

1852 – 2002

150 YEARS OF NOOTEBOOM TEXTIEL B.V.

Interwoven with textile for one and half centuries

	<u>in business</u>		
	<u>from</u>	<u>until</u>	
URIAS NOOTEBOOM	1852 -	1901	49 years
ANTON NOOTEBOOM	1901 -	1945	44 years
HARRY NOOTEBOOM	1945 -	1960	15 years
ARIE NOOTEBOOM	1960 -	1994	34 years
SANDER NOOTEBOOM	1994 -	2002 & onwards	8 years
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			150 years

On the 24th of May 2002 Nootboom Textiel B.V. celebrated its 150th anniversary. Five generations of the Tilburger dynasty then become interwoven with the tissue, knitted to the fabric of textile. It began quite simply in 1852 with the founder Urias Nootboom, the great, great, grandfather of Sander Nootboom, the current owner-director of the firm.

From Urias, the founder in the distant past up until Sander, the current trendsetter, we would like to give you a bird's eye introduction into the history of Nootboom Textiel B.V..

THE BEGINNING

Urias Nootboom, the pioneer (1852 – 1901)

Let's go back 150 years in time to the year 1852 where we find ourselves in the burgeoning town of Tilburg, the city in Brabant which would eventually become the centre for fabrics in the current day Netherlands and a major industrial city. Tilburg was still a rustic city in those days. It was formed through the centuries from hamlets and settlements merging together.

Urias Nootboom was born in the centre of the city which is where he also grew up. He had a wish to be an entrepreneur and so set up a small business in premises at the Zomerstraat, which eventually became number 34. In those days gentlemen's clothing was primarily manufactured from cloth and leather. He bought these materials from the emerging local textile manufacturers, quickly acquiring expert trading skills. From the very beginning they were important for the city's economy. That small business very quickly turned into an actual shop which also became the base for Urias' business trips within the region. Soon he was selling his textiles in the city to business merchants in the textile industry, especially to tailors in the vicinity of Tilburg. Everything was still small scale then. Urias always set off on business trips without appointment. There were simply no means of communication as we know of and are used to today.

Early on, although he travelled in a carriage, you could say he was more of a market vendor than a merchant tending to business in an professional capacity. In those days Tilburg was surrounded by countryside interspersed with hamlets whose livelihood came primarily from agriculture and raising livestock. It would be fair to say that Urias took his merchandise along on his periodic visits to farmers. Nevertheless, he soon created a furore and when he passed his business on to his son Anton in 1901 it had become pretty well known as well as having become a significant undertaking.

THE CONTINUATION

Anton Nooteboom, the man who opened up new horizons (1901 – 1945)

Anton set to work energetically. He was even more ambitious than his father and strove to expand the business. As early as 1916 he had his business listed as 'trade in drapery' in the Register of the Chamber of Commerce in Tilburg. Its registration, under file number 91, then became an official fact. This low number indicates that there were just a few significant companies in Tilburg at the time.

The drapery Anton focused on included material, leather, worsted, ironed yarns and haberdashery for tailors. He managed to expand his father's sales territory to cover the whole of the province of Noord-Brabant even before the first World War. This was a milestone in the early decades of the 20th century. Anton purchased his material from the manufacturers in the Tilburg area. There were already 150 of them in the run up to the hey-day of the textile industry. His father had built up a good relationship with most of these manufacturers. Nevertheless, Anton also purchased the haberdashery further from home, in Enschede, which was also rapidly becoming a hub of the trade in fabrics. He was actually opening up new horizons even then. Anton travelled in a carriage for a long time, probably the same one his father had ridden in half a century ago. When the Model T Ford motor arrived on the market in the early thirties, he did not hesitate and exchanged his carriage for an automobile, significantly increasing his mobility as a consequence. It also enlarged his span of activity and therefore his possibilities.

