



Our Story

Experiences of the Dutch in Queensland

Publisher: The Dutch Australian Community Action Federation - Qld Inc,
PO Box 235, Ashgrove Qld 4060

Published in Brisbane, April 2001.

ISBN: 0-646-41201-9

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www.printacular.com.au

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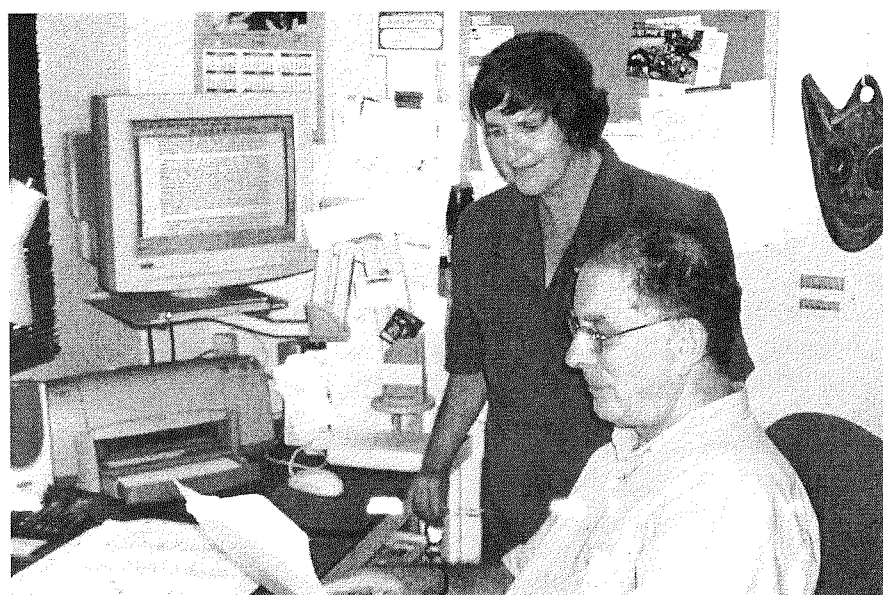
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February 2001 - Annelies Zeissink, DACA-President and Rob-Jan Mijnaerends, editors of this book at work.

PREFACE

It is a well known fact that Dutch merchant ships of the Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagny (VOC) [*Dutch United East Indies Compagny*] landed on the Australian continent which later became known as 'New Holland.' In 1606, the ship the 'Duyfken' carried out the first recorded landing on Australian soil but the barren and scarcely populated land did not appeal to the VOC merchants. Dutch immigration started during the 'gold rushes' of the 1800s but petered out, to take off again during the 'great depression' in the 1930s. During World War II, many Dutch were stationed at Wacol's 'Camp Columbia', the Head Quarters of the Dutch Army. During the '50s, upon the conclusion of World War II, there was a large influx of migrants from Europe, including a total of more than 160,000 arrivals of Dutch-speaking people. Dutch migration continued throughout the century and there are still a few hundred people departing from The Netherlands for Australian shores each year.

At the beginning of the new millennium, people like to reflect on achievements and history of the past century. Hence, it would be appropriate to record the experiences of the Dutch who settled in Queensland. It is our intention to foster a greater understanding about their background and the role they played, and continue to play, in the development of this state.

People who came either directly from The Netherlands or via countries such as Indonesia wrote their stories for this book, which is not an academic text. The editors tried to maintain the style of the writers, while carrying out the normal editing tasks to achieve clarity of contents and readability. Some stories had to be shortened to conform to available page size. If stories could not be shortened, submitted photographs were added to use all space available. Historical currency values mentioned in the stories have not been converted into dollars and cents to avoid repetition. At the time of decimal conversion (1966) the values were as follows: £1 = \$2, 1 guinea = \$2.20, 1 shilling = 10 cents.

Some stories are of people coming to this 'country down under', who tried to 'assimilate' according to the expectations of 'Anglo-Australians' but rejected those unrealistic ideals. They took on a new identity as integrated 'Dutch-Australians' and were proud of it. Others have denounced their 'Dutchness' and assimilated. Many Dutch-Australians are visiting The Netherlands to soak up the culture and to stay in touch with their relatives and friends. There is also a sizeable group, who reluctantly accepts the 'tyranny of distance', which separates them from the country of their birth. They have come to terms with their life in Australia, living here mainly for the sake of their children and grandchildren, as well as the pleasant climate and 'the Australian way of life'. They maintain their 'Dutchness' to a large extent but understandably, there would be various shades of integration amongst the Dutch settlers.

Whatever the circumstances, the Dutch came to Australia and it changed them, their attitudes, humour and culture, incorporating the best of both worlds. Migrants in general have contributed towards the changes in this nation; to become less parochial and more tolerant. In food language, this means that you can now eat your 'vegemite-on-toast' and have your 'beschuit-met-hagelslag' too, without anyone challenging you.

To the authors - it was a privilege to edit your stories. To the readers - may the contents of this book open a window to our past, provide an understanding of our present and contribute to our overall fulfilment.



Consulaat van het

Koninkrijk der Nederlande

FOREWORD

- The promise of a better life;
- the excitement of a young family to move to a less populated continent;
- the traveller who spends time in a country and returns to live there;
are the main reasons for Dutch migration. No matter what age, immigrating to a country like Australia in being so far from family roots is a wrenching experience but a new beginning can bring with it strength.

In producing this book The Dutch Australian Community Action Federation – Qld Inc. wish to share the stories on the interesting experiences and adventures of Dutch people who came and settled in Queensland. The settling and integration of all migrants is an essential part in the history of a country. It is important to have a written record of this history. In fact in the words of *Emmerson* – “There is properly no history, only biography”.

Within the pages of this book readers may appreciate and discover for themselves perhaps a hidden element of their own lives. They may also come to a better appreciation of the same familiar difficulties experienced by themselves. All too often people feel alone as they undervalue their own cultural ideals and set them aside in learning to deal with a new life in a new country.

I congratulate and thank those who have put this history together. It has been an enormous project by a dedicated few who have given generously of their time with limited resources.

To the writers, thank you for your contribution and co-operation – you have made history

KASPER KUIPER
CONSUL TO QUEENSLAND

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Executive Committee of the Dutch Australian Community Action Federation - Qld Inc. (commonly abbreviated to DACA) decided in 1999 that it would be important to record the experiences of the Dutch in Queensland, eventually resulting in the production of this book. The stories are mainly written in a descriptive way while some are also reflective in nature. All stories, which have been placed in chronological order of the authors' arrival in Australia, have contributed towards the historical and cultural value of this publication.

The DACA-committee is grateful for the support received throughout the process to complete this book. Firstly, we would like to thank Dr Anneke van Kammen for her considerable editorial assistance. Rob-Jan Mijnaerends' editorial role and computer skills in making the text print-ready, while adding images, has been greatly appreciated. Jacomien Mijnaerends designed the cover of this book, which has enhanced the presentation of this compilation of stories.

