

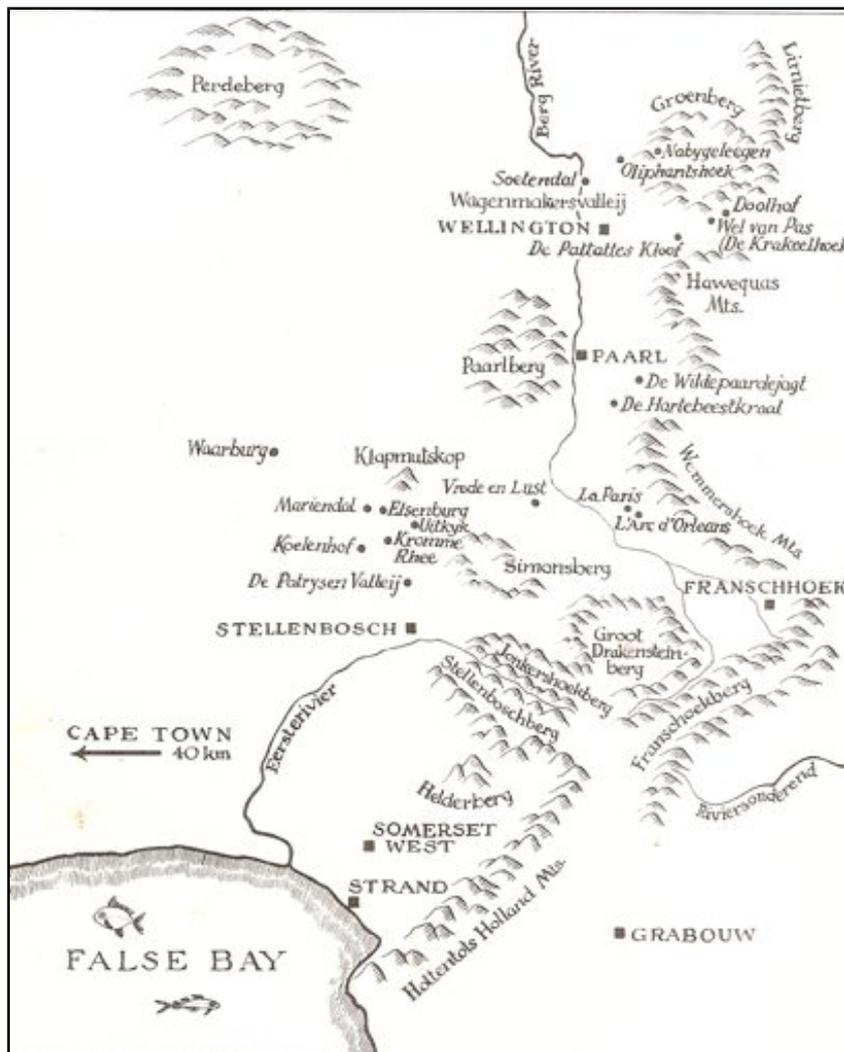
2. Francois, son of the Huguenot

The Second Generation

## Francois Retief

son of the Huguenot

1708 - 1789



**Francois Retief  
The Second Generation**

**07.04.1708 - circa 1789**

**Francois, born on Pattatskloof, situated in Wamakersvallei  
Married 03.12.1741  
Anna Marais (about 1722 – 24. 05.1777)**

1. Francois (01.01.1743 – 10.06.1807) farmed on Groenberg, Wellington  
Married 10.02.1765  
Margareta Joubert (01.03.1748 – 23.10.1821)  
Daughter of Pieter Joubert and Martha du Toit
2. Anna Aletta (18.07.1744 – 18.04.1795)  
Married 05.09.1762  
Jacobus Johannes Malan (10.04.1739 – 19.08.1806)
3. Daniel (christened 05.06.1746 - ?)  
Married 17.04.1768  
Hester Marais (20.03.1746 – 22.01.1798)
4. Maria (christened 19.05.1748 –16.04.1813)  
Married 31.05.1767  
Francois du Toit (christened 23.08.1744 - ?)
5. Jacobus (christened 21.12.1749) died in infancy
6. Petrus (christened 07.11.1751 – 04.02. 1813)  
Married 27.04.1783  
Maria Elizabeth Redelinghuys (christened 15.12.1765 – 27.09.1829)
7. **Jacobus (christened 07.09.1754 – 12.05.1821) our ancestor**  
**Married 01.11.1772**  
**Deborah Joubert (04.05.1749 –09.06.1814)**  
**A sister of the oldest brother's wife**  
**Second marriage July 1815**  
**Johanna Petronella van Blerk (christened 05.06.1774)**  
**She was a widow of Joel Daniel Herholdt and lived next door on Doolhof.**
8. Paul (circa 1757) died in infancy

