

GOLD!

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Magazine van de Vereniging Gouden-Kruisdragers Vierdaagse

In this edition:

- Gold Medallists Trail

- Birthday during the
4Days Marches

- The 4Days Marches
of 1948





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GOUD! is an issue of the Association of Gold Medallists

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The Association of Gold Medallists is founded on 24 july 1951 and approved by royal decree d.d. 24 july 1952, no. 46
Cover photo: Duncan de Fey (Stichting DE 4DAAGSE)

Foreword chair

Dear Gold Medallists,

The preparations for the 105th four days walking of Nijmegen (formal writing '4Days Marches' according board of Stichting DE 4DAAGSE) has been almost finished when you read this foreword. We are ready for the Flagparade, the 4Days service, the members' meeting in Lent and an event that will last four days this year. We are about to present our members and other 4Days Marches walkers a beautiful present.

Although the lustra of the 4Days Marches and the association are no longer celebrated in the same year since the pandemic of covid, we like everybody to enjoy a special jubileum path, constructed on occasion of the 105th anniversary of the 4Days Marches: the Gold Medallists Trail. Many Gold Medallists have contributed to the design and realization of this path.

The volunteers of the Association of Gold Medallists have been experiencing a turbulent year because of the new types of membership introduced by the Royal Dutch Walking Association (KWbN). This development was not supported by our association and has resulted in an significant loss of members of the KWbN. It has been unclear to many of us how things are put together: chair, secretary and treasurer have had a big job in explaining the new situation regarding membership fees and have done their best to register all requested wishes in the administration.

I hope we will have a rather 'dull' year, meaning that we don't experience unpleasant surprises, so we can focus on ambitions laid down in the multi-year plan and search for new volunteers for the association. Volunteers are not precious, they are priceless and indispensable. Therefore, I like to conclude to thank everyone that make it possible: reunion, GOUD!, jubileum path and meeting-points. They make a splendid 4Days Marches possible. I am looking forward to meet you at one of the activities of the association or the most beautiful walking event in the world: The Walk of the World.

Frans Leijtens



News ** News ** News ** News

Contribution to €12

During the annual meeting of our association on the 22nd of April 2023 at KWJ Brakkenstein the members present agreed with the annual budget for 2024.

A part of the budget is the rise of the contribution, the rise will be from €10 to €12 per member per year from 2024 onwards. This is the first rise of the contribution in quite a number of years and we hope to keep the fee at €12 for a long time.

There are a number of reasons for this rise. Not only many of the fixed charges are rising, among which are the costs for the website, banking fees, mailing- and printing costs and the things needed for the meeting points. Besides that the amount of members decreased from more than 3700 members to 3006 members on April 22nd 2023.

Two Corona (covid) years without 4Days Marches and the new member-forms of the KWbN in 2022 took care of rather a lot of cancellations, while only in 2022 we got a lot of new members. Finally the association had to pay VAT for the first time due to a new law, this caused that there was less left to spend of the €10 contribution.

Due to the contribution of €12 yearly for each member we will have a healthy balanced budget for the years to come, this will cover all activities of our association and there will be room for innovation.

Membership GKD and KWbN

The combi-membership and levy membership fee has led to discussion and confusion. The processing of all adjustments together with questions and discussion has caused (too) much burden for the member administration. We like to thank the member administration for all the work done.

Please note that a new situation has arisen. The combi-membership is no longer mandatory. It is possible to be member of GKD without being member of the KWbN.

There are three options to choose from:

1. Membership GKD and KWbN complete
2. Membership GKD and KWbN basic
3. Membership GKD only

Please notify the member administration only, no later than 1st October 2023 via mail: ledenadministratie@goudenkruisdragers.nl or website: <https://www.goudenkruisdragers.nl/wp/adreswijziging/>

The payment/collection of membership fees GKD and KWbN will go through separate invoices or direct debits.

The membership fee of the GKD in 2024 is €12 Euro (incl. tax).

The membership fee of the KWbN in 2024 is (approximately) €38.50 for the complete option and €26.50 for the basic option.

Payment/collection of the fees GKD and KWbN will be again in 2024 by separate invoices or direct debits.

4Days Marches Church Service

The 60th 4Days Marches church service will take place in the St. Stevens church on Sunday, July 16, 2023 at 10 A.M.

The central theme will be '60 years of God's People on Their Way'. The service will be led by father Ruud Willemsen, reverend Joop Mol and chaplain Manuel Kuhn.

Multiple choirs, soloists and an orchestra will contribute to the service, with musical direction provided by Rob Engels. The church opens at 9:15 A.M. We hope to see you there!

