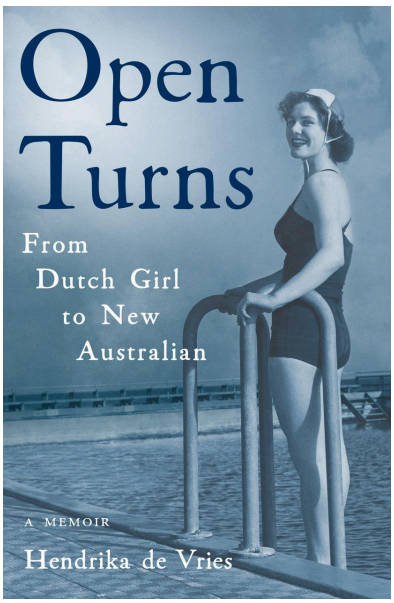
***"Intentions are like prayers, if you pay attention they come back as destiny,"* her mother has taught her.**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Displaced girl finds her inner champion in Australia's waters as award-winning author continues her story



SANTA BARBARA, CA — Hendrika "Henny" de Vries was just a little girl when she experienced brutal violence and hunger in WWII Amsterdam. Now a teenage immigrant swimmer in 1950s Australia, she must learn to turn challenges into success. She is smart, she swims fast, and she has definite opinions about the kind of woman she intends to be.

In this moving and heartfelt memoir, de Vries expertly dissects her complex experiences and provides a much needed look into what it means to be a fiercely alive young woman in a world that requires women to minimize themselves.

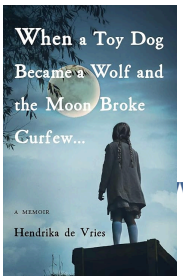
A compelling coming of age memoir told through the eyes of a displaced young girl with big dreams, "Open Turns" dives into the intersection between intentions and destiny through reflective and inspirational story telling.

"Open Turns: From Dutch Girl to New Australian"

Hendrika de Vries | September 2, 2025 | She Writes Press | Memoir

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Ebook | 978-1647429515 | $12.99



Praise and awards for Hendrika de Vries

2019 Mary Sarton Women's Book Award winner

2019 Nautilus Award for Memoir and Personal Journey winner

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Non-fiction Author Association Gold
2020 Eric Hoffer First Horizon and Culture award winner
2020 Next Generation Indie Book Awards Finalist - Memoirs
2021 NYC Big Book Awards winner - Memoir and Young Adult Non-fiction

"*Open Turns* is a **beautifully told coming-of-age story** that captures the dislocation of immigration, the resilience it demands, the joys and pressures of elite swimming, and a young woman's evolving understanding of what strength means in a world shaped by war and particular expectations of womanhood. Devries' memoir **offers an insightful portrait of a young woman finding her way in a new country, in her sport, and in herself.**"

—Vicki Valosik, author of *Swimming Pretty: The Untold Story of Women in Water*

"In *Open Turns*, Hendrika de Vries **shows us the twist and turns that a young Dutch migrant girl navigates to find an identity in Australia after surviving the devastation of her native Amsterdam under Nazi occupation**. The strength and speed of her body provides her an identity and sense of belonging as a competitive swimmer in her new land. This coming-of-age story will inspire the migrant within each of us seeking home. Supported by loving parents, a strong will, and powerful resilience, DeVries reveals the meaning of destiny. **You won't be able to put this book down!**"

—Maureen Murdock, author of *The Heroine's Journey*

"This beautiful book **speaks for all traumatized and displaced children**. An inspiring tale of a young girl's intentions, guided by parental wisdom and love, to find her inner champion in a land where she struggled to belong. **A powerful reminder that we can all dream and manifest a brighter future.**"

—Maryanne Mooney, author of *The Worthy Leader: from Potential to Mastery*

"What a powerful continuation of Hendrika de Vries' story! It begins in 1950 when 13-year-old "Henny" and her family emigrate to Australia, a completely new and different world with no understanding of the war trauma she has just survived. I loved the way this **honest, sometimes sad, but ultimately hopeful book evoked memories of my own experience as an immigrant and as an adolescent.**"

—Christine Downing, Ph.D, scholar, author of *The Goddess: Mythological Images of the Feminine*

"*Open Turns: From Dutch Girl to New Australian*— asks three essential questions that are both mythic and spiritual: Who am I apart from my talents and dreams? What destiny is calling me to become who I authentically am? What does remembering my past add to the texture of who I have become? **Moving between becoming and being Hendrika's coming-of-age adventure into herself and out to the world resonates with all of us who have wondered about our identity, our destiny, and our purpose in life.**"

—Dennis Patrick Slattery, Distinguished Emeritus Professor,

author of *The Fictions in Our Convictions: Essays on Cultural Mythology*

"*Open Turns* is a **fascinating coming-of-age story** about a young Dutch girl who embarks on a journey into the unknown when her family, traumatized by WWII, immigrates to Australia. With strength and chutzpah, "Henny" finds her place in the new country, becomes a successful swimmer and grows by fighting her own demons that demand her resilience when success does not come as expected. **I loved this book and want to hear the sequel!**"

