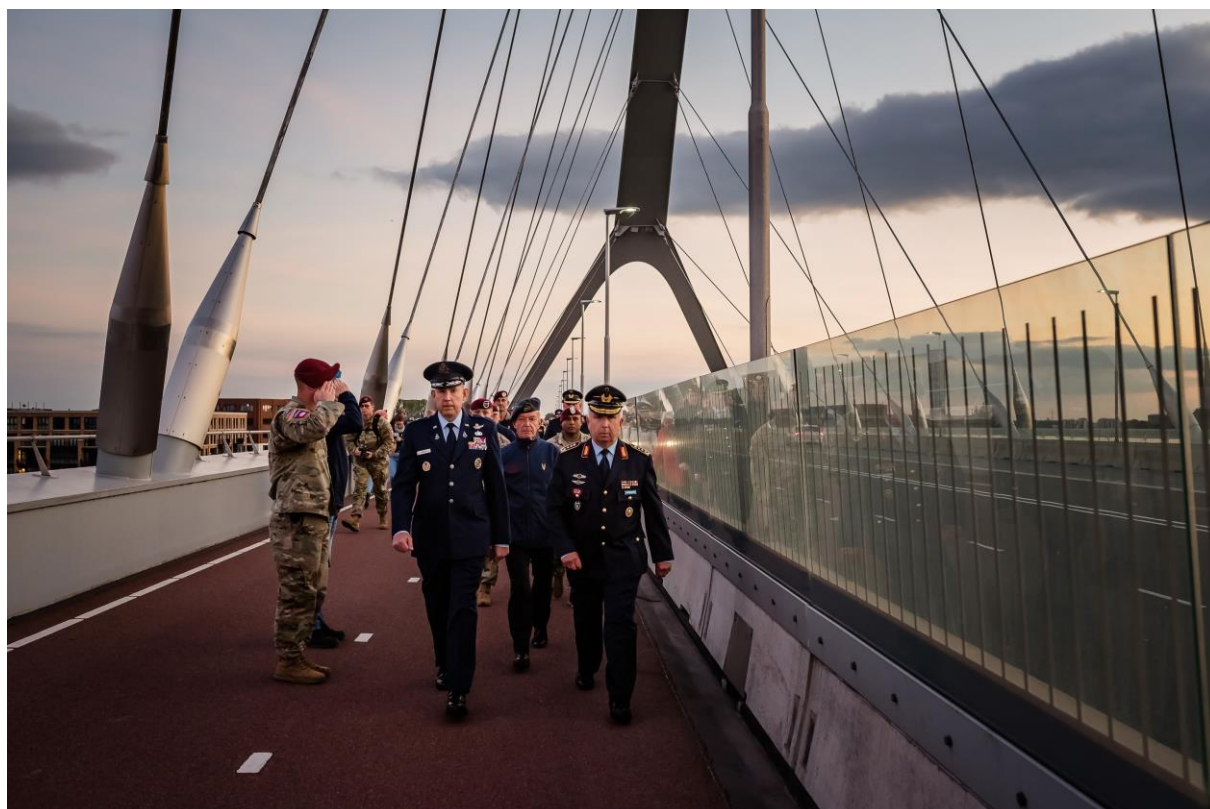


SUNSET MARCH

2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Sunset Marches #2267 up and including #2631



Acknowledgements

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A German and an American
general walk the Sunset March
together during the 77th
Commemoration of the 1944
Waal Crossing on 20
September.

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Sunset March connects

On 24 January 2021 Team31 members Jorg Elfrink and Denise Caspers (US) walked the Sunset March together, as they did before. How great a surprise it was for Denise when at the end of the march Jorg knelt on one knee and proposed to her.



The couple met for the first time when the two of them worked at the COAC in Uedem (Germany) in 2008. The two veterans joined the Sunset March later. The new couple will marry in law in The Netherlands in the first quarter of this year. On 7 May 2022 the marriage will be ecclesiastically blessed in Meire Grove (Minnesota, USA), Denise's native village.