Our aim was to include a broad range of experiences in relation to time of arrival in Australia and other circumstances. Ongoing publicity in general and personal approach in particular, such as initiated by Ms Hannie van der Mark, have motivated a large number of people to write their story. We thank the authors for their efforts. Without their valuable participation, this publication would not have been possible of course. The articles included form an integral part of the history of Queensland's multicultural population.

We feel honoured that DACA's Patron, the Consul for The Netherlands in Queensland, Mr Kasper Kuiper, accepted our invitation to write the foreword. He also agreed to launch this book on the 29th April 2001 at the 'April Fest' of the Prins Willem Alexander Village.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the financial contribution from the Royal Netherlands Embassy in Canberra as well as the support received from the Nederlandse Emigratie Fonds based in The Netherlands.

Annelies Zeissink,

DACA - President

VIA ICELAND TO QUEENSLAND

Henk Kylstra

It is more than half a century ago and the memory has not dimmed. To be precise, it was on 'St Patrick's Day' 1948, that the good ship 'Aagtekerk' berthed at Port Melbourne, discharging me and my scant belongings into a three-year contract with the Melbourne University. The special procession for that day, with as its centrepiece the ancient archbishop Cardinal Mannix borne up on a grand palanquin, remains imprinted on my memory!

How did this come about? Briefly, it happened as follows. The German occupation of the Netherlands had ended, at last. The liberation (with street parties and all-around rejoicing) was in turn followed by career oriented preoccupation. This meant a return for me to the studies, which were interrupted when, as a young Dutch patriot, we had almost to a man (and for that matter, woman) reneged on signing the proffered 'olive-branch' of a 'declaration of loyalty' to the German war effort. No doubt, partly because of the extensive reading done awaiting the liberation, I did well enough in my first year back, to be selected for a scholarship year at Leeds University in Great Britain. At that place of learning most particularly, I advanced my studies of 'Icelandic'; which now, after 'Old Icelandic'; came to also include a live interest in the modern language. Leeds was at the time the hub of Icelandic studies in the British Isles. Rewarding as all this was, there was also the long pent-up wish to get a little further beyond the study room, the lecture-room and the library. These could not in the end signify the whole meaning of life.

At the Leeds boarding house, we were a motley bunch: two Dutch, three Norwegians, a Slovak surgeon and a Hungarian. When the Norwegian, Tony, drew my attention one day to an advertisement in the then still 'Manchester Guardian', seeking a 'lecturer in Dutch' for Melbourne University, I lent a willing ear, got to work quickly on a curriculum vitae and a letter of application. This completed in laborious longhand, I wondered: "How could all this be made to look really presentable?" 'The British Council', to whom I shall be forever grateful for providing a social outlet beyond the boarding house and intermittent contact with other students, came to the rescue. I became well acquainted with these excellent people during my 1946-1947 year in Leeds; they became my friends and so I had no totally disabling scruples about asking the typist at the British Council, Eileen, whether she would assist me in converting my application draft into presentable typescript form. She in fact did better than that and what I finally sent off looked quite professional.

I had just about forgotten that I had done all this when, camping by the sea in East-Yorkshire, I saw an Icelandic trawler in Grimsby harbour and impulsively hitched a ride to Iceland with it. When there, encamped in the grounds of the university at Reykjavik, out of the blue, I received a telegram to say that I had the Melbourne job. At once I confirmed my acceptance and returned to the Netherlands, via Leeds. The rest was a matter of sorting out details with the University department in Melbourne and, most importantly, booking my passage. The 'Aagtekerk' was a lovely ship: a freighter, where I was one of a dozen passengers. During the seven weeks it took to get me from Antwerp to Melbourne, routine on board became a way of life. I missed it when we arrived. Later I moved to the academic life of the University of Queensland for a number of years and I am presently retired in Brisbane.

December 2000

MOVING TO QUEENSLAND ACROSS THREE CONTINENTS

Dimmen de Graaff

I was born in Heerenveen, The Netherlands, in 1915. My father was a surgeon and general practitioner, later a gynecologist and my mother was a nurse when they met. The misery of the peat workers around Heerenveen had made a deep impression on me even when I was a young boy. At my first high school I became a committed Social Democrat. I was a rebel and did not like the regimented and rather old fashioned Dutch school system. Due to illness, it took me a long time to finish school. I was fed up with learning and decided to emigrate. War threatened and I wanted to see the world before it exploded. In December 1937, I went to London to widen my education and stayed till August 1938. I plunged into the London life and enjoyed it to the full. The Munich crisis made me determined to leave Europe.

I left as a steerage passenger for Cape Town, South Africa, knowing very little of what daily life was like over there. Detribalised people often lived in slums around the cities but there were also some 300,000 whites eking out an impoverished existence. I moved to Pretoria. There I found a job travelling around the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Swaziland. I also enrolled at the University in English and Afrikaans, and a Commerce course. After about a year I became assistant manager on a property in Northern Transvaal, a job done on horseback. As the manager was German my position became untenable by April 1940 and I returned to Pretoria. A fortnight later Holland was invaded and a friend and I joined up. I could choose between the South African army, and instant South African citizenship, the Dutch army in England or the Royal Netherlands East Indian Army (KNIL). As my grandfather had served in the latter, I also joined. We received two valuable concession papers: that time in the East Indies would be counted as South African time and that I would be demobilised according to South African army traditions.

I travelled to Bandung (Java) and was allowed to join ten months training for reserve officers (CORO). As I passed the last hurdle I was promoted in October to 2nd Lieutenant. I served my time at the 14th Battalion with the Javanese 3rd company. Our army was disciplined and well equipped to keep order and peace in the archipelago but that was as far as it went. On 7th December 1941 we were at war with Japan. The war effort was a lost cause before it began but I was not pleased when capitulation was so rapid. The legend 'the Dutch did not fight', though totally inaccurate, was exploited for political ends during the next few years.

I did not capitulate but joined forces with some Brits and Australians. We built a boat but became prisoners in Changi after it was wrecked. Later we were transferred to the Kin Sayok camp in Thailand - just a clearing in the jungle and work on the railway started. Some smuggling kept me alive until in April 1943 we were moved to our final destination Prankasi. Officers did not work on the railway every day but it was nevertheless no picnic. I became welfare officer. In this position I translated the illegal news into Dutch and distributed it. As welfare officer, I met Colonels Dunlop and Coates, the eminent Australian surgeons.

When the war ended I remained in Bangkok for some months and finally returned to Java and from there via Port Said to South Africa, most of the passengers being South African troops returning from the war in Egypt and Italy. We had a wonderful reception in Durban. I became assistant editor and advertising manager of a new Dutch pictorial magazine. Unfortunately I was soon involved in a very serious motor vehicle accident but survived.