Volunteers Wanted

Help is always welcome in our association. This year, too, the committee would like to get into touch with any members who consider assisting us as volunteers or even board members. For this reason, a speed date was organized a number of years ago: an informal Saturday afternoon in which the board and enthusiastic members joined in a conversation to see who was willing to take up important tasks or interesting activities. We are planning such a speed date again this summer. The session will take place on 9th September 2023. Attendance does not commit you to anything and this way the board can explain all the ins and outs. So, if you consider yourself a good treasurer, or editor of GOUDI, webmaster of our website, or fancy coordinating the meeting points during the Marches, you are invited to attend the speed date session in the canteen of swimming pool the Zandzee in Bussum. Put down your name at voorzitter@goudenkruisdragers.nl and you will receive further details in due time.

Membership Administration Contact

If you need to change your membership or send us a new address, please notify us via email ONLY at ledenadministratie@goudenkruisdragers.nl. This will keep our administration up to date and will prevent our volunteers from being overwhelmed. Thank you for your cooperation!

Summary general meeting

Association of Gold Medallists april 2023

The meeting is held in the building of KWJ on April 22nd in Nijmegen; a new location for our association.
The chair opens the meeting and the board announcements are being discussed.

1. The members who passed away last year are being remember with a moment of silence.

2. The new membership structure of the KWbN caused a lot of extra work. Our association warned the KWbN about this before. A lot of members cancelled their KWbN subscription.

3. During the informal meeting between our board and the Stichting DE 4DAAGSE we were told that the route change on the second day of the 4Days Marches (the passage through old Weurt) will be maintained.



The members of the Association of Gold Medallists are listening carefully

4. It is being announced that in fall, new speed dates will be organized. Our association can use several new volunteers in several areas.

5. As lustrum reward fort he 105th 4Days Marches, our association is going to offer an Anniversary Route to Stichting DE 4DAAGSE. The chair gives more information about the route and the process on how this all is going to be established. The official offer will be middle of June.

6. With small adjustments, the report of the general meeting in July 2022 is affirmed.

7. The annual report of the secretary is accepted without any remarks.

8. The treasurer provides additional information to the financial annual report. The financial committee did her work and proposes to grant the board discharge. This is done by acclamation.

9. The meeting agrees with the proposed budget. Important is an increase of the yearly contribution from € 10 to € 12.

10. There is a change in the board: Irene van Haren steps back and quits her board activities. Michael Kors joins the board in her place. He introduces himself. Frans Leijtens, Rino Hamelink and Harry van Dijk are re-elected by acclamation.

11. The reunion 2023 will take place on 30 September 2023. The location is the Marechaussee Museum (Military Police Museum) in Buren. The reunion will be combined with the local Torentocht (Tower March). More information will follow in GOUD!

12. The meeting is closed with a drink with all attendees.

In Memoriam

- Robert Hirschel
- P.J. Hommel
- F.E.G. Bender
- A.T. van Haaren
- Kitty Grootveld-Burgers
- Piet Meerder
- Wim Zeegers
- Ria Cammaert
- Corrie Hemelop
- Peter Thorn
- Hans Doornheim
- An Schraal-Baaiman
- Raymond Neve
- R. Breed



- Nijmegen
- Oud-Vossemeer
- Venray
- Beek
- `s -Gravenhage
- Zoeterwoude
- Teteringen
- Almelo
- Est
- Utrecht
- Rotterdam
- Lelystad
- Valthermond
- Bussum

Powered by GKD Walk in Ruurlo

This year's first Powered by GKD walk was organized by Walkers' Association DOS Barchem in the splendid environs of Ruurlo, which is well known for its many beautiful castles. For me, this was to be the first preparation for the 4Days Marches of Nijmegen. Together with my sister I travelled to Ruurlo on Sunday 12th February. The trip by car from our address in Apeldoorn to the part of Gelderland known as "De Graafschap" was an outing in itself. The Haydn symphony from the car radio was fitting background music to the views of the 18th century castles close to our destination: the canteen of the local tennis club in Ruurlo, where we were directed to a parking space by a number of traffic controllers. They had their work cut out, for the attendance was enormous! This makes you realize how important volunteers are in the organization of such an event.

Because my sister had a leg injury, we decided to take it easy and opted for the distance of 'only' 10 kilometres. The event was professionally organized and the volunteers of the tennis club went all out to serve drinks and snacks to the walkers.



My elder sister walking past a farm.

After a cup of coffee we went on our way. The track was easy to follow thanks to excellent marking and it was not long before we left the village and walked through an undulating landscape typical of the region, here and there interrupted by groves. The route took us through one of those groves, where we saw the messengers of spring: the first crocuses and snowdrops.