The map on previous page is taken from  
In the Steps of Piet Retief by Eily and Jack Gledhill

## 2. Francois Retief, son of the Huguenot

### Frans as a young man

Although young Frans was only 13, he was already a handy young man to have about the farm when his father, the French Huguenot Francois Retief, died in 1721. As the oldest son, his father's death meant that he had to become his mother's right hand man. He had two older sisters and two baby sisters and also two younger brothers, Paul and Pierre (who was always a little different). When Frans was born on De Pattattes Kloof in the winter of 1708, his father was over forty. Frans's father could be short-tempered at times and had expected a good deal of him. From an early age his father had taught him many things. By necessity, he had become familiar with the agricultural activities on the farm. He could ride well and had a certain amount of experience in handling horses, driving wagons, carts and even using a plough.

He was also used to handling a rifle, and like the other pioneers' sons, he had to know how to defend himself, as there were many wild animals around. He had often seen baboons, hyenas, lions, leopards and even *wildepaarde* [zebras]. He did not remember his father's sister, Tante Anne, but knew his uncle and his cousins on L'Arc d'Orleans in Wemmershoek. Sometimes, when they had gone to inspect their other farm, La Paris, next door to L'Arc d'Orleans, they had seen elephants and hippos in the Berg River. There were also different kinds of buck, from eland to little *grysbokkies*, and Frans had hunted with his father and learned to shoot for the pot. I do not think there is a country in the world where colonists found such a wealth of animals and plants. There were so many little animals, tortoises, wild fowl and fascinating plants, that Frans must have found the veld a very interesting place. All things considered, he was an average pioneer boy of his age in his time.

Frans had learned French at his mother's knee, and it was a French Bible that his parents brought out at night for the *huisgodsdienst* [family devotions]. His parents and his grandfather living on De Krakeelhoek were born in France, so he was in fact a French boy growing up to be bilingual in a Dutch colony. They had no minister when he was a small boy, but he remembered Paul Roux, the *voorleser*, reading the sermon in French, and Hermanus Bosman, the *sieketrooster* reading it in Dutch in their primitive barn of a church. His immediate family, his grandfather and all the people from the Wagenmakersvallei who belonged to his church, had to cross the Berg River on a Sunday to get there. Kolbe, who wrote about the Cape in those days, remarked that the Huguenots were devout and very serious about their church attendance and that some families travelled for three or four hours to attend the nine o'clock service. Although he was only six years old, Frans could remember how pleased everyone was when their *dominee* arrived at last, the first since he was born. Everyone liked Ds. Van Aken very much and he was the one who managed to arrange for them to get a new site for a proper church.

Frans was to become a devout churchman, actively involved in church affairs throughout his life. As a young boy of twelve, he was enthralled by their new church. They had never had a proper church before and he was very impressed, as he did not have memories of the beautiful churches of Europe that his parents had seen.

Frans liked the ordered procedure in the new church on Sundays. The men's benches were placed to the one side, the women's straight-backed chairs brought from home, to the other, and the floor was sprinkled with fresh sand before each service.

At *eerste gelui* [the first call of the church bell], carts and wagons could be seen outside and the congregation started to take their seats. At *tweede gelui* [second call] the *voorleser* took up his position in front of the pulpit. He read a piece out of the Bible and made various announcements. Frans always watched out for the deacons, who filed in just before *derde gelui* [third call], and took up their positions on either side of the pulpit, looking very serious - while the elders took their seats.

The *voorleser* announced the psalm, someone sounded the note and while the congregation sang, the minister gravely ascended the steps to the pulpit. The atmosphere was dedicated and expectant. During the hymn, the deacons took up a collection for the poor in Tulbagh. This was an official ruling that caused dissatisfaction and at one time their own need was so great that they took up a second collection for their own poor. As the church was full of French people, it seems incongruous that the service should be in Dutch, but that was the law. The sermon was so long that people used to get up and go outside and come in again, until someone on the *kerkraad* suggested they locked the door while the sermon was in progress.