I lost my post on the magazine but became secretary/administrator of a small aircraft company, which was more interesting. I also turned in the documents given me by the South African authorities, became a South African citizen and British subject, and was paid out for my POW years. At the first post war election in South Africa, in 1948, General Smut's Party lost by 5 seats, including his own. This led to the period known as Apartheid. A romantic movie reminded me of a girl I had known in Bogor, with whom I had kept in touch. She was not yet married. I wrote to her, now in Holland and three weeks later I was on my way via London. I was never to see many of my good friends in South Africa again. The romance petered out in the relentless cold and unsympathetic light of conventional Dutch society. I was still too mentally tired to make a real go of a worthwhile occupation, which in any case was difficult in an over-educated country recovering from the war. The establishment of normal relationships became difficult by mutual feelings of resentment over the lack of sympathy for the hardships everyone had suffered. The solution was to emigrate once again.

The head of immigration at the Australian Embassy, a retired colonel, could not understand why I didn't want to go back to South Africa where I had just become a naturalised citizen. My statement that I thought the apartheid policy was doomed and South Africa would be isolated and held in disgrace by the world met with unbelieving stares. I decided to pull rank, contacting my father's cousin with whom I had spent time in Surabaya at the beginning of the war and who was now a retired Vice-Admiral. He wrote a letter on my behalf and suddenly I had become a *most desirable* type of immigrant for Australia.

In August 1948, shipping was still scarce and I was lucky to get passage on a ship to Indo-China. In Singapore, we had the disappointment that the small ship taking us to Australia would not depart for another week. We had to stay in the Singapore poorhouse, with a lot of impoverished small-business men. When the 'Maetsuyker' did arrive it was nearly up to pre-war standard and the contrast with the poor house could not have been starker!

After 10 days we landed at Fremantle, where the Dutch stewardess commented "Oh you poor people! You don't know what you've let yourselves in for ... " I remembered the Communist dominated bullies in the docks preventing urgently needed relief goods being loaded for the just liberated women and children from the Japanese camps. I was a 'reffo' (refugee) in Australian eyes, whether I had paid for my passage or not - and nobody was interested in one's past. Being accepted or not depended entirely on one's ability to perform and fit in. This I found very refreshing. Assisted migrants had to work for two years on allotted work and in areas decreed by the Australian authorities. I was very privileged, having paid my own way and with my good English and Capetown University Matriculation Certificate, which was recognised in Australia. I was allowed to find work wherever I could.

I stayed for a few days in an immigration camp. The Labour Exchange found me a job as a worker on one of 11 tobacco farms belonging to an originally Greek family. Pemberton was quite a distance from Perth. We workers stayed in huts that were roomy but very basic. The workers were a hard drinking, gambling mob. The worst aspects were the isolation, the lack of female company and the lack of a compatible culture. After three months I left and made for Bunbury on the coast, where the government had just started construction of a power station. I was engaged on the spot. This time the accommodation was a tent I shared with Sam, a good-natured chap but a hopeless alcoholic. I met some girls on an island where I worked and we had a jolly time fishing for and eating crabs with plenty of bread and beer. Though pleasant, there was not much future in it. My mental state had recovered with the hard physical work and I was getting restless.

An advertisement in the West Australian newspaper drew my attention to positions in the Public Service of Papua New Guinea. I wrote, leaving the Dutch honorary consulate as my forwarding address and went back to Bunbury. A month later I went to check up in Perth and found a whole pile of letters, the last one wanting to know if I was still interested. I left in February 1950; after two days I flew from Townsville to Port Moresby. When I arrived at the administrative centre in Konedobu they despaired - another one! What to do with him? I was accommodated in rusty army barracks known as 'House Pig' - a very appropriate name. It was highly unsanitary and I promptly got sick with dysentery. I had not had dysentery even on the Burma railway! I threatened the sanitary inspector with a photo of the sanitary carts next to the mess. I could send it to a notorious scandal rag in Australia. Problem solved!

I had to stay for a year or I would have had to refund the fare to Port Moresby. Brownd off, I was not in the mood for a desk job, I wanted an outdoor job. On the recommendations of an agricultural officer also in 'House Pig', I became the new Curator of Parks and Gardens in Port Moresby. The fact that I didn't know anything about gardening was not the main issue. The fact that 'the Dutch are good gardeners' and my assurances that after dealing with the Japanese on the Burma Railway I could deal with anything, I was given the job. I stayed on for 21 months and was then given 3 months leave. I went back to Port Moresby, where I had an independent position within the rules and a very good salary. During another leave I met Pat at the All Nations Club; she was a committee member. The club had been initiated by prominent Australians to promote integration. Well in my case it was certainly successful. I married Pat during six months leave after I had been in PNG for six years. We returned to Port Moresby, acquired a large circle of friends and generally enjoyed our life there. My family had increased by two girls, Maria in 1959 and Judith two years later.

After 11 years I needed another challenge - I became an Inspector of Rural Progress Societies. Lae was my new station, hot and humid all the year round, ideal for growing things. For that reason a large botanical garden had been created. I catalogued the collection in the Botanical gardens, after that I started travelling along the coast in all sorts of craft, in all sorts of weather. I was often absent from home, which Pat disliked and the climate did not suit the children very well. I was transferred to Kavieng, on the islands of New Ireland, where I became project manager at a combination experimental station and plant introduction station, with a primary agricultural school attached. It became one of the best training schools. The Kavieng Club was the centre of social interaction for the isolated planter's families all along the coast. In 1970, after eight years my time was up. Just then my nutmeg won the second prize on the London market. I got a last minute promotion out of that. We left with a deep sense of gratitude for having had the opportunity to spend eight years on a beautiful and fascinating island and be part of its community.

We returned to Australia and settled in Canberra. Two children had to be educated and I had to work. I reorganised the horticultural section of disadvantaged and handicapped children's centre, then joined the new Democratic Party in 1977 and was in turn Treasurer and Secretary of the Canberra branch. I retired in 1985 and we moved to the milder climate of Queensland, where my daughters were. We started in Morayfield and now live in Petrie. My wife and children are Australian. I have visited the Netherlands a number of times since my retirement but I have never been homesick. I left to stand on my own two feet and succeeded.

Summarised in September 2000; D. de Graaff's full 'Memoirs' are held in DACA's Resource Centre

FROM ROTTERDAM VIA NEW SOUTH WALES AND VICTORIA TO QUEENSLAND

Piet and Grada Korevaar - Leenman

In 1986, I watched the Americans celebrating the renewed Statue of Liberty in New York. That inspired me to write a few words for my children and grandchildren, just to give them something in the future to remember the past. I arrived as a migrant in beautiful Australia, the country of our choice after consideration to migrate from our original homeland Holland.

