



She even helped choose the name by which their business empire became famous. Her husband's recently published biography recounts how Anton Rupert decided, in 1946, that it was time to rename his cigarette-manufacturing business, then called "Voorbrand".

Rupert went to bed that night with the issue on his mind. In a dream, the paintings of Rembrandt appeared, and "when he woke up, he knew instantly what the name of his company would be", according to *Anton Rupert: A Biography*, by Ebbe Dommissie and Willie Esterhuysen.

Rupert then "roused Huberte to share his brainwave. 'We were so excited, we never thought about sleep again,' [Huberte] recalls. 'We made tea and talked till daylight. Both of us knew the name was spot on.'"

Out of Rembrandt grew a multibillion-rand investment business (Remgro, Venfin and Richemont) that began with filter-tipped cigarettes and wine and now includes interests in tobacco, financial services, luxury goods, mining, telecommunications, media and technology.

With this wealth behind them, the couple became the patrons of scores of worthy causes including conservation, science and architectural heritage.

Huberte Gerardus Goote was born on December 3 1919 in Paul Kruger's house in Pretoria, five months after her father, an immigrant teacher from the Netherlands called Hubertus Johannes Goote, died in the Spanish flu epidemic.

She was baptised "Hubertus", after her paternal grandfather, a minister in the Netherlands. A telegram led him to believe that he had a grandson and he proposed that the child be "given the family name of Hubertus Gerardus, which was duly done".

Later, when the likes of Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands became friends of the Ruperts, she would be teased about having a man's name. But she refused to adopt its Dutch feminine form — "Huberta was a hippopotamus, she said. In the end they agreed on Huberte, the French feminine form," according to the biography.

Until the age of seven, she grew up in Rustenburg, where her mother supported both her and her elder sister, Bets, by "sewing dresses for friends" and collecting firewood and beetroot from the family farm she inherited. In many later interviews Huberte cited this time as the origin of her frugality and disapproval of ostentation.

In 1927, her mother married Piet Wessels, a teacher who later became headmaster of Krugersdorp's Monument High School, which Huberte attended. She was a bright child and passed her first three primary school years in one year. She showed an early interest in the arts, acting in operettas and joining the school choir.

After matriculating, she worked as a children’s librarian in Krugersdorp, which helped her get a job in the campus library while studying at the University of Pretoria.

There she met Anton Rupert through their shared involvement in the university’s student representative council. Anton, a postgraduate student in chemical engineering, was its chairman when she was elected as the representative of first-year students.

Active in student politics, both Huberte and Anton helped organise centenary celebrations for the Great Trek.

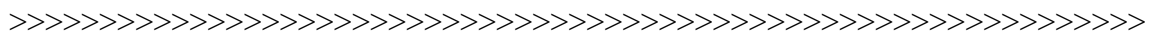
Their engagement was announced on October 10 1940 — Kruger Day — and the couple were married a year later in Krugersdorp’s Doppe church. The politician father of one of her bridesmaids told Huberte: “You are going to marry a leader of the people, a man of whom we expect much. Decide early on that you want to be his helpmate. Someone must keep the home fires burning.”

Huberte took the advice to heart. Besides being “the unpaid clerk, typist, telephonist, secretary and messenger” at Voorbrand, she studied the Companies Act. This allowed her to take company minutes and, presumably, discuss intelligently the ideas her husband had when he woke from his dreams.

Huberte’s premonitions of mortality helped to create what may well be remembered as her most important legacy. As she explained in an interview six months ago, she decided to commission the Rembrandt Art Museum, now open to the public in Stellenbosch, when she realised that she and her husband had become too frail to look after their extensive art collection.

The achievement of the art museum, though, could never erase her greatest pain — the death of her son, Anthonij, in a car accident exactly four years to the day, October 28, before she herself died.

She is survived by her husband, Anton, son Johann, daughter Hanneli and five grandchildren. — Bonny Schoonakker



Rupert loses wife to her battle with cancer

HUBERTE Rupert, wife of industrialist Anton Rupert, died in Stellenbosch on Friday — on the same day that her youngest son, Anthonij, was killed in a car accident four years ago.

Huberte, 86, who had cancer, died in her sleep.

She will be buried in a private ceremony on Wednesday, after which a memorial service will be held at the Stellenbosch Dutch Reformed Church.

A rock taken from the Cederberg mountains will be her tombstone, according to her wishes, her family said in a statement.

Huberte was a well-known patron of the arts and was involved in establishing the Rembrandt Art Collection and a number of theatre and classical music projects.

Huberte and Anton met when members of the Student Representative Council at Pretoria University and were married in 1941.

She is survived by her husband, her son Johann, daughter Hanneli and five grandchildren.

— Henriette Geldenhuys