Frans's father had died only a year and three months after the church was inaugurated. It was the same month they had had the catastrophe of the end gable collapsing and destroying the pulpit. Only two and a half years later, their venerated Paul Roux, also died. To make things worse, they could not get permission to have another French *voorleser*. The *kerkraad* appealed against this ruling as there were still at least 25 older members of the congregation who only spoke French, but permission was refused. After this, the *koster* [sextant] sometimes read a sermon in French, but after a while that also stopped. Then they had another blow, when just over a year later, in December 1724, their beloved Ds. Van Aken also died. The congregation was deeply affected. Fortunately Frans also had pleasant memories of Ds. Slicher who followed and everyone was very sad when he died six years later.

As the Retief children were born from 1702 onwards, the early concern of the Huguenots about schooling for their children did not affect them personally. One of the first things the Huguenots had asked Ds. Simond was to arrange for schooling. Paul Roux and Hermanus Bosman had both taught, but at different times. The Political Council insisted that the teachers speak Dutch and French so that the children would become fluent in Dutch as soon as possible. The main problem was the distances of the farms from any school. The solution was to have tutors living in the homes, teaching their children and those of their neighbours as well. We do not know what happened in the case of Frans and his brothers and sisters. They probably had a tutor or shared one with someone living nearby. The children of the Huguenots could hardly avoid becoming bilingual, and Frans became comfortable using Dutch.

Frans's father had had two farms, De Pattattes Kloof and La Paris, when he was small. They lived on De Pattattes Kloof, quite near his grandfather on De Krakeelhoek until he was five. His mother, Marié, as a warm and loving person, would naturally have worried about her old father living alone. She had felt responsible for him from an early age so they would have seen him often. Later, Frans's father bought what turned out to be his mother's favourite farm, Hartebeest Kraal, and they moved there in 1713 although transfer was only taken in 1718.

Marié had a strong, but good influence on young Frans as he took on many responsibilities after his father's death. Even the nine year-old Paul would have had to pull his weight at that time. The girls also took on more responsibilities in the house as their mother became more involved outside. She was always in charge of her own affairs and sold De Krakeelhoek when her father died in 1725. At that time, Frans was 17. All his life he remembered his grandfather, the old Frenchman, Pierre Mouij.

Maria, the oldest sister, married her widowed cousin in Hex River when Frans was twenty, and the following year, Anna married a cousin's son, who also lived in the Hex River valley. Frans was the oldest one at home until he was over thirty, when he started looking around for a farm of his own. After that, Paul, Frans's younger brother, continued to run the farm for his mother.

It is not strange to me that it was in the Wagenmakersvallei that Frans chose to remain, as there seems to have been an almost mystic attraction for the family to that area from the beginning. At the age of 33, Frans bought D'Oliphantskop aan de Groenberg and Nabygelegen next door to it. These two farms faced Groenberg from one side, while De Krakeelhoek faced it from another. It is not difficult to guess that Frans was planning to get married when he started farming on his own. Later that year the knot was tied when he married Anna Marais on 4 December 1741.

#### Frans and Anna Marais

Frans was fourteen years older than his bride, Anna Marais, who was the daughter of his cousin Aletta Rousseau from L'Arc d'Orleans.

1. Catherine Taboureux x Charl Marais Snr. both born in France, Anna's great-grandparents Catherine Taboureux, widow xx Daniel des Ruelles a widower, also born in France
2. Her son Charl Marais x his daughter Anna des Ruelles, Anna's grandparents
3. Their son Daniel Marais x Aletta Rousseau (a cousin of Francois), Anna's parents
4. Their daughter Anna Marais x Francois (Frans) Retief

## 2. Francois Retief, son of the Huguenot

Here we meet an interesting Huguenot family. Charl and Catherine Marais and their family, left Rotterdam on the Voorschoten, which suffered terrible storms and damage on the voyage. It was eventually rescued from Saldanha Bay and brought to Cape Town by a sloop, arriving just a month before Francois and his sister, Anne, arrived on the Borssenburg.

Charl Snr was an older man, and he and his family were well educated and left their mark on the community. He has been called the "Father of the Huguenots" because of his leadership and work among his people even before coming over to the Cape. He was granted a farm which he called Le Plessis Merle, in Simondium. To everyone's dismay he was attacked by a Hottentot, and died as a result, only a year after his arrival. His two adult sons, Claude and Charl who were born in France, continued farming. A year after Charl Snr died, his widow married Daniel des Ruelles, a widower, whose two daughters had come over from France with him. Presently the younger Marais son, Charl, fell in love with his stepsister, Anna, and they were married. These two were the grandparents of Francois's bride and it was their son, Daniel, who married Francois's cousin, Aletta Rousseau.