I left Rotterdam just before Christmas 1949 on the 'Volendam', an old troopship carrying migrants and displaced persons to Australia and Dutch troops back from Indonesia, and I arrived in Melbourne on the 26th January 1950. It was her last voyage before being scrapped. We had an uneventful trip of five weeks although it was a very old ship. Christmas was spent in the Red Sea, sleeping on deck just behind the foremast in a hammock. The temperature was not too pleasant and the air was stuffy in the cargo holds down below. The 200 men on board were sleeping in beds three high, while the passenger cabins were reserved for women and children.

After landing in Melbourne, I soon found accommodation at a St Kilda guesthouse and work as a mechanic in a factory of the Southern Electric Company. This, together with an assurance of accommodation by a friendly landlady, enabled my wife and four children - two sons and two daughters - to come out from Holland. They soon booked on the 'Orcadis', an English passenger ship, and arrived in Melbourne in April 1950. By that time I had started working for a Dutch dredging company in Melbourne as a tug-master and got with the job a small three-bedroom house in Williamstown. We lived there for about three years and were very fortunate to get that house, as most migrants were living in migrant camps in country areas at that time.

We were also very fortunate to meet the friendly Lang family and other people in Williamstown who were helpful to us non-English speaking migrants and they supplied us with everything we needed, such as bedding and kitchen utensils for the first few weeks. Our own household goods came by cargo ship, which sank in Indonesia on the way to Australia and the goods, when they finally arrived, had been damaged. Also the people of the Presbyterian Church in Williamstown did their best to make us feel at home and welcome - those last two things never to be forgotten as it meant so much for us, coming from the other side of the world to settle in a new country. In the third year of our stay in Williamstown, we were able to buy our own and bigger home and at this time our youngest daughter, Rosemary, was born.

Later, the company offered me a position as tug master in Kurnell, Botany Bay (NSW). With the position came a three-bedroom house in Cronulla, where we lived for about two years. Next we bought a business in Failford, NSW, which consisted of 19 acres of land, an old house named 'Shalimar' and four holiday cabins. We did a milk run seven days a week, picking up milk-cans by boat from farmers along the Wallamba River up to Nahiack. A milk truck took the cans on to the Taree Manning River Dairy Coop. We were also letting cabins in the holiday season and were growing potatoes and vegetables to make extra income. I always considered our stay at 'Shalimar' as a pleasant and exciting time. We had many animals - two dogs, a cow, a pig, chickens, goats, and a horse. There was plenty of good food and we made

friends amongst the farmers. Although the work was long and heavy, it was a fantastic time for a family with growing up children.

As the two oldest children reached the age to leave high school while work prospects in the country were not so good, we sold our milk run business and moved back towards Sydney. We bought a small ferry service at Woy Woy, where passengers crossed Woy Woy Bay to catch the train at Woy Woy railway station. We stayed there for about two years, then sold the ferry business and started a contracting business, building small jetties and tidal swimming pools. We soon found that for this kind of work it would be better to be closer to Sydney and we moved to Oatley. I built many jetties and tidal pools, carried out bridgeworks in Sydney Harbour and the Georges River and did pile driving and bridgework in country areas. Then I started working again with various dredging companies, working in Welshpool in Victoria for the oil fields, at Gladstone, Queensland and later at Port Kembla and Newcastle harbour on various dredges and tugboats.

In 1969, I made the mistake of going into business again with my family, by buying the seagoing tugboat 'Sprightly' but the partnership didn't work out. It was a miserable state of affairs; for similar reasons we had left Holland in 1949. Instead, I started working for a dredging company again, working 12-hour shifts 6 days per week, to work ourselves out of a financially and emotionally bad time. We tried to make a living contracting again at St Mary's and later I worked for seven years on passenger ferries and tugs, including as captain on the 'John Cadman', a cruising restaurant in Sydney harbour, mainly at night and weekends. I enjoyed my work on the 'Cadman' and was able to build up our now successful marine hire business. I spent at least four days a week in our St Mary's yard of our business named: Hunter Construction and Marine Services Pty Ltd. We made the first of 40ft x 12ft steel pontoon in our own yard in St Mary's and leased these, as well as heavy anchors and winches, to contracting engineering firms all over Australia. My wife Grada worked in a Sydney department store, selling chinaware, crystal and glassware. Although we both had a very busy life in 1986, we enjoyed our work managing to be together on the weekends in our home unit, overlooking Sydney harbour, the bridge, opera house, Luna Park and Lavender Bay.

As for our children, we could not wish for better ones. They are all happily married and have their own homes. We are proud of our children and they are good parents in their own right. In 1986 we counted a total of thirteen grandchildren.

In 1990 I decided to retire and sold the business to our eldest son Tom. We moved from Sydney to Mapleton in Queensland and bought a two-hectare-property called 'Monterey'. We enjoyed the district, views and friends but moved again after nine years as the work became too much for Grada and me. We managed to purchase a home unit in 'Breakwater' at Point Cartwright near Mooloolaba. The unit has beautiful views over beaches and the ocean.

As mentioned in the beginning, this short story is meant mostly for our children, grandchildren and further descendants to give them some idea how 'Opa and Oma Korevaar' came with their young family to Australia in 1950 and settled in this country. My advice for them is to persevere, to believe in their work, and to love each other and their country. I hereby like to thank my lovely wife Grada for sticking with me all this time and bringing up our beautiful family, as without her determination, perseverance and love our life would not have been the same.

June 2000

SOME OF OUR EXPERIENCES

Nelly Boerdam.

At the time of our migration, we were a family of four: my husband Wim, I, a daughter aged five and a son who just turned three. The preparations to leave The Netherlands took us more than a year. We wanted to go as a family and needed a sponsor to guarantee accommodation and proof that Wim would have a job, before we were allowed to leave the country. Our migration was finally approved and after receiving our vaccinations etc., we were ready to go. It was a trying time and relatives and friends shed many tears but we were looking forwards to our future. The children took it all in their stride and were very good. Our daughter's teddy bear was accidentally left behind in the taxi and that was a drama in itself.

Our ship, the 'Volendam', was very crowded. It had been used as a troopship and rather basic. Men and women were separated. The children and I were on C-deck with about 300 women and children and Wim slept on D-deck with 500 men; not very comfortable, especially when it was getting hot. However, we survived the journey and disembarked safely in Melbourne at the end of January 1950 after a journey of six and a half weeks.

Our English was not good and there was nobody to meet us at the ship. We were really alone and had to find our own way to Flinders Street Station, so we started to walk, Wim with the two suitcases and I held onto the children but very soon we were picked up by a man with a car, who brought us to the station. The people were very friendly at that time. We would not dare to be so trusting nowadays. Somehow, we found the platform for the train to Brisbane. This train was very crowded and people even slept on the floor. As it was going to be a long trip, we did the same. It was all very confusing, especially for the children. Arriving at South Brisbane Station, we were met by an Australian who was supposed to give us a house and work near Southport on a fruit farm but it had rained for four weeks and the farm was flooded - so no work. His intention had been to make us share farmers but we had no money and that plan fell through. However, one of his friends owned a sawmill nearby with a 'house', which was a single-men's hut. There were two camping beds and a double wire bed base but no mattress. Our children slept on the beds. We put our coats and other clothes on the wire base. When the rain started pouring again, the roof leaked and we had to shelter under umbrellas.