The walk was quite varied, partly tarmac but also sandy tracks through woods and open terrain. Because we walked only a short distance, we did not pass museum More, known for its collection of modern art. Walkers who had opted for one of the longer distances had the opportunity to visit this museum. Moreover, they were able to walk the "Trail of Love". But for us single women this was not possible.



The walk was organized by Walkers' Association DOS Barchem and attracted a large number of walkers. The dog could join them!

After some 5 kilometres, there was a stop at a farm where all sorts of things were offered to boost our energy. Sitting at a long table, we got talking to some other walkers. One elderly gentleman told us he had done the Nijmegen Marches 30 times. And he was proud to say that in spite of his age he had successfully finished the 50 kilometres all those times. But 30 times was quite enough, he thought. 2019, the year before Covid, had been the last time. A lady sitting next to me had had the 4Days Marches on her bucket list for years, she said, but had never had the opportunity to take part because of her work and her family.

After they had left and we had finished our refreshments, we, too, went on our way. In the last part of our walk we came across a few striking works of art. One in the shape of a bench with a view of one of the castles in Ruurlo and a bit further on there were two gigantic metal images of animals.

It was a short trip, but well worth it in every respect. Well organized, beautiful surroundings and pleasant people to talk to. It is during walks like these that one meets such lovely people. We were quite satisfied when we went home.

Esther Zijlstra



A work of art in the shape of a bench with a view of one of the many castles in the surroundings of Ruurlo.

Young Gold Medallists

At the powered-by walk in the Dutch village of Ruurlo, four young Gold Medallists joined the event to spend a day with their walking friends. They were accompanied by a one-and-a-half-year-old son in a child carrier backpack on the back of his father – a Gold Medallist – and a seven-month-old son in a carrier on the belly of his father – who had been brought along by his partner, a Gold Medallist.

After the walk, a WhatsApp group was set up with the aim to walk together more often, for example to train for the marches together, or to meet at another Gold Medallists event. Would you like to join us for a walk or would you like to visit one of the Gold Medallists activities without being the only 'youngster'? Please send a message to jaimy.pieterson@gouden-kruisdragers.nl. I would be happy to hear from you.

Kees Brinkman's reflections on the 4Days Marches

The Marches of July 2022

The number of participants of the 104th edition was lower than in previous years. Of 42,175 people who signed up, only 38,519 came to the start, 34,725 of whom made it to the finish. The percentage of drop-outs was anything but low: 9.85%! Because of the stifling heat on Tuesday, the first walking-day was cancelled. On Wednesday it was warm, Thursday was wet and on Friday the weather was fine again.

Habits of exercising and inactivity

In November 2022 neuroscientists had what they called spectacular news: walking is a major problem solver! We should walk more regularly; it is a medicine without side effects and you will get old if you keep moving and if you don't, you won't get old. That is nothing new for Gold Medallists! A team of physiologists of Radboud University are investigating the relation between health and physical activity and have already come to this conclusion earlier on. Only 47% of people are physically active. 4Days Marches' walkers are an exception: as many as 92% of them are active all the year round.

Registration for 2023

The period in which veterans and young people can register starts on 23rd January and ends on 10th February. This results in 32,606 entries, which at the same time is 70% of the limit. The second period lasts from 13th February till 16th June 2023 and is open to beginners. This period is to end at 47,000 entries. There is so much interest that the 4Days Marches' website explodes. Thousands of enthusiasts are queuing up. As a result, there is a lot of irritation and incomprehension among those who want to register. The Marches'

leader is not happy either. It took a long time for the technical problems to be solved. As early as 14th February, spokesman for the organisation Mark Prinsen announces that the limit of 47,000 entries has been reached.

Symbols

For years, the chimney of Engie Power Station had been a landmark during the first day of the Marches when the route still ran from Elst to the Waaldijk. After the demolition of the chimney in April 2022, the machine room and the boiler house were imploded on 8th October of the same year. The power station is situated on the border of the Maas-Waal canal. The local authorities want the location of the Engie Power Station to become an industrial zone for the creation of durable energy, water related activities and logistics.



1967 – 2017: Plaque in Memory of Prince Claus

On 21 July 2017, the last day of the 4Days Marches, this plaque was unveiled and on 20 October it was placed on the site of Concert House "De Vereeniging". It was 50 years after HRH Prince Claus successfully finished the Marches in 1967. The ceremony took place near the VIP grandstand on the Via Gladiola in the St Annastraat. Half a century ago, Prince Claus was embraced by Princess Beatrix who had come to welcome her husband.