(Photography: Jorg Elfrink)

1. Introduction

Just like 2020, the year 2021 was influenced by the Covid-19 virus. Many scheduled events had to be cancelled or could only be carried out in an adapted form. However, a sufficient number of interesting facts about the Sunset March can still be reported here. It stands to reason that also in 2021 a minimum of one veteran walked the Sunset March on any one day, in spite of the Covid pandemic; the Sunset Marches #2267 up to and including #2631.

This year the Board has thought it wise to advise any possible "followers" against marching along with the Veteran of the Day during the various lockdown periods. This was the reason why also this year a lot less people were able to experience the Sunset March together than usual.

Obviously, the decision to advise "followers" against joining the march was taken very reluctantly. Usually, interested people can spontaneously join the Sunset March and walk along with the marchers by way of tribute. This possibility is a very special and important aspect.

2. President's Report

The first Sunset March was walked in October 2014. It was number #2631 on New Year's Eve 2021. Over a seven years' period the Sunset March evolved from a modest initiative into a resounding success and a Nijmegen tradition at the same time. The publication of a book and the status of Intangible Heritage which was granted to the Project clearly evidence all this, but especially the fact that every day a veteran was willing and prepared to walk the Sunset March across the Oversteek Bridge (Bridge of the Crossing).

This is the right time to thank all people from the very beginning for their dedication and the load of work they carried out.

As the president and first person of the Board I hereby hand over my duties to a successor. In February he will take over the baton after having been running for some time as the vice president. It is with slight melancholy, but at the same time especially very proudly, I now look back on seven years of Sunset March. I would like to thank my co-members of the Board and all those veterans for their trust and faith to create something very special: The "Sunset March".

Tim Ruijling.

3. What is Sunset March?

Creation

Sunset March was an initiative made by a number of veterans from the Overbetuwe region in The Netherlands (website: veteranenoverbetuwe.nl). During a regular Veterans Overbetuwe meeting on 20 September 2014 the plan was conceived to see whether it would be possible to utilise the Lights Crossing "light monument" on the new city bridge "De Oversteek" in Nijmegen to realize a "living" and daily tribute to our allied liberators.

This initiative is meant to commemorate the great sacrifice the American soldiers brought here for our freedom while they were far from home. It also aims at building a visible bridge to all veterans who contributed and still contribute to peace and security in missions across the whole world.

This idea was widely welcomed right from the start and soon after the website required for this activity was launched and made operational, the first Sunset March was walked on Sunday 19 October 2014.

The five initiators "of the first hour" are: Henk Hanenburg, Wim van Mierlo, Douwe Osinga, Tim Ruijling and Dirk-Jan van Zuidam. The Foundation Board was enlarged with Kees Bleijerveld, George de Jongh, René Scheeres and Wim van Zijl. As a last member it was Peter Grotens who joined the Board as Vice President.

Since 11 November 2015 Sunset March has been a foundation with the cultural ANBI status (which means that it is a charitable institution).

How does it work?

Since 19 October Sunset March 2014 has been a daily tribute to the allied soldiers who fought for the freedom of the Netherlands. In Nijmegen a new city bridge was built, called De Oversteek. (The Crossing). The bridge is situated very close to the section of the river Waal where the soldiers of the US 82nd Airborne Division crossed this river to the north bank on 29 September 1944. This action is considered to be one of the most heroic ones of World War II and owes its fame partly to the well-known war movie "A Bridge Too Far"

During this so-called Waal Crossing 48 American soldiers were killed. On the Oversteek bridge Atelier Veldwerk realised a light monument, called "Lights Crossing²"

This light monument on the new bridge is very special. On the bridge there are 48 pairs of lamp posts, one pair per American soldier killed. Around sunset the lamp posts are lit, pair by pair after the other at walking pace. Lighting them all takes nearly 12 minutes. The first pair that is lit is located under the southern arcade of the bridge, the upturned letter V. Every evening at sunset a veteran walks the Sunset March across the bridge from the south side of the river to the north side.