The floorboards of the hut had gaps of more than 2 cm. The men living there before had left food scraps and empty cans under the hut. Mosquitoes were breeding freely and our poor son was covered with bites and became rather ill. To top it off, someone who did not like migrants reported to the council that we had made the mess under the hut. Again, there was no work at the sawmill due to the rainy season. We were offered a house in the hills if Wim worked on the road when the weather was dry. Just imagine the heat and humidity at the end of January. Under those conditions, it was especially difficult to sleep on the wire bed. Wim became ill and lost a lot of weight but the house in the hills was a home to us. There was not much furniture, only a camping bed and a wood stove. All our belongings including mattresses were in crates in Melbourne. We just had to wait. We had to buy mattresses for the children but to do this we had to walk six km to the train at Pimpama and go from there to Southport, do our shopping, then return by train and finally walk back with the mattresses.

Wim did not earn anything and we could not stay there without money. Wim used the remaining money to buy a ticket to Chinchilla, 450 km NorthWest of Brisbane. He did

hesitate because if no work were to be available, he would have no money to come back to us. He was advised to go, as there would be work and a house and this turned out to be correct. The sawmill was about 52 km from Chinchilla. The owner of the mill was looking for workers. He gave Wim a job and some money to send to us. After a few weeks, Wim returned with a truck and a helper to collect us. The children and I had stayed behind in the house in the hills. We could buy milk at the farm but the three of us were terrified of the bull! I wanted to tell this to the farmer but I called the bull a 'he-cow' to the great amusement of the farmer.

Our wooden crates had arrived in the meantime. Everything was loaded on the back of the open truck and we had to sit on top of the crates, as there was no space in the cabin of the truck. We had to spend the night in a Salvation Army shelter for women and children. Wim had to sleep in the cabin of the truck. It was not very nice and we doubted whether we had done the right thing to emigrate. The next day we were again on the back of the truck going from Helidon to Toowoomba. I was terrified because I had never been on mountain roads and sitting on the back of the truck, we just had an awful feeling that the road was slipping away from us. We finally arrived at the sawmill. There were about a dozen huts nearby without windows, just wooden shutters that could be pushed up. There was also no bath or shower but we had a big iron tub. Before we could have a bath, we had to go down to the creek to fill an old kerosene tin, carry it up the hill and heat it on top of the wood stove.



1950 - Nelly Boerdam, washing-day at the Forestry camp at Chinchilla

First we bathed each of the children. Next we had our wash and then we were too tired to throw out the water and we left it in the tub overnight. To our great surprise, we found dozens of drowned mice in the tub the next morning. We were very relieved, as it was difficult to sleep at night because the mice made so much noise. It sounded like an army marching. It gave us an idea and a few more nights of 'swimming lessons' meant the end of the mice.

At this time, our daughter was six years old and had to go to school, which was nearly 2 km from the mill. We had no transport, so every morning I walked up and in the afternoon I collected her again, taking our son with me. It was a long walk for him twice a day but he was very good. It was really rather pleasant as we went along a 'firebreak' between all the trees, but it was very lonely. Sometimes we could hear the creepy sound of the dingoes howling in the morning. Our little girl was very brave. She could not speak English but still became friends with Billy, a little boy, and we got to know his parents. They lived next to the one-teacher school, in the Ballon State Forestry. The people lived in tents, which had wooden floors, and about 1 m. high timber walls, covered by canvas. A big tarpaulin was thrown over it all. It was quite primitive but also very peaceful. In the mornings, the sides of the tents were rolled up because the days were usually fine and sunny. Nights were cold in winter.



I hated it when the hooter went off unexpectedly, usually signalling that an accident had taken place and there were quite a few of them. The nearest hospital was in Chinchilla, about 50 km West of us. After some time at the mill, Wim got a job with the Forestry department and we shifted to the forestry camp and stayed there for two years. It was a good life, very relaxing. The men had to make firebreaks and fight bush fires. We had no electricity and no refrigerator, just a meat-safe with its sides covered by cotton cloths, hanging into water. The safe was kept cool by evaporation. The butter was kept cool using the same principle. It all worked well. The bush-shower was in a separate little building. The water was usually luke-warm as the tanks heated-up in the sun. These tanks were filled every Monday by a truck, which came around with very dirty water from the creek; 'alum' was added which settled the dirt. The bush toilet was in the backyard, quite a few metres from the tent, which was not very nice in the dark as there were snakes around. Our little fox terrier killed several of them.

Meanwhile, Wim bought a Panther motorcycle and built a sidecar for the family. Once a fortnight we went to Chinchilla to do our shopping. The dirt roads were terribly corrugated. Instead of using our motorbike, we sometimes went with an old army truck. Coming back one day, the truck was driven by a twelve-year-old boy, as the driver was drunk after spending all morning in the pub. We really preferred to use our bike. The bush people were very friendly but we didn't stay because there was no future for the children. Wim possessed officially translated fitter & turner certificates, applied for a job at Queensland Railways in Toowoomba and was told that there was a job in Roma where he would have to do a test. As Roma is 300 km North of Toowoomba, it was a big trip on a motorbike. Having arrived in Roma, Wim was so tired that he just about fell off the bike. Soon after he did the test and got the job.

We moved to Roma and boarded there with a man for whom I cooked and did the housework. Later, we bought a block of land for £65 and Wim started to build our house in his spare time while he did shift work. It took him seven years of hard work to finish building the house as he did all the work by himself. He started with a small loan from the bank.

Later, I found part-time work as a clerk at the Queensland Rabbit Board but when I was 38, I had to give up working, because I fell pregnant. After our son was born, we left Roma, as there was no future in that town for our eldest son. When our daughter was awarded a teaching scholarship in Brisbane we also moved there as we did not want to let her go by herself. Wim got a job at James Hardie as a boiler attendant and maintenance man. We let our house in Roma and shifted to Hendra, where we lived for 20 years.

After completing her teaching studies, our daughter went to Hughenden in NorthWest Queensland and our eldest son was apprenticed at Brisbane Airport by the department of Civil Aviation and he lives in Wishart (Brisbane). Our youngest son is employed by Telstra and he now lives in Eumundi, in a beautiful bush 'pole house'. Our daughter married and eventually moved to Ningi. We have lived in Yamba and Bribie Island and are now living in a relocatable-home park at Burpengary. This is the best thing we have ever done. We are very happy here and, as we are of a very mature age, we are not thinking of moving any more. Wim is 83 and I am 80. We have three children, eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. They all live nearby and we were able to celebrate my 80th birthday with all my relatives present. This was my greatest wish!