The unveiling was done by Royal Commissioner of Gelderland, Mr Cornielje, in the presence of Nijmegen mayor Bruls and marches' leader Willemstein. Will the royal participation in 1994 by Prince Pieter-Christiaan of Oranje-Nassau, son of Princess Margriet and Pieter van Vollenhoven, also lead to the creation of a plaque in 2044? He was, after all, leader of a walking group of the Royal Utrecht Students' Society for Voluntary Exercise in Weapon Handling. (RUSSfVEi-WH, or KUSVtvOidW, for short). Let's wait and see, 2044 is a long time ahead.

1989: Friendship with Japan

Through the 4Days Marches, Nijmegen got into touch with Japanese walkers. Each year Japanese walkers take part. This resulted in a bond of friendship between Nijmegen and the Japanese city of Higashimatsuyama. In 1989, this friendship was symbolized in a granite work of art. It consists of two arms of about a metre tall on which the flags of the Netherlands and Japan are displayed. The inscription on the plinth is in Japanese first, then in Dutch and finally in English. This monument was erected as a symbol of friendship between Dutch and Japanese walkers.



2016: Poem “Crippled Walker”

On Monday 18 July 2016 I came across this poem in the Lange Hezelstraat in Nijmegen. It was possibly removed shortly after the 4Days Marches. The poet is unknown to me.

Small Rectification

Finally, a small correction of my contribution to the previous edition of “Goud!”. I wrote that J.N. Breunese was Marches’ leader from 1936 till 1967. But from 1964 till 1967 Marches’ leader was lieutenant–colonel B.D.F. Breunese. He was the nephew of major J.N. Breunese, who passed away in 1963, shortly after the Marches. My apologies for the mistake and thank you to the observant reader!

Conclusion

I hope to be present again in July, though no longer as a walker but as a spectator. Good luck to you all during the 4Days Marches!

Kees Brinkman



Walkers refresh themselves with water from public water taps Source: Regional Archives Nijmegen.

The 4Days Marches of 1948

After the hot edition of 1947, the Marches of 1948 were particularly warm, too. Temperatures reached well over 30 degrees centigrade in the daytime. But in those days this was no reason to call off the marches or to shorten the routes. 6,649 participants signed up, 4,127 men, 1,468 women and 1,054 military. This small number of army people was caused by the deployment of the army in the Dutch East Indies.



Since 1928 the 4Days Marches have been opened by a parade of the national flags of the walkers. This was also the case in 1948. Source: Regional Archives Nijmegen

The “tradition” of walkers meeting again on the former trunk road from Arnhem on the first day comes to an end. This year the walkers are taken via Driel and Ho-moet back to Nijmegen.

The second day is warm, perhaps a little too warm for these Marches. The newspaper writes that “there was less singing than yesterday”. Yet, H. van Mechelen, composer of the 4Days Marches’ Hymn, had rehearsed many songs with dozens of walkers in the Craftsmen’s Society on Tuesday 29th June!

In the evening, Mr. K. Boessenkool, secretary of the 4Days Marches, was honoured for having dedicated himself to a smooth course of this walking event for forty years. He was presented with a wireless set.



Just having received a drink in a paper cup and accompanied by a mouth organ, youngsters walk the 55 kms route of the 4Days Marches of 1948. Source: Regional Archives Nijmegen.

On Thursday morning 18 people did not turn up. Among them two Norsemen, who were part of a group of 30 foreigners. There were few non-starters among the women. The Wrens (servicewomen) did not come off badly in comparison. That day was the start of the London Olympics, which were to be the games of Fanny Blankers-Koen (Dutch winner of 4 gold medals, ed). The first-aid posts gave 600 treatments, 400 of which were massages.

On Friday the pontoon bridge across the Maas lies ready, but when, at 1300hrs, ships are allowed through again, a large number of walkers have not crossed the river yet. An enormous crowd gathers for the ferry. Servicemen with guns across their belly form a cordon to fend off the masses in order to make things easier for the ferry captain. Eventually, things work out, for after all “we are one for all and together we are one” (a line from the Marches’ hymn, ed.).

A group of 581 walkers does not make it to the finish. A percentage of 8.7 drop-outs is not a bad result after all, in view of the circumstances. In September Queen Wilhelmina abdicates after a reign of fifty years, and Queen Juliana ascends the throne.

In 1948 there were only few marches to train for the 4Days Marches of Nijmegen, which is why a few Gold Medallists organized a special march in Nijmegen. Under the leadership of Piet van de Kaay (Arnhem, 23 Marches), well over 1,600 participants walked a route that we now know on the second day of the Marches. From the Grote Markt to Nijmegen East and the Hatert Fens and Alverna to Beuningen and Weurt and back through the Hezelstraat to Café Raafs, where the medals were handed out. That is also where on Tuesday 24 July 1951 our association would be founded on the initiative of Jan Hendrik Theunissen van Manen.