When the first pair of lamp posts is illuminated, the veteran starts walking at the pace with which the lamps are lit one by one. When the other side of the Waal is reached, he will stop at the "De Oversteek" Waal Crossing Monument and pays tribute. It is very special that very often school classes, groups of friends or interested citizens or veterans walk across De Oversteek bridge along with the "Veteran of the Day". Authorities and administrators of national veteran organisations also regularly walk the Sunset March. On special occasions and remembrance days the Sunset March is very often walked with large groups of interested people and participants. A horn blower then blows the Last Post and flowers and wreaths are laid. Special recurring events during the year are: 22 February for a German delegation including number of international soldiers of a NATO unit, 4 and 5 May (Remembrance Day and Liberation Day), the Four Day Marches Week, 20 September, 19 October (Sunset March Anniversary) and 11

November (International Veterans Day/Remembrance Day). Veterans who have been registered as "Veteran of the Day" receive a unique numbered certificate after their first Sunset March. Only one veteran can be "Veteran of the Day" on any one day and only one numbered certificate is issued on any one day, even though more veterans march the bridge on that day.

Multimedia

On the Sunset March website (www.sunsetmarch.nl) veterans can enrol to walk the Sunset March. In addition, on the website a large number of interesting things can be found, such as: objective and working method, register of veteran walkers, foundation details, walkers' experiences, photographs and videos. Sunset March is also present on Facebook. The Facebook page is used for announcements, impressions and reactions about (special) Sunset Marches. On LinkedIn you can find the Sunset March group where LinkedIn members can sign up.

Board and Team31

The Board is composed of 10 members, 5 of which are the "Founding Fathers" and the 3 members of the Daily Management. In the past year the intended president of the Sunset March Foundation, Peter Grotens, joined the board (Picture 2 and Picture 4) and was instructed. During that period he performed the job of vice president. On 22 February 2022 he will become the new president. The board takes care of coordination, planning and managing all activities. Since the beginning of 2021 there has been a special officer charged with the daily coordination, Henk van Deelen. Henk is a member of Team31. The Board also monitors the basic principles of the Sunset March. In case on a given day a report of a veteran does not appear via the website, a reserve from the Board or Team31 walks the Sunset March.

Team31 is a group of veterans who are willing and prepared to regularly act as Veteran of the Day. This group of "regular marchers" is very essential for the daily activities. At this moment there is a waiting list for those people wanting to join and become a member of Team31. The names of the members of Team 31 can be found on the website. As special members the names of an American, a German, a French and a Norwegian marcher figure on that list.

During the lockdown periods, on account of Covid-19, the Oversteek bridge was crossed as much as possible without "followers". In those periods an additional call was made again on the Team31 members. They were asked to act as much as would be possible as Veteran of the Day, as experienced and loyal marchers. On 19 December a fifth lockdown period started which continues into 2022. Team31 is fully committed and has made an excellent job. This Covid year they have played a crucial role.

By tradition a Team31 Day takes place in Fletcher Hotel Erica in Berg en Dal, near Nijmegen on the third Saturday of January. On that day all people directly involved in the Sunset March can meet each other (again) in an informal setting. On account of the Covid-19 pandemic this annual meeting had to be cancelled unfortunately last year. As soon as it will be allowed, this Team31 Day will be planned and carried out.

4. Veterans who acted as "Veteran of the Day" in 2021

From 1 January up to and including 31 December 72 new veterans signed up as "Veteran of the Day". Every veteran who walks the Sunset March for the first time receives a unique certificate. It bears a unique number, his or her name, the date of his or her Sunset March and the sunset time.

It is sent by mail. On the website the names of all Sunset Marchers are stated in a separate register together with their nationalities.