After Frans and Anna were married, she came to live with him on D'Oliphantskop, and so remained a Wagenmakersvalleier all her life. Anna, who was from the second generation born at the Cape, was Dutch-speaking and so Frans and Anna's home language was also Dutch.

Their first baby, Francois, was born on New Year's Day in 1743 and Anna Aletta was born in July of the following year. Only three months later, they were involved in an incident that blew up into a case of which every detail has been noted and preserved in the Cape Archives.

### Anna and the slave, Claas van Bengale

Strange to say, as in the case of Frans's parents before him, their very words come back to us from the past in a court case. This time it concerned Anna and the slave, Claas van Bengale. It was an unfortunate affair concerning three people who talked without considering the consequences of their words. I cannot imagine Marié, Anna's mother-in-law, getting into such an undignified pickle. This case opens a little window into the home life of Frans and Anna, giving insights we would never otherwise have had.

When this unfortunate business occurred, Anna was 22. Like her husband, she still had pure French genes and appears to have been typically voluble. Her statements, as well as those of the slaves, were given in Dutch without interpreters. At this time, Frans and Anna owned four slaves and one can see that the family had come a long way from the rustic pioneering beginnings of Frans's parents.

The four slaves were Januarie van Rio de la Goa, Claas van Bengale, Augustus van Malibar and Aurora. At that time there were more male than female slaves at the Cape. With three men and one woman on the farm, it is not surprising that two of them, Augustus and Claas, were continually at loggerheads. Between them it was *ruusie en krakeel* [strife] all the way, and the problem was Aurora.

On the Wednesday evening of 14 October 1744, Frans asked Claas to go outside and call in the dogs as they were barking.

Claas called, "T'sa, t'sa," in such a feeble way that Anna said to the other:

*"Kan die mooie aap niet beter roepen?"*

["Can't the silly fool call any louder?"]

Frans had planted a field with peas and it was time to pick them. Before breakfast the next morning, on the Thursday, Augustus and Claas went to the lands "*om ertwen te plukken.*" ["to pick peas."] They were still arguing. Then Augustus told Claas that Anna had said he was "*'n mooie aap!*" At that Claas did a very stupid thing in his anger. He retorted that even if he was a "*mooie aap*", he would sleep with Anna if he could get the chance. This was a very dangerous thing for anyone to say of a married woman, but for a slave to say such a thing of his mistress, and to the wrong person, was total madness. The arguments between Claas and Augustus continued to flare up when they came in at eight o'clock to eat their breakfast in the kitchen. Claas also made ugly threats about Augustus to Januarie and this mood of "*ruusie en krakeel*" continued after breakfast as they went back to the lands.

Meanwhile, Frans's horse had to be saddled as he had to go to Stellenbosch on "call up" duty for the Dutch East India Company. This duty and control from the authorities irked the

farmers terribly, because it interfered with their farming, and left their women to cope on their own. Frans departed, after which the trouble between Claas and Augustus boiled right over, and they went for each other in the pea plantation. When they returned to the kitchen for lunch, they were still arguing.

It is recorded that Anna was sitting inside in the *voorhuijs* [front room] having lunch with a neighbour, *den vrijswart* [the free-black] Sinopaaij. On hearing the continued arguing, Anna became annoyed and stood up and went into the kitchen and said that if she'd known "*dat sy (Aurora) soo een teef was ik soude haar niet gekoft het.*" ["that Aurora was such a bitch, she would not have bought her."] At this point Augustus was so angry that he told *Nonje* (Anna) what Claas had said. She went back to the *voorhuijs*, collapsed on to a chair and wept emotionally and most likely felt that it was most unfair that Frans should be away at such a time.

Anna was so upset, that shortly after this, she took her children, and with Sinopaaij, probably also very indignant, set out to go and see her uncle to tell him all about this terrible thing. On the way, they met some *burghers*, whom they asked to go and arrest Claas. Of course Claas knew he was in terrible trouble and the *burghers* found him hiding in a *sloot*. They took him to the *fiskaal*, who demanded that he be thrashed, branded and put in chains for 25 years. However, in the minutes there is no record of these demands ever being met, and it is doubtful whether the case against Claas van Bengale was taken any further.