Marcel M. Claassen



Board members of the Association of Gold Medallists in supreme concentration during the meeting of april 2023

Membersmeeting Monday July 17th 2023

You are invited to attend the Members' meeting on Monday July 17th 2023 at the Van der Valk Hotel in Lent. The meeting starts at 2 pm and will take about an hour. The board proposes the following agenda:

1. Opening by the chair
2. Contribution from the march leader of Stichting DE 4DAAGSE and/or delegation of the KWbN
3. Incoming correspondance & announcements from the board
4. Minutes of the General Meeting held on April 22nd 2023
5. Reünion and 'Powered by GKD'-walk in Buren, 30th september 2023
6. Reunion 2024
7. (other) Proposals of the board
8. Proposals from the members
9. Any other business
10. Closure with 4Days Marches song

Notes to the agenda:

Item 6: The board is looking for members that like to help with the organisation of the reunion en 'powered-by GKD' walk in the autumn of 2024.

Item 8 en 9: When members have proposals or questions for the board, the board likes to be informed prior the meeting in order to prepare and/or discuss the issue raised and address it during the meeting. The board requests anyone with questions that take some preparation, to sent those to the secretariat, if possible in writing and at least one week before the meeting.

Gold Medallists Trail

We started 5 years ago with this, so it took us a while, but the Gold Medallists Trail is completed. The Gold Medallists Trail is for experienced 4Days Marches walkers and leads you along the highlights and most well known places of the recent 4Days Marches history. If you follow the trail the app "StoryTrails" installed on your smartphone walks with you; in the app you will get a sign that you are nearing a well known location and next the app will show you the story that belongs to that specific location. The 24 most important stories are told by means of a small film on your telephone; at every location a Gold Medallist will tell you a story about the history and traditions of that location. Next to that there are a number of well known places that are only depicted with a number of photo's



Michael Thyregod is one of our Danish members. He has finished the Marches 26 times. Would you like to hear what he tells in the video on Heumensoord? Walk our Gold Medallists' route!



Our member Marcel Claassen has successfully finished the 4Days Marches 57 times. He has been involved in the archives of the Marches for over 50 years. Curious to see what he tells here? Take a quick look in the storytrails app!

The Gold Medallists Trail is not only for experienced walkers a method to reminisce. The trail is not only a gift to our members, but also to the Stichting DE 4DAAGSE and therefore to all the walkers. Beginning 4Days Marches walkers who want to learn what the event is, get knowledge of Gold Medallists. After all, if you really want to know what's going on, you'll ask an Gold Medallist! Marching-leader and honor member Henny Sackers made you think when he called us the 'keepers of the 4Days Marches history, and with small filmshots in the app we'll giving that history to the next generation walkers.

You chose to walk the trail any way you want: you can follow the paper map in the guide or the tracklog in the StoryTrails app. The travel directions can only lead you counter-clockwise; if you use the app you can follow the trail in both directions. The formal start of the Gold Medallists Trail is at Shamrock's in the Smetiusstreet 17, Nijmegen, but of course you are free to start at an other location. And because not everyone wants- or can to walk the full 28 Km, there is also a shorter version of the trail; you pass the stories that happen in the center of the city and around the Wedren, this trail is 6 Km.

If you read this article and you haven't received a guide or app; we are trying to send it to you as soon as we can. Keep an eye on our website or our Facebookpage for the exact dates on which we open the trail and send our guides. You can already download the StoryTrails app for free in an Appstore. The app contains a lot of other walkingtrails of other organizations, so trying out another trail is a good opportunity to practice. The Gold Medallists Trail will in the app first be available for our members and buyers of the guide.

In due time, we will, as the guides will be sold out, make the trail in the app for free for everyone. If you think the app looks familiar; the "Klompennaden" app is the same as the "StoryTrails" app but just looks a little bit different. It is a reliable user-friendly app that is in use for a long time. Whether you use the app or the guide, we hope you'll enjoy the walk and the stories of the Gold Medallists. However the lustrum is already 2 years behind us, we'll give you this long-expected gift from our celebrating association and in honor of the 105th 4Days Marches



Our member Marge Petronis lives in the United States and can also be found on the GKD route, where she tells about the first walking day. She has finished the Marches 21 times.

Double party

Congratulations!

Celebrating your birthday during the 4Days Marches is very special. Eighty of our members celebrated their birthday during the week of the 4Days Marches. We asked the members how they celebrate their birthday. It is very special to read how everyone makes it a special day in it's own way. We wish you a great birthday again this year.