In January 2021 the first "new" veteran of the year walked the Sunset March and received a certificate with the number 582. On 29 December the last "new veteran" of the year 2021 marched the bridge and received certificate number 654. All this contributed to an increase in the total number of walkers which was 18% in 2020 to 20% in 2021. During the total lifespan of the Sunset March (2631 days on 31 December 2021) 654 certificates were issued, which means that nearly 25% of the veterans of the day is someone who walks the march for the first time as such. That the percentage was somewhat lower in the past few years can be ascribed to the disincentive policy that was pursued during the lockdown periods.

5. Oosterhoutsedijk Construction Works

On the Oosterhoutsedijk (dike), close to the Oversteek (Crossing), you will see the Waal Crossing Monument, where, by way of final step in the Sunset March the salute is usually made, dike reinforcement work on the Oosterhoutsedijk was started after the end of the summer. The work is expected to be continued until the end of 2022.

During that period the dike will be closed to the public and the stairs to the dike will be closed by a fence (Photo 11). In consultation with the works superintendent the Veteran of the Day will be granted the possibility to open the fence and will be able to make the salute near the monument as usual.

It stands to reason that the work is an obstacle and that extensive ceremonies near the monument are hindered or restricted by the construction work. However, the additional effect of the work is that the regular and repeated nuisance caused by youngsters, who parked their vehicles near the monument and who were sometimes disturbingly present and left rubbish behind, have to take their "activities" elsewhere.

6. 2021 Activities

Board Meetings

In the past year the General Board met 3 times. These meetings were held on the Saturdays 10 April, 28 August and 4 December. All meetings took place at our sponsor's location Dirksen Opleidingen at Elst, under full satisfaction and in full compliance with the Covid-regulations.

The Daily Management, extended by the presence of the vice-president, met twice during the past year.

Cooperation

The Sunset March activities were again supported by a large number of institutions and organisations this year.

Existing partnerships were continued and perpetuated, others were revived. Thanks to gifts, sponsoring and donations all planned activities could again be carried out this year. Of course, we extend our gratitude to our valued sponsors and partners and obviously we hope for a continuation of this relation.

Our sponsors and partners are:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| > Veterans Institute | > Friendship Albany Nijmegen Foundation |
| > Pro-Intell Security Solutions | > Fletcher Hotels Berg en Dal |
| > Dirksen Education | > BAM Infra |
| > Jaleesa Derksen Photography | > Engineering Corps Veterans Regiment Association |
| > VFund | > 11e Airborne Mobile Brigade |
| > 4Day Marches Foundation | > 82nd Airborne Division |
| > Liberation Route Europe | > Honorary Consul in Cleves Germany |
| > Armed Forces Military Music | > And many departments of Nijmegen Municipality |
| > Kersten Retail Elst | |
| > VSI | |
| > Veldwerk Studio | |

Special Sunset Marches/dates

In spite of the Covid-19 epidemic, 365 Sunset Marches were walked. There was a March every day, in all wind and weather conditions.

There were some longer periods, of which one is still going on, without "followers". There were still a number of memorable Sunset Marches - some of which were held in a moderated form, which are well worth mentioning:

- ✓ 24 January: proposal for marriage between two Team31 members (see article in the box on page 2)
- ✓ As is customary every year, a delegation of the Radboud University walked the Sunset March on 11 April together with Daniël Wigboldus, the Radboud University's College President and marched it in dignity. On 11 April the day on which the university was closed in 1943 is commemorated.
- ✓ 30 April. On this date Francis Keefe died (see the book Sunset March, Bridge between Present and War Past), one of the last Waal Crossers alive.
- ✓ Condoleances were expressed.
- ✓ 4 May. On account of Covid-19 a very restricted commemoration ceremony was held near the Monument (Photo 1).



*Photo 1: 4 May 2021: restricted commemoration ceremony at the Oosterhoutsedijk.
(Photography: Bosje - Trots op Nijmegen)*

- ✓ 4 May: The President and The Vice President were present at the commemoration ceremony at the Dutch Consulate in Cleves (D) (Photos Photo 2 and Photo 3).