From this case, I have gained a most interesting glimpse into the daily domestic routine on D'Oliphantskop. There was quite a cosy atmosphere with the slaves eating in the kitchen and everyone on the farm closely involved with each other. Unfortunately, the familiarity went too far and backfired. The relaxed way in which Anna was having her free black neighbour stay for lunch, even when her husband was away, is interesting and surprising. Although Sinopaaij was a *vrijswart*, he was also a trusted neighbour and would have been a Christian. It seems that it was only with the English occupation, towards the end of 18th century, that the colour distinction became an issue. Anna seems a spontaneous, informal person. After reading all about the problems the Huguenots had and their strict Calvinistic background, Frans and Anna's household seems very informal and I wonder whether it was typical of farm life at that time.

This episode makes me think that Frans was the quiet and serious one, while Anna was the more spontaneous and lively partner, impulsive and emotional. I wonder what she learned from this episode. Perhaps her husband quietly took her aside and asked her never to make such a personal remark about a slave or anyone else again. As a boy, Frans had been taught by his mother to treat his elders and the house slaves with respect. I wouldn't be surprised if it was Frans who in the end asked them to drop the case, as it was not a very savoury matter to be bandied around.

Claas may have been lucky to get away with only a hiding, because in the 18th Century, barbaric punishments were dealt out to transgressors. One case is remembered as the most gruesome of them all. It involved a happening at their very own Drakenstein *Gemeente* in Paarl a few years before Frans and Anna were married, but they may well both have been in the church on that memorable Sunday morning, on 1 March 1739.

Estienne Barbier, a Frenchman, was an employee of the Dutch East India Company who rebelled against its tyrannical methods. He escaped from the castle after he had been locked up after various transgressions and was able to hide for a whole year on the farm of the widow Cilliers of Daljosafat. She came from the same town in France that he did.

Although the case ended in tragedy, it started in a most dramatic way. Imagine the surprise of the congregation, just coming out of church after a lengthy sermon, when a small commando of about eight, marshalled by Estienne Barbier, trotted up to them and incited the men to stand up against the authority of the Dutch East India Company. Barbier then, to the amazement of the congregation, nailed a paper onto the door of their church, in the style of Martin Luther.

The Hottentots had complained to the governor that some of their members had been killed in a shooting. Some stock farmers along the Olifants River were then punished for illegal trade with the Hottentots, by having their cattle confiscated. Barbier knew that many farmers considered the *veeboere* [stockfarmers] to be outside the jurisdiction of the Council of Policy and immediately took up the cause of the stockfarmers. He backed up his paper on the church door with circulars *aan alles de Africanders Gebroedsels* [to all the Afrikaner Brethren]. It was treason as far as the Dutch East India Company was concerned. When Barbier was caught, he

## 2. Francois Retief, son of the Huguenot

was sentenced to a most barbaric death as an example to any others who might question the Dutch East India Company's rules. On 14 November 1739 (two years before Frans and Anna were married), he was tied to a wooden cross and his right hand and head were chopped off. After that, his body was quartered and displayed at various places. His head and hand were stuck to a pole as you enter the Nuwekloof Pass at Tulbagh, where this gruesome spectacle remained for many years. This case must have shaken Frans and the congregation to their very foundations and have been spoken of for years.

Frans and Anna seem to have been very happy together and produced eight children in all. Only two were girls and they also married into French families, the Du Toits and Malans. Of the six boys, two did not reach maturity. Jacobus, from whom we descend, was born in 1754 and grew up as the youngest member of the family. In 1757, Anna's last baby was born, but did not survive. The only reference to this baby is that he was christened Paul. Only a year later, Frans's mother, Marié, died on Hartebees Kraal, where she was living with her youngest daughter who was married to Tieleman Roos.

As parents with a family of young children, they must have been horrified in June 1755, when Ryk Tulbagh, the governor, announced to the Political Council that some cases of *kinderpokken*, as they called smallpox, had broken out. It followed an epidemic of scarlet fever in April of that year. The Council was alarmed, remembering the seriousness of the previous epidemic of 1713, and they called for a meeting of the doctors for guidance.

They stated that the infection was thought to have come from a sick person off a ship returning from the East, as was the case in 1713. (Later ships were inspected for such cases before the passengers disembarked.) The doctors said that the smallpox epidemic had started in a sort of shanty town for slaves, near the beach, where washing was done. Realising that it was very infectious, some very practical rules were laid down:

Sick people's washing had to be done separately and in separate places.