When I celebrated my birthday on the first 4Days Marches in 1997, this was on the Thursday of the 7-hills, our chairman wanted me to walk around with a big sign which contained the text "My first 4Days Marches and celebrating my birthday too!" I declined this idea very friendly but firmly. I had enough troubles with myself that first time. But he had found a solution to this. I walked about 30 meters in front of him and every time I heard the Dutch birthday song "Lang zal ze leven" (the equivalent of the English Happy Birthday song) behind me. He told everyone that wanted to hear "that lady over there is celebrating her birthday"

Since about 15 years we stay in "Het Uitzicht" in Groesbeek with our Walkingclub "Oostendam" this is a great group-accommodation which welcomes us every year very warmly. Then I celebrate my birthday there and treat every club member (40 people) with a pastry from the province of Limburg. (in Dutch: "vlaai"). I have never really missed celebrating my birthday during the 4Days Marches, because I walked for 10 years together with my family (husband, daughter and son). My daughter still walks and is a Gold Medallist too. This year my birthday is just before the 4Days Marches, on a Monday. This time I celebrate my birthday the Saturday before.

Alice van Toorn

I celebrate my birthday in the midst of the holyday season. My dream: taking part in the 4Days Marches just once. So no birthday celebrating at home. In 2004 I finally got the chance to take part in the 4Days Marches; my preparations were 400 Kilometers walking for my distance of 40 Km and a family that had to get about without me. I stayed at a friend of a friend in Nijmegen that was lucky to have some experience in 4Days Marches' walking, but she didn't walk in 2004.



De best wishes in Dutch to Harma!

I always walk alone! My birthday was on the second walking day. I got all sorts of 4Days Marches' keepsakes and a congratulations sign (A4 format) which was pinned on my backpack. Nice reactions on my way and once and a while they even sang a birthday song to me.

On my way I got a number of telephone-calls and I really felt like I was celebrating my birthday. Again in 2005 I was celebrating my birthday during the 4Days Marches, this time on a Thursday, but now I stayed at the family of my aunt. A very fine place and now no funny things with my backpack and that stayed that way for years. Till now!, Sometimes I wear a string of flowers.

At my 50th birthday in 2006 I wanted to stay home for my birthday. Ten years later in 2016 I did celebrate my birthday during the 4Days Marches. What a lot of emotions for me on that Thursday the 21st of July, but it felt good! The glass of wine at my guesthouse tasted extra good that night. At home I celebrated my birthday as usual on the Saturday and/or Sunday just like other years.

Harma Waalkens-Timpener

My finest story about my birthday was in 2003. It was the Day of Wijchen and because of the high temperatures the routes of 40 and 50 Kms were cut by 10 Km. I do love walking but in this case the shorter route was a real present. On the way I spent no attention to my birthday. Of course we think of it eventually and then I take care of something nice to go with the coffee. We stayed for years at a guest-family, that hosted at the peak some 20 walkers in their house. This was of course a lot of fun. The last couple of years I am walking with a friend who lives with his family in Nijmegen-North. So we'll celebrate my birthday in a lot smaller way.

Raymond Meeusen



Harma Waalkens-Timpener



Foto 1: July 16, 1997 at KLM, the 4Days Marches' walkers, John Kieboom 2nd from right.

In the period I took part in the 4Days Marches I celebrated many times my birthday during this walking-event. The nicest birthdays were the ones at the KLM/Royal Dutch Airlines 4Days club, of which I was a part about 8 years at that time.

At every checkpoint the people congratulated me and they sang to me also. The marking "he has his birthday" was behind my name on the checklist.

Once back on our accommodation, congratulations came from Olga van Akkeren, the leader of our KLM-club.

This year my birthday is on the Saturday after the 4Days Marches. I'll be waking up at the campground "De Dennen". There is a good chance that people will sing a birthday song for me.

I think to celebrate my birthday Saturday night with my husband and kids, but I will not spend too much attention to it. In the early days (around my 18th birthday) I would wear a special T-shirt to show I was celebrating my birthday. Up front the text in Dutch and on the back in English. The result of that was that there was birthday song singing regularly by (foreign) military detachments.

I can remember that one year I was sung to by an American detachment and they all wanted a thank you kiss, so this became an extra round of walking and of cause I honored their request!

The photo is from "Pink Wednesday" in 2015.

One year I got a KLM-travelclock and the other year a KLM watch.

One nice birthday was when three KLM--members and a stewardess of Northwest Airlines (KLM-alliance) celebrated their birthday on the same day! We got a big cake in the 4Days Marches' colours with four chocolate walking-boots on it!!