With everything running smoothly and business going well, the Second World War suddenly threw a spanner in the works Anton had so carefully managed to build up. He was forced to put his activities on the backburner during the war. Everything was scarce, the things Anton needed for his business most of all. This forced him to be ingenious. He found out that his wares were a sought-after means of exchange and managed to stay afloat practising the oldest form of trade; barter. Ever since 1901, after taking over the business from his father, he had realised a steady growth in sales which meant that the setbacks during the war did not quite finish him off. After the war he passed on the rudder to his son Harry. It was a basically sound business with rather a lot of potential that fell into the Harry's lap.

THE POST-WAR PROGRESS

Harry Nootboom, the man who built things up again (1945 – 1960)

Harry began to revive with lots of enthusiasm the enterprise that had been battered by the war. He had the stroke of luck that the wares he sold were in high demand during the early post-war years. This would only be of benefit to him. This Nootboom was a competent and clever business man, perhaps even more so than his forbears. His vision extended perhaps further than that of Urias and Anton and he understood that if he wanted to keep ahead of the competition while maintaining his strategic alliances, he would have to work on a broad expansion of the range of wares. This meant understanding the requirements of the trade, which was subject to the whims of fashion. It also meant being a good judge of quality in order to ensure that his customers would rarely if ever be dissatisfied. Finally, he needed to know where best to do his procurement. Harry had it all: a finely tuned sense of taste, a nose for sniffing out the best bargains, a keen business sense and a knack for making money. He expanded his business and started buying textiles in Belgium: Nootboom's first cross-border activity. He introduced lining material from Haaksbergen and added uniform fabrics to the range of wares (firemen, police, the army and brass bands). Representatives were appointed for the provinces of Brabant, Zeeland and Limburg and one for the North of The Netherlands as well.

Meanwhile, the South of the Netherlands still remained Harry Nootboom's sole territory. This was in any case where he decided to seize his chance. He treated his salesmen generously. In addition to a company car he also gave them a rail pass. The salesman could leave the car at the location when the working day ended in order to go home by train, returning the following day to pick up his car and resume his journey on to the next customer. Apparently, Harry dismissed the added costs at least in terms of efficiency. Anyway, Nootboom Textiel was flourishing. Sales figures continued rising and Harry looked for new opportunities. In the fifties of the last century, he expanded his range to include fabrics for ladies' wear. This decision turned out to be a stroke of brilliance. Men's ready-made clothing was rapidly becoming in high demand and that would seriously affect the hegemony of the tailors who were Nootboom's main customers. He had sought and found new custom.

Harry, though he had luck on his side it was unfortunately not to last. He unexpectedly died in 1960 at the age of 53. His elder son Arie, who had just turned 22 then, had to take over the business a lot sooner than he ever expected. Nevertheless, that's what he did.

MODERN TIMES

Arie Nootboom, the innovator (1960 – 1994)

Young Arie was thrown in at the deep end. He needed to respond quickly. Even though his father had trained him well and he already knew quite a few tricks of the trade, the actual running of the business was still unknown territory to him. Fortunately, he could rely on the experience of competent employees who had learnt the ropes under his father's tenure. They set him on his way, and with a commercial instinct as if to the manor born, he soon became a worthy successor of his predecessor's legacy. Arie searched for innovation, leaving the established route his father had travelled by adapting the organization and modernizing the

company. He introduced a broader collection and changed the sales method and tactics. Furthermore, he improved the administration and streamlined the supply chain, leading the company into the digital era and staying on top of developments in computer technology. This Nootboom looked a lot further beyond the borders than his father ever did. When it came to purchasing abroad, his father had restricted himself to Belgium. Arie made new contacts in Europe and Asia, among others in England, Italy, Portugal, Japan and China. This resulted in exciting opportunities for purchasing stocks. What his father had already foreseen and experienced, now became reality. Fabric for men's clothing was quickly discarded from the collection. Arie could no longer find a profitable market for them. He then focused completely on fabrics for women's and children's wear. He knew it was promising merchandise. He included in his supply the entire range from woven and knitted fabrics, undyed and printed materials, to cotton and wool, but also the latest products and fabrics of synthetic origin, manufactured from artificial fibres such as polyester and viscose. Consequently, Nootboom Textiel B.V. became a modern-day business in fabrics. Profitable outlets were found primarily through rural drapery shops and with commercial travellers. However, he also found customers among the smaller ready-to-wear tailor shops.