People had to be buried in the clothes in which they had died.

In the country the people were to be buried where they had died.

People working with raw meat and fresh bread, like butchers and bakers, could spread the disease, and were not permitted to have sick people working for them.

In spite of every effort, the disease raged for six months. Between May and September, two thousand people died. Even with living in the country, Frans and Anna certainly had a stressful time. It was estimated that one thousand settlers and well over one thousand slaves were lost. It is not known how many of the Hottentots, as they were known, died, but this epidemic tragically affected their chances of survival.

### The Retief boys

Meanwhile Frans and Anna's four sons, Francois, Daniel, Petrus and Jacobus, grew to become fine men, all of whom became active in De Kaapse Patriotten in later years. All had pure French blood coursing in their veins and were quite likely volatile young men who thumped the table and gesticulated when discussing the politics of the day. They were very interested in this as life at the Cape under the Dutch East India Company's rule was certainly fraught with many frustrations.

By 1771, Frans was a man of sixty-three and his children's ages ranged from 28 to 17. Ds. Petrus van der Spuy had served the Drakenstein congregation in Paarl for 18 years and had christened Frans and Anna's youngest children. He was the first *dominee* who had been born at the Cape. It seems brutal to send a child of nine to Holland to be educated, but that is what happened to him and he first qualified in medicine before he studied in Leiden to become a minister. At the age of 25 he was invested as the *dominee* of the Drakenstein church in Paarl. Ds. Van der Spuy was a bachelor. Although he never charged for medical services, his popularity gradually waned over the years as he became more and more autocratic. The Political Council still had the last word at the Cape as far as the church was concerned and therefore still ratified the appointment of the deacons and elders. Of course, the Heeren XV11 in Holland had the final word on everything. The name of Frans's brother-in-law, Tieleman Roos, who was often the leader of confrontation with the government on behalf of the farmers, had been put

forward as a deacon ten times over almost 20 years. Each time it had been vetoed as they considered Tieleman Roos a strong and troublesome leader figure.

Then in 1771 something happened that was just too much to bear. Burgher-Luitenant Thomas A. Theron was nominated as an elder in their church. He was considered very unsuitable for reasons that are not quite clear. Frans, his sons and various other members of the congregation, were absolutely scandalised! But Ds. Van der Spuy simply ignored their protests. Tieleman Roos, Frans's brother-in-law, led the faction that objected, and the Retiefs stood shoulder to shoulder on Tieleman Roos's side. Thomas Theron was appointed anyway and the objectors were censured. Frans, the loyal churchman that he was, was horrified at the split in the church that lasted almost ten years that had resulted from the appointment.

For twenty years Ryk Tulbagh had been governor of the Cape. During his time he had kept a firm hand on corruption and became known as *Vader Tulbagh*. But it seems that the Dutch East India Company, as a whole, was growing more and more arrogant and after his death the corruption again became a serious factor at the Cape.

Frans was a man of 66, when his beloved wife Anna died at the age of 52, on 24 May 1774. They had been married for 33 years. Frans did not remarry. He had helped his sons to get started on their own farms. The only son who was not yet married, was Petrus, who farmed on the home farm with his father. Six years after Anna's death, Frans made D'Oliphantskop over to Petrus who got married two years later.

When Frans died at the age of 81 in 1789, his younger brother, Pierre, who was sometimes confused, was still living. Frans Retief's kind and caring will and testament leaves the impression of a decent and thoughtful man, humane and extremely considerate. I do not believe he was aggressive and short-tempered like his father. He had supported his widowed mother in her farming operations from the time his father died when he was 13 until he bought his own farm and married at 33. For many years his mother had been a strong influence in his life. He differed from his father in that he was more active on church bodies, but less so in civic affairs. Of course, Frans did become civically involved at times, especially when it concerned Tieleman Roos, his youngest sister's husband.

In his will, we see how Frans worried about minor grandchildren and appointed all his heirs and their spouses as guardians over them. It was a case of one for all, and all for one in his family. Like his mother, he was also concerned about the lot of his slaves after he had died.

Their slaves, Toontjie and Tonetta van de Caab, were not to be separated or to be sold to strangers. The same applied to Jeftha and Clara van de Caab. They were to be accommodated amongst the children and heirs. The old slave, Augustus van Malibar, who obviously held a position of great privilege, and had been with them from the earliest days of their marriage, was to choose with which family member he wished to live.