John Kieboom



Foto 2: In 2008 I was completely surprised when my wife, sons and daughters-in law were on the side of the road with the Rotterdam flag and congratulations for my 60th birthday. That was very surprising too!!

I was born and raised in Nijmegen and celebrating my birthday during the 4Days Marches all my life. When I became 12 years of age I could finally walk the 4Days Marches myself. The best that can happen is when the finish and my birthday are at the same day! This photo is made in 2016, after the finish of my 10th 4Days Marches. My mate Tycho started the day with handing me a shirt with the text "It's my birthday" so it showed very well the whole day.



Willem Jansen

I took that day my friend Jeanine with me for the last few kilometers (Jeanine has the down-syndrome, but a lot of long-distance walkers and fast-walkers know her because of her parents) she celebrates her birthday on the 22nd of July too. This year we were camping on the same campground and I had made the same T-shirt for the both of us.

Veronica Leijtens



Veronica walking together with her friend Jeanine

In march 1998 I retired early. At my departure of the University of Groningen, where I was in charge of the interior services with their own upholsterers and furniture makers they asked the question “what are you going to do now?” For me the answer was clear: “I am going to walk the 4Days Marches in Nijmegen” Since that day walking became my hobby. On my 61st birthday on July 21ste I get up at 4:00 and I’ll drive to Lent where the bus leaves for Nijmegen so I can start at 6:00. It’s a great experience to walk the first 4Days Marches in your life celebrating your birthday. With an enthusiastic daughter singing the whole day and when finishing in Nijmegen in the afternoon she’ll be able to find an orchestra director that will play a Dutch birthday song. Great!!! The first 4Days Marches is very impressive and releases a lot of emotions, but years after it becomes even greater.



Herman with daughter and grandchildren

I am doing nothing particular on this day, although I always say that there are very few people who get 40.000 guests on their birthday. For me the 4Days Marches are one big party on itself!

Ans van Soelen

I celebrate my birthday normally very quiet and simple wit old 4Days Marches' friends that stay in the same hotel. No extraordinaries, but very pleasant. It is also nice that my husband celebrates his birthday during the 4Days Marches' week too. So this is a double party. Although we are not walking this year, we will be attending Nijmegen.

Wil Riebeek

In 2017 I celebrated my 80th birthday on the finishing day and because of this occasion my daughter Carin and three grandchildren walked with me. All the reasons for an festive happening. In the guide “ Special walkers” I am mentioned under number 40. On the third day of the 4Days Marches I celebrated my 85th birthday and again accompanied by Carin, Daan and Anne. They all had to walk 40 Kms and halfway the route you will join each other. Than if you finish on July 22nd 2022 for the 22nd time you cannot wish for a better thing to happen. When finishing I said “I can’t do it very much better, so I don’t have to do this anymore” But in het mean time 2023 arrived and this year too my birthday is during the 4Days Marches. And I am enlisted again! If it works out I’ll be there on that Friday; my 86th birthday!

Herman Oosterman

It’s often exiting when my birthday will be round the 4Days Marches. Sometimes during the walking days, but most of the times just not. This year too I have my birthday on a Monday. The celebration for my family is most of the time shifted to the nearest Sunday. This will happen this year too. That way I can get my starting ticket in a relaxed way and prepare myself for walking. In 2001 I celebrated my birthday for the first day during the walking days. A godchild of mine followed college in Nijmegen and with a couple of cousins she surprised me with a banner at the side of the road at the starting place. They got me a button to wear that said that it was my birthday. I still have that button and can still wear it in other years.

Theo Reuling



Theo Reuling and companion

I am walking the 4Days Marches since 2005 and in this period I “celebrated” my birthday 18 times during this walking event. I celebrate when I feel like it, the weekend before or the weekend after.

During the 4Days Marches I keep it unnoticed, I focus myself on finishing the 4 grueling days.

Theo Rovers

My birthday is on July 15th, so it happens that my birthday is in the 4Days Marches' week. I think it’s super sociable and I walk in a group that consists of five persons and this is very pleasant. My walking-companions give me a party-hat and everyone congratulates my on the way. It is a real big party. Years ago I was always very sad on my birthday because it was almost always in the summer-holydays, but since I take part in the 4Days Marches it is really great during my birthday.