Photo 2: 4 May 2021: President Tim Ruijling (right) and Vice President Peter Grotens (left) place a wreath in the name of the Sunset March and make a salute at the Dutch Consulate in Cleves (D) during the Commemoration of the war victims. (Photography: José de Baan)



Photo 3: 4 May 2021: A wreath is placed at the Dutch Consulate in Cleves (D) in memory of the World War II War Victims. (Photography: José de Baan)

- ✓ On 14 May a detachment of the Veteranen Regiment Genietroepen (Engineering Corps Veterans Regiment) walked the Sunset March. At the end a donation to Sunset March was made (Photo 4).



Photo 4: 14 May 2021: Wim van Mierlo (in the middle) takes delivery of a cheque presented by the vice president of the Engineering Corps Regiment Association Gerrit Beerkens in the name of the Sunset March Board, in the presence of President to be Peter Groten

- ✓ On 21 June a delegation of the Humanist Spiritual Counseling Defence Department marched the Oversteek Bridge. On 21 June (longest day) World Humanist Day is celebrated. On that day humanists celebrate the values and ideals of humanism worldwide. One of the key values in humanism is freedom.
- ✓ On 11 July the annual Dutchbat commemoration during the Sunset March took place with many participants and was widely attended, as usual.
- ✓ 19 July. As is usual on the Monday evening preceding the Four-Day Marches in Nijmegen a large international detachment walks the Sunset March. Since the Four-Day Marches were cancelled this year for the second time in succession, a delegation of the Board joined the March on the invitation of the Four-Day Marches organisation together with a small group of other invited persons in order to uphold the tradition of this special Monday evening event.
- ✓ 1 August. Regular "associate" of the Sunset March, former navy man Theo Langeveldt, walked his 500th Sunset March. He was accompanied by a Board delegation and received a modest token of appreciation.



Photo 5: 1 August 2021: Theo Langeveldt (Standing – third person from the left in navy beret) walks his 500th Sunset March, accompanied by a representation of the Board (Photography: Sunset March Board)

- ✓ On 13 August a large delegation of American (ex) soldiers of the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) General C.W. Abrams chapter walked the Sunset March (Photo 6).



Photo 6: 13 August 2021: Acting ambassador (USA) Mrs Marja Verloop walks at the head of the Sunset March followed by members of the General C.W. Abrams Chapter (Photography: Karin Zeitvogel/Stars and Stripes)

- ✓ 22 Augustus: 2500th Sunset March. By tradition special attention is paid to every 500th Sunset March and every time another special representative of the public administration is invited. This year (Caretaker) State Secretary for Defence, Mrs Barbara Visser, walked the 2500th Sunset March together with a group of board members as a guest of honour (Photo 7).



Photo 7: 22 August 2021: Caretaker Secretary of State for Defence, Mrs Barbara Visser (front right) walks the Sunset March as a honorary guest.

- ✓ On 20 September, the Waal Crossing Remembrance Day, a German and an American general walked the Sunset March.
- ✓ Contrary to last year, the traditional "couloir of honour" could fortunately be marched again this year. It was composed of 48 pairs of 2 (former) soldiers/veterans, a Dutch and an American one. Lieutenant General Klaus Habersetzer of the German Airforce and Brigadier General James Smith of the American Airforce marched fraternally side by side. This memorable Sunset March was attended by about 400 participants and interested people. (Photo 8).



Photo 8: 20 September 2021: After the end of the March the Salute of Honour is made near the Waal Crossing Monument by among others a German and an American general.

- ✓ On 22 September the network organisation of actively serving civilian and military defence women walked The Sunset March, for the third time already and in doing so it has embraced the March as an annually recurring event. (Photo 9).