Arie then decided to start selling abroad. Belgium and Switzerland were the first international markets. In order to be able to present larger collections, Madame Esselle in Amsterdam and Mutsaers Textiel in Tilburg were acquired, thereby significantly enhancing the company's capacity. Supply and sales rose in proportion.

Arie was known to use humour in his business relationships. "It works", he always said. Among colleagues his standard retort to the question when asked how things were going was: "I'm not going to tell you how things are going otherwise you'll copy them." He also introduced the slogan 'On Safari with Uncle Arie' among his customers. It was the slogan he launched on the occasion of a grand clearance sale in 1979, resulting in a completely empty warehouse within three days. Not an inch of cloth was left.

Arie Nootboom is a business man as well as a family man. He likes to compare the Nootboom character to the human hand. This is how he puts it: "By shaking someone's hand, we ooze warmth and seek contact with one another. That is the beginning of friendship. We can also put that right hand to work and the resulting activity could lead to business. Furthermore, our hand has five fingers. When we point a finger in the air, it is meant as a warning; take care is the message! We also ball our fist when things need to be emphasised. As a family, those are the qualities you need to hold up, especially in order to persist with a business tradition through a 150 years of good and bad times."

In 1994, Arie in his turn passed on the business to his then 26-year old son Sander, who had already assisted him for a while with a view to eventually taking over the business. Arie himself was 56. In his opinion the baton had to be passed on without delay. He no longer wanted to be in Sander's way.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

Sander Nootboom, the exporting reformer (since 1994)

What had happened to Arie, eventually also happened to Sander, who has been the owner-director of Nootboom Textiel B.V. since 1994. He too was thrown in at the deep end. Arie felt that his son should take over the reigns early on. Being an old hand at the trade, he

already had taught Sander so much that he could with confidence entrust the company to his son. Arie did not make the wrong decision. Sander felt that more attention needed to be given to export activities and so plunged into foreign markets, especially in Europe. Success would soon follow. Today, Nootboom Textiel B.V. sells in, among other countries, Germany, Austria, Poland, Lithuania and Denmark. Furthermore, Nootboom textiles can be found all over Europe. In his own unique manner, he brought about a significant turn-around in the company's approach to the market. When Sander assumed his stewardship, the sales ratio of domestic sales to sales abroad was 70%-30%. Today, that aspect has been increased to a ratio of 80% to 20%.

The business he took over from his father concentrated mainly on materials measured by the yard i.e. fabrics for tailor's shops and commercial travellers. Sander soon tapped into the circle of major ready-to-wear tailor shops and traders in foreign markets. Ever since, he has reorganised the sales force by utilising strategic alliances made with agents in every country where Nootboom sells its products. In order to serve those markets with the exclusive fabrics they required, he went looking for suppliers in the Far East. He found them in the Asian countries of China, Indonesia, Taiwan and Korea, though he has also been successful closer to home as for example in Turkey.

In between, he also managed to set up a joint venture with Kresz in Poland, a leading Polish textile wholesaler in Eastern Europe. Sander has also turned Nootboom into a partial fabricator. Instead of buying their fabrics ready-made, Nootboom now also purchases plain textiles which are delivered to textile dyeworks to be processed according to the customer's wishes. Nootboom is able to purchase on call so as to meet the wishes of customers thereby guaranteeing them a short period of delivery.

Sander Nootboom has even greater ambitions. He wants to turn Nootboom Textiel B.V. into a firm on the cutting edge of textile supply that occupies an unassailable position among its customers. A company that also knows how to combine utmost efficiency with a customer-friendly attitude.

Sander Nootboom knows he is the fifth link in the textile chain of the family, the seeds of which were sown by his great, great grandfather Urias in 1852. He is fully aware of this responsibility. He does not want to break that chain and hopes in due course to weld a sixth strong link on to it.