September 2000

ANNE'S STORY

Anne van Riel (Sauer)

The year was 1949. It was customary in my family (parents, one brother, two sisters), to get together on Sunday morning, drink endless cups of coffee with special cake and talk. I did not live at home anymore as I was doing my training as a nurse and it was compulsory in those days, to live-in at the nurses-quarters. We worked a 54 hour week and had lectures in our 'spare' time, even if it was our day or half-day off or straight after night-duty! We supplied our own uniforms, which consisted of a blue dress, with a starched collar and cuffs, white apron, a white starched cap and black stockings. The pay, even for those days, was poor but we were all in the same boat.

One Sunday morning, on my day off, my boy friend Ted and I joined the discussions. My father, a businessman, had just received a provisional tax letter and was not very happy. "Why don't we migrate?" he said and continued: "Someone was telling me about Australia; there seems to be plenty of opportunity. Let's all go together. You and your brother get married first and then we will all go." We looked at a map of that far-away country of which we knew so little and we decided to contact the Australian Embassy. The conversation changed and nothing more was said about migrating. We all knew our father - that was 'Sunday-morning talk' and by Monday, he would have forgotten all about it. However, Ted had taken all that talk far more seriously. He went to the Embassy and to our amazement turned up with a stack of literature and all sorts of forms to be filled in. Yes, it did look all very exciting and those beaches were beautiful but we had no intentions of going there!! Ted did want to go and hoped I would come with him. I insisted on finishing my training first, as that was only a few months away. That was fine by him but in the mean time, he started the ball rolling. My parents were very upset and tried everything to talk us out of it.

I finished my training and all our migration-papers were ready. There appeared to be a great shortage of trained nurses in Australia. Being single, as long as I promised to work in Australia, I was accepted. The Dutch authorities would have preferred me to stay in Holland as there was also a shortage of nurses, therefore I told them that I was going to be married. My mother begged me to wait a while, to let my fiancé go on his own to start with, to see if he could find work and to check out the conditions. My mother and I had always been very close and I hated to see her so unhappy. Ted left with a friend in November 1949 on the 'Johan van Oldebarnevelt'. Ted's friend was married to Willy. She and I would follow together later.

Ted arrived in Melbourne, had a look around and when his friend and some others decided to go to Sydney, he went with them. His letters were optimistic, he loved the weather and the people. Finally, they went to Brisbane and that was it! He lived with eight other Dutchman in a boarding house on Gregory Terrace, close to a large hospital. He found a job with the railways and loved working outdoors. In the meantime, my 'travelling companion-to-be' turned up, saying that she missed her husband terribly and that she had booked on the 'Himalaya' of the P&O line. She wanted to leave quickly. Only first class was available but she had made a tentative booking for us. Was I coming? Yes, I was! Mother made me promise that I would not marry for 12 months, saying: "As you'll find out, you'll have far more to say, before you are married then afterwards!" Life became very hectic. One week's

notice was accepted and I was given a letter of introduction to the matron of a hospital in Melbourne. I needed some more clothes and large suitcases. I walked around with long lists and a big knot in my stomach. Fortunately, as all my papers were already in order when my fiancé left, the Australian Embassy caused no problems. When I told them I was going to Brisbane, there were gasps of horror... "To Brisbane? Whatever makes you want to go there for?" "Because, that's where my fiancé is", I replied. They 'wished me all the best'. I thought it best not to quote them to my parents. Most of my family came to Hoek van Holland to see us off. There were hugs, kisses and tears. It was just as well that I didn't know that I wouldn't see them again for 21 years...

The ferry trip to England was uneventful. The next day we boarded the 'Himalaya', a beautiful new ship that had done her maiden-voyage to Australia. There were about 300 Dutch migrants on board, mainly men and a few young couples. At lunchtime we gathered in the dining room and were introduced to a roast-dinner. Our young steward could not understand why so many of the men were grumbling! So I explained smiling that Dutchmen like lots of potatoes and vegetables! He came back with an enormous dish of steaming potatoes - applause! That night the stewards rewarded Willy and me with a table for two, so they could take better care of us. Our cabin was very comfortable and I loved to be woken up with a cup of tea and a piece of toast. After four years of strict discipline and taking care of other people's needs, it was delightful to be taken care of and I think, because I obviously enjoyed it so much, the staff seemed to go out of their way to be especially helpful. We swam, played deck tennis and met a lot of Dutch people. Speaking to English families helped us with our English. Most evenings there was dancing and never a shortage of partners. Of course, there were quiet times too, just hanging over the railing at night, thinking of all that was left behind, my boy-friend in Australia and what it would be like over there.

The ship was bound for Sydney via Melbourne where it would stay for two days. On the first day I took the train to Flinders Street with my letter of introduction to the Matron of the Royal Melbourne Hospital and arranged a meeting for the next day at 10 am. Unfamiliar with the train system, I came 10 minutes late!! The secretary was cross but I explained the reasons to her. The matron saw me for a few minutes, offered to write a letter of introduction to the Matron of the Brisbane General Hospital and gave me an escort to have a look through her hospital and nurses-quarters. Then we collected that letter from the office and lunched in the nurses' dining room! What a wonderful first impression this was of the Australian people!

Arriving in Sydney we were met by Ted and Willie's husband. The next day Ted and I flew to Brisbane. It was rather a shock to drive through 'the Valley', which in those days looked very messy - neglected buildings and dirty streets. We finished up under the Storey-Bridge at the 'Yungaba' migrant hostel, where we stayed for a short time! The next day, Friday, I went to Matron's office at the General Hospital, handed in my papers and my letter and was told to take a chair and wait ... It was very fortunate for me that there were so few nurses who wanted to do their midwifery course. As I was prepared to do this, Matron promised me to get the Board to accept my Dutch general nursing papers. When would I like to start? "Next Monday", I said. "Next Monday?" The matron asked surprised. "Yes, I don't have very much money and I cannot depend financially on my boyfriend", I answered. In those days we could only bring £25 into the country and the matron understood the predicament. "Well", she said, "we have only half an hour to get you to the linen-room for uniforms and you need to have an X-ray". She wrote out some forms and everything was organised, just in time. I was allocated a room in the nurses quarters and had to report for duty on Monday at 9 am. I had to attend lectures on Tuesday. I had some bouts of homesickness

and agony when I found that I could not understand what the Tutor-sister was going on about, except “You must and you should”. I wondered what I ‘must do and shouldn’t do’. The girl sitting next to me saw that I was not coping and held her block-note so that I could copy her notes. Suddenly a voice bellowed out: “What is the matter with you, are you too lazy to take your own notes?” After the lecture, I asked for ‘some of those things’, pointing to some papers. “Where do you come from?” she enquired, adding: “What are you doing at my lectures if you cannot speak proper English?” So I told her that I was a migrant from Holland. “And how long have you been in this country?” she enquired. “One week.” I replied. “You better learn English as quick as you can!” she said patronisingly in a rather loud voice.