—Radhule Weininger, clinical psychologist, author of *Heart Medicine*

"In *Open Turns* Hendrika deVries continues recounting her life story, moving from post-war Holland to her new life in Australia. This **beautifully written memoir gives voice to women's struggle to find an identity where their place is dictated by men.** What makes de Vries's memoir so unique is how she **vividly shows us the life of a talented athlete fighting for identity and belonging as an immigrant.**"

—Elayne Klasson, author of *Love is a Rebellious Bird* and *The Earthquake Child*



More about Hendrika de Vries

Hendrika is a retired family therapist, a teacher, and a writer, chronicling her life experiences with oppression and resistance in Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, migration, competitive swimming, and misogyny in 1950s Australia. A fierce feminist and activist, de Vries infuses her writing with historical depth and personal perspective on challenges facing women and anyone deemed other. She is the author of *When a Toy Dog Became a Wolf and the Moon Broke Curfew,* award-winning memoir of her WWII childhood. Her writing has also appeared in *The New York Times* and the *LA Times*. She lives in Santa Barbara, CA. Find out more about her at **www.agirlfromamsterdam.com**.

Follow Hendrika on social media:

Facebook: @HendrikadeVriesAuthor | Twitter: @HENDRIKADEVRIE3
Instagram: @hendrika.devries.92

In an interview, Hendrika de Vries can discuss:

- Dealing with the challenges of major life turning points.
- What intention means to her, and how she believes it plays a part in all of our stories
- Returning to writing and sharing the next part of her story after her first award-winning memoir
- How young women's experiences today echo her own experiences as a girl in 1950s Australia
- The difficulties people face emigrating and what belonging means to her
- Her experiences fleeing a war-torn country and how that influenced her work as a family therapist
- What she hopes readers will take away from “Open Turns”

An Interview with

Hendrika de Vries

1. **You faced many disappointments and challenges in your journey. How did you remain resilient through so many challenges? What advice do you have for people facing similar challenges?**
   My parents would not let me think of myself as a victim. I was taught that challenges are part of human life and can be turning points, OPEN TURNS, where you access your strength and resilience. You are not alone. The universe is a vast mystery where we are all interconnected. When you start sharing your authentic story you will be surprised by the support and serendipities that come your way.

2. **What parallels do you see between your experience as a young woman in the 1950s and the experience women have today?**
   I think it is still all about the female body and who has control over it. Throughout history women’s bodies have been objects of debates and discussions. Laws (Roe vs. Wade for

example), rules, debates and comments about her appearance, her sexuality, her ability or desire to carry life, her strength, her weaknesses and where “she belongs” have dominated history and objectified girls. A person may have a brilliant mind, but even today, if that brilliant mind exists in a female body, she will face far more scrutiny than minds in male bodies. Until women have total ownership over their own bodies, girls in every era and culture will be vulnerable to oppression and depression. Of course, social media has added complications that a young woman in the 1950s never experienced.

3. How did writing *When a Toy Dog Became a Wolf and the Moon Broke Curfew* inform your new memoir?

Readers of my first memoir clamored for a sequel. This made me reflect on how my experience as an adolescent immigrant in the 1950s might be relevant for today’s reader. The final chapters in *When a Toy Dog Became a Wolf and the Moon Broke Curfew* recount the circumstances that made my parents decide to emigrate to Australia. Writing about that experience helped me understand the moods and introspection of a displaced adolescent in a strange land and encouraged me to let her have her authentic voice in OPEN TURNS. Today the topic of migration is again of political relevance and I hope my story will influence readers to remember their own ancestral migrant stories.

4. In what way do your experiences as a young woman influence your work as a family therapist?

Oh in almost all ways. My experiences taught me about trauma, PTSD, transgenerational trauma, changing family dynamics and relationships in migration or major life losses. And my training and my own life experiences also showed me how we may access our human resilience, strength and hope for recovery and renewed well being during those times. The title OPEN TURNS expresses it well, I think. Our turning points or life transitions open us up to new paths in our complex human existence.

5. What advice do you have for girls or women fighting misogyny today?

As I always say: it is not your fault. Speak up. Do not silence your voice. Do not go it alone. Reach out to others. Join support groups and writing groups to tell your story. There are resources available.

6. Do you plan to explore other areas of your life in future writings?
Well being 87, I may write some articles or essays about later experiences. I have some thoughts about writing down my reflections on aging, for example. Probably not another book. Although I still feel “fiercely alive” I am also ready to curl up and catch up on reading all the wonderful books my author cohort at She Writes Press have written.

7. How have you seen intention and destiny playing out in your story?
Serendipities, connections and weird coincidences have played a huge part in my life. I believe intentions do lead to destiny in a wondrous way, because everything and all of us are interconnected. There is power in the way we think about things or who we intend to be. It impacts the outcome or our future. My long life has led me to the conclusion that the world is much more mysterious than we like to think, and that intentions combined with an openness to the mystery of life reveals paths and connections that create our destiny.

8. What do you hope readers will take away from *Open Turns*?
An understanding of what it meant to be a fiercely alive young woman with big dreams in the 1950s, and the rights denied to women that they still had to fight for, and how we can do that today.. To dream big, be prepared for disappointments, dashed hopes and detours, but don’t give up hope. Realize that transitions are times of OPEN TURNS that build resilience and strength for new opportunities. Jump in the water!