Photo 9: 22 September 2021. Women and Defence walks the Sunset March (Photography: source: Vrouw en Defensie [Women and Defence] Facebook page).

- ✓ On 19 October the Sunset March celebrated its 7th anniversary. On that day nearly the entire Board walked the Bridge to commemorate this memorable fact.

7. Media

In spite of the Corona pandemic the Sunset March received a lot of attention in the various local and national media.

Some of the salient facts are:

- ✓ On 5 May Omroep Gelderland (a Dutch regional radio channel) broadcasted the Musical Freedom Tour on the occasion of Liberation Day from the well-known Hotel De Wereld in Wageningen. In that programme the Sunset March was paid prominent attention to. In it the March was represented with dignity by Team31 member, Cees van Doorn.

- ✓ On 21 July the “Wandelhart” programme (KRO-NCRV/Omroep Gelderland) was broadcast with well-known national television personality Joris Linssen. In it ample attention was paid to the Sunset March (Photo 10).



Photo 10: 21 July 2021: Member of the Board George de Jongh and Joris Linssen (Photography: source: Sunset March Facebook page)

- ✓ TROUW 23 August: On the occasion of the 2500th Sunset March a nearly page size article is published about the sunset March in the daily newspaper TROUW.
- ✓ NRC 28 December: Another newspaper, the NRC publishes a large article on the subject “Art in Public Area”, with reference to the largest war monument in Europe: “De Oversteek” (the Crossing); in it an important ancillary role for the Sunset March.

8. 2021 Finances

The Sunset March Foundation has a number of fixed annual costs. They are especially the costs paid for domain names and maintaining a specific bank account for the ANBI status, flowers and wreaths for the commemorations, team activities and promotional work. The other costs are variable and are annually adjusted and defined by the Board. Since no Team31 Day was organised in the past year and because a lot of activities had to be cancelled, funds were available to provide the board members with new coats. By the side of a fixed annual sponsor contribution from our partner Pro-Intell Security Solutions and the support in the field of materials by the Municipality of Nijmegen a considerable support was received.

Further a number of smaller and larger donations was received. In most cases from private people. As was stated before, a considerable amount was donated by

the Vereniging Veteranen Regiment Genietroepen (Engineering Corps Veterans Regiment Association). This year participation in the Clubkas Campagne (Club Funds Campaign) of Rabobank again resulted in a contribution to our funds. Our sponsor Kersten Retail gave us a large monitor to carry out presentations. In short|: thanks to the many contributions from all those who take a benevolent view of us we were again in the past year a financially healthy foundation. Therefore, it was possible to carry out all the planned activities.

9. 2022 Prospects

During the coming year the progress of the pandemic and the attaining measures will be decisive for the way in which planned Sunset March performances as well as (special) performances to be planned can be realised. For this moment we can publish the following planning:

- ✓ 365 Sunset Marches
- ✓ 22 February: annual participation of a German/Dutch delegation
- ✓ 11 April: Radboud University commemorating the University closure in 1943.
- ✓ 4 and 5 May. Receiving Liberation Fire and informal commemoration of the war victims; with German participation. Relay Race to Cleves, Germany by a large group of marchers.
- ✓ 11 July: annual Dutchbat participation on the day of the Srebrenica Massacre
- ✓ 18 July: Participation of 4 Day Marches Detachment of international veterans on the Monday evening preceding the 4 Day Marches in Nijmegen
- ✓ 24 August: Annual Participation by the DVBA
- ✓ 20 September: Waal Crossing Commemoration
- ✓ 22 September: Annual participation by Vrouw en Defensie (Women and Defence)
- ✓ 19 October: 8th Sunset March anniversary
- ✓ 11 November: International Veterans Day
- ✓ 18 November: Luchtmacht Vredesmissie Veteranen (Airforce Veterans Peace Mission).



*Photo 11: Stairs to the monument on the Oosterhoutsedijk will be closed till the end of 2022
(Photography: Dirk-Jan van Zuidam)*