When I sat for my oral examination, I was told afterwards to wait outside the Matron’s office and the tutor-sister went in. I heard them both laughing heartily and wondered why they did. When the sister came out, she asked me how long I had now been in Australia and when I said: “six months”, she grinned and said that I had done very well. Continuing to grin, she walked off. I must have said something very funny during the examination but still do not know what it was. Suffice to say that I had passed both my written and oral exams after six months and another three months later I received my veil. I was now a midwife, at the same time accepted by the Board as a General Trained Nurse, and was to stay with the hospital for three more months.

Ted and I decided to stay in Australia and to get married and I bought a wedding dress. From Holland I had brought a long dress, worn at my brother’s wedding. The dress fitted my friends’ youngest daughter who would be our bride’s maid and her sister, who would be second bride’s maid, copied the dress to match. Two of Ted’s male friends completed the bridal party. I had also invited two of my colleagues. We were married in the Presbyterian Church in the Valley and it was a quiet affair. We accepted the offer of friends to use their house afterwards. Returning from the photographer we went to the house where we ate, drank, danced, sang and played games. In hindsight all this must have seemed strange to our Australian friends.

Finding accommodation close to transport was not easy but we found an expensive flat on Annerly road. Ted found a job as builder’s labourer but it did not work out. Next was a job with ‘Wunderlich’ putting roofs on houses. I had returned to nursing, which involved shift-work and as Ted was then alone, he really missed his mates. Ted and his friends had often played bridge and I suggested that he invite his friends straight after work on Friday-nights. I would have tea ready so that they could play bridge afterwards. That was well received. Once their wives came out, we took it in turn to play bridge at each other’s house. It started something that would last for years.

It would appear that I was one of the early ‘married women in the work-force’. I became pregnant 18 months later and continued working for the first six months! We had managed to save enough to buy a block of land and borrowed money to build a small house. The Commonwealth Bank was initially reluctant to lend us the money as we had no credit rating, no guarantor and only our bankbook as proof that we were capable of saving. We started packing on the day I came out of hospital with our baby boy and moved into our new home the next day. We had only the bare necessities but they were ours and we were happy. It was now difficult to keep up with friends, as there was only an hourly bus service after 6 pm. Gradually I got to know some of my neighbours. They discovered I was ‘good’ with babies and very interested in breast-feeding - our house became known as the ‘Sauer-clinic’. We had two more children, a girl and a boy, who were christened at our local Presbyterian Church.

They went to the Sunday school where I was a teacher. When they attended kindergarten, I became secretary of the parents-committee for a year. Some of the people I met there are still my friends. As I did full-time night-duty, I was home when they woke up and when they



returned from school. Once a fortnight, on my nights off, Ted played bridge. We did not meet many Dutch people. When there was a slump in the economy, around 1957, Ted lost his job on the roofs and he commenced work at the reading-room of a newspaper. He got his ticket and worked there for many years. He finished up in charge of his department, a position he held until his death in 1977.

1961 – The Sauer family, from left to right, Michael (4), Anne, John (8, standing), Tonny (6) and father Ted

Cultural differences, there were plenty. A woman once whispered quietly, “don’t mention to people you are a nurse – they have a bad reputation, because of the sailors, you know”. I just looked at her and raised an eyebrow. The custom to separate at parties, where the men stood around the ‘keg’ and the women sat somewhere else, puzzled me. I never forget my first Christmas with balloons and paper decorations and Father Christmas but...there was also a big ‘stocking’ sneaked into my room filled with presents from all the girls in my group. They couldn’t understand why I cried.

I can imagine why people did not so easily invite others into their homes. The custom of providing all sorts of cakes for morning or afternoon tea or supper could make people think twice about inviting others. When people came to my house, I immediately put on the kettle to make either tea or coffee. Without an apology I would offer plain biscuits or a just piece of toast. Years later somebody remarked: “When I came to your place, you always just put the kettle on, no matter what time of the day it was.” My reply was “That is ‘the Dutch’ for you.” I feel that we have been well accepted into the community. When people comment on my accent, I tell them with pride that I was born in Holland. I retired a few years before Ted passed away. He had taught me to play bridge and I joined the Dutch bridge-club where I met some lovely people who took me in as if I had been a member for years.

I was encouraged to apply for a position as matron of the St.Aubyn’s hospital in Kingaroy and was unexpectedly appointed - a very different life began. After a few years in Kingaroy, I felt that I was loosing contact with my children. I resigned and returned to Brisbane. With three other widows we started bush-walking and with camper-van and tent we camped in various National Parks. Later we traveled around England and Scotland. My companions - all teachers - gave me crash course in English literature and history.



My children are all married now and doing well. I am the proud Oma of seven grandchildren. In 1994, I married John a widower also of Dutch descent. He was far more involved with Dutch people than I was and I now have a lot more Dutch friends while also maintaining contact with my Australian friends. Over the years, I have been back to Holland six times and it was lovely to see them all but my ‘home’ is now here.

September 2000

**DE MENS WIKT – GOD BESCHIKT
(MAN PROPOSES – GOD DISPOSES)**

Louise (Wies) Groen in't Woud

In 1948, we left the Netherlands for a short stay of nearly three years in Indonesia. Eighteen years later I returned for the first time on a short holiday. It shows that there is no knowing what will really happen in the future even with the best-prepared plans.

I was born in Rotterdam and when I finished primary school, I took on a hairdressing apprenticeship. There were no real apprenticeships in those days, as exist now. Eventually, I became fully qualified and kept working until I married Cor (Cornelis) in June 1939. Cor worked for the Fokker factories in aeroplane construction, as a fitter and turner in Amsterdam-North, where we lived for the first years of our marriage.

When World War II started Cor had to join the army but remained employed by Fokker to help repair war planes. Unfortunately for us, after invading The Netherlands, the Germans took over the factories and all employees were forced to continue working there. This of course was not uncommon in Holland during WWII when men were forced to work in various factories for the Nazis. In September 1944, the workers dared to go on strike and nobody worked in the factories anymore. Although Fokker continued to pay part of the men's salaries, times were very tough during that last year in Amsterdam.

I won't go into details how we survived but that period of the war was called the 'honger winter' (*famine winter*). Things were awful! Just when the hunger and winter cold were at its worst, our third son was born at home in March. There was no food and nothing to warm the house with and the baby cried from the moment he was born and would not stop crying. The midwife said that it was due to hunger and, after six hours, suggested I breast feed him instead of waiting the usual longer period. I was very hungry too and luckily, a kind neighbour brought me a small plate with something to eat. The boys were standing next to the bed eyeing the food and saying: "you are lucky mum, because you are sick so you can have something to eat." So what does one do as a mother - share the food with the children of course. Finally, six weeks later in May 1945, the war ended. We have spoken little to the children about the bad times we had during that time. The children were too young - later they did not want to hear it any more as that all happened in Holland and they now live in a 'free country called Australia.'