Rageni Goeptar

In 2022 my birthday was the Sunday before the 4Days Marches. We are always in Nijmegen the weekend before. We always attend the 4Days Marches' mass at the St Stevens church. Always very nice and fine. Then we celebrate my birthday on the Grote Markt with coffee and pastries together with our 4Days Marches' friends which is very enjoyable. After that we go to the Wedren to get our starting-tickets, that's always a party too! Next I took my friends to dinner. And also in the hotel my birthday was celebrated. That year the personnel of the Mercure Hotel sang a birthday song at breakfast, which was very nice. This year we'll walk the 4Days Marches again, I'm up for my 20th medal. I'm very excited about it. This year my birthday will be the Monday before the 4Days Marches and then we'll celebrate it in Nijmegen with a smaller group. I am looking forward to it already! The Sunday before we'll celebrate it in the usual way. The foto is on the Grote Markt. I am sitting up front with pastry in my hand.

Inge Snoep



Inge eating a delicious cake on the Grote Markt in Nijmegen

Celebrating a birthday during the 4Days Marches. There is where it all started. Years ago I heard that the finish of the 4Days Marches was on my birthday. I always wanted to take part in this and this time it looked really fun: 28.000 guests on my party! And so I went. From this first birthday I remember that especially my family who came in great numbers, saw a lot of walking people, but could not find me in the crowd. Finally they gave the gladiolus to other walkers.

I have walked the 4Days Marches 11 times now and I will not walk in 2023. There is more on the field of walking than Nijmegen alone. This year I am walking the Camino in Spain from Santiago de Compostella to Finisterre and Muxia. Next to this I am enjoying a lot of other walking events.

Kor van Timmeren



Different photos of Kor van Timmeren

We didn't know much about what would happen, because we are not from Nijmegen and there were no mobile phones at the time. Later on that went a lot better. From 26 times I walked in Nijmegen, I could celebrate my birthday there for 15 times. I celebrated even 3 times on the finish day, it could have been four times but unfortunately 2006



Yvonne Bos-Rops

My walking friend always make it a real happening. In the past years they treated me with 4Days Marches' candy, drinks, gladiolus and walking shoes as pendant, little statues, keychain and pin, mugs with the 4Days Marches' logo on it 4Days Marches' books the 4Days Marches' CD from the Sint Maartenskliniek (St. Maartens Hospital) and of course the pin with the melting 4Days Marches from last year. It became a nice collection.

To make it really enjoyable I got a sash with written on it "60 and sexy". 5 years later I finished with the text "It's my birthday" If you do a thing like that you are very busy, from all sides you get congratulated and very nice comments, especially from co-walkers that are celebrating too. On the question most asked: "what age are you now?" I have made a standard answer "that's a state secret!". This year I am celebrating again at the finishday, I am looking forward to it already.

Yvonne Bos-Rops



Yvonne cheers at the finish



My walking friend Fred Wassink (passed away too soon) persuaded me to take part of the 4Days Marches with the words “if you take part once you’re hooked forever”
I thought “yeah sure, well we’ll see about that” Of course we enlisted for the longest stretch, 50 Km, although we could legally have chosen for 40 Km. And I really enjoyed everything, but above all the great spirit on the way, I had never experienced a thing like that. Hooked? Yes sure right from the first time.

Year after year followed and finally in 2011 for the 10th time. I walked together with my son and his friend on 50 Km, both of them for the first time and they were well trained sportsmen. But getting up every day so early to be able to start in time, at 4 in the night, was not a thing they were used to and that became more and more a problem. Every early morning I took a picture before we started and every morning the eyes got smaller. Most of the time I celebrate my birthday during the 4Days Marches and in that year it was on the second walking day. Most of the times people congratulate me on that day, but tiredness and sleepiness took their toll, even 50 Km’s long! In the mean time I had planned something at the finish. Almost every time the volunteers at the sing-desk congratulate me with my birthday, which is very thoughtful. I told my son and his friend that they had to pay close attention about the signing procedure. And that is what happened, they were very surprised! Of course after that we celebrated my birthday at the Wedren, at last we finished the 4Days Marches.

This year I will be there again and hope to celebrate my 71st birthday, this year on a Thursday and most of the time there will be some family on the roadside.
The real celebrating will be on the Saturday of Sunday after the 4Days Marches with the family and friends.

Jan Vogelsangs

Congratulations to all!

Too late, but not forgotten. Last year, a number of members of our association reached a special milestone.
Are you walking for a lustrum reward this year? Then come to the reunion in Buren! Then you will be awarded your reward by the chair.

15x	20x	25x
Mr. T. Meijers Hank	Mrs. C. Derksen Wehl	Mr. T. Ridders Germany
Mrs. B. Vissers Heukelom	Mr. F. v.Meel Den Bosch	Mr. G. Groenen Nijmegen
	Mrs. P.M. Gerrits Middelaar	



Café Raafs Location founding of the Association of Gold Medallists in 1950, 1-3 Stikke Hezelstraat at Nijmegen.
Source: Regional Archives Nijmegen