The Fokker factories did not re-establish straightaway but Cor managed to find a job with the water police repairing boat engines. In the mean time, he started studying at the MTS (*secondary Technical College*) for engineer. In June 1946, my brother in law mentioned to Cor that there were jobs for engineers in the Dutch East Indies (*now Indonesia*) with KLM, the Royal Dutch Airlines. After some soul searching he gave up his permanent position in Amsterdam and moved to Batavia (*Jakarta*) in September 1946; initially by himself so that he could find accommodation.

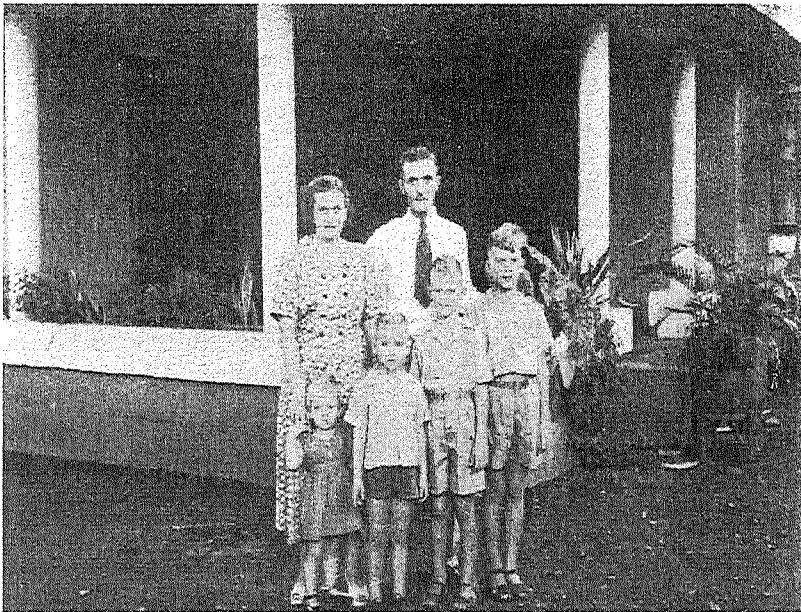
After two months in the Indies he was sent to Melbourne. The KLM was located at Essendon airfield during the war and the Dutch planes of the East Indies, used by the Allies

during the war, were left there. They had been part of the inter-island transport system, the KNILM (*Royal Netherlands Indies Airways Company*). The engines had to be packed up and returned to the East Indies. During the year that Cor worked on that task, he took a liking to Australia.

In the mean time, I stayed in Amsterdam with the three boys. Cor returned to the East Indies in 1947 and started looking for a house, which was rather difficult to find. The Japanese occupation had been so destructive that there were not many houses suitable for family accommodation. Most of the suitable houses had been taken up by the defence forces, which had first choice especially in the larger towns. These were not normal times - it was war - and families were not allowed to come from Holland unless they had special Government permission and unless there was accommodation available.

I remained in Holland - waiting! My friends and relatives could not understand why I did not join my husband. Cor finally found a house and I went to The Hague to get government permission for the transport waiting list. We were vaccinated and had our health checks. I was given a number but no permit yet. Eventually, my doctor referred me to a psychiatrist and, with the help of a special report to say how frightened I was without my husband to bring up three sons in this difficult time, I received that permit. We left the Netherlands on the ship 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' under the government sponsored 'family reunion scheme'. This meant that there were mainly women and children on board. We arrived in Batavia in January 1948.

We lived in a reasonable quiet suburb and had little trouble with the Indonesians. My



August 1950, departure from Indonesia to Australia. Cor and Louise & children from right to left: Kees (10), John (8), Koos (5) and Louise (20 months old)

daughter, Louise, was born in Batavia. Everything went all right until the 'Overdracht' (*transfer - to Indonesian sovereignty*). We had been through considerable changes during these years and I suppose we had changed ourselves. Whatever the reason, we decided that we no longer wanted to go back to Holland. Cor in particular wanted to try his luck in a new country and, as he was impressed with the freedom and space in Australia. He wanted to migrate there.

We did not qualify for government assistance and paid our own way. To get a job in Australia we needed a sponsor and this we found in a very kind lady in Brisbane - a friend of Australian friends in Batavia. Going to Brisbane suited us because Cor had found the climate in Melbourne too cold and miserable - too much like Holland. In August 1950 we took a plane from Batavia to Sydney and then on to Brisbane, where we had a three weeks holiday with our sponsor. Luckily, she was used to Dutch people!

Cor found that his engineering papers were not recognised here in Australia in spite of the fact that he had worked for an international company like the KLM. He decided to take a job as mechanic, which he found in, of all places, Charleville. We went by plane and the next day there was a picture of Louise, our daughter, in the daily paper under the caption 'Flying Dutch Girl'. They had found out that we had come all the way from Batavia and that we were the first Dutch family to settle in Charleville. That was considered newsworthy.

We stayed for fifteen months in Charleville and enjoyed some of the things while living there but it was certainly very different from anything we had experienced before. I joined the Country Women's Association (CWA) and when we left, the ladies organised for myself and the four children to stay at a holiday flat in Sandgate, near Brisbane. Meanwhile, Cor stayed at a boarding house looking for work, which he found in Caboolture. Unfortunately, the only place we could find to live was in a two bed room house owned by an old man, who obviously did not understand much about migrants. The boys had to sleep on the verandah, which for Australians was common in those days but a rather new experience for Dutch people. Washing was done with water hauled up from the creek; the tank water was only for drinking. The old man hated the Dutch food, which I cooked for him, and I did not understand what he wanted to eat. I tried very hard to please him but everybody was unhappy with the situation and we felt rather depressed. Under these circumstances, Cor and I were supposed to celebrate our 12¹/₂-year wedding anniversary - a Dutch custom - but instead of a party I sat down and cried tears of frustration and unhappiness.

One day Cor met a man who lived in train wagons he had bought from the Railway Department and he suggested that we could move in with him. It was typical bush living. There were no toilets but the men made a special bush style toilet for the women; I don't know what the men did exactly! We had kerosene lamps and a pump-action kerosene stove. Water was again a huge problem but we felt so much better, so very different and fun-like that in fact we had a very pleasant time. He was a nice man, full of jokes and good humour and, after six weeks, when Cor had found a job as a car mechanic in Landsborough, it was sad to say goodbye to him.

With the Landsborough-position came a new house and we were greatly relieved when we moved in and we stayed there for three years. It was one of the most pleasant times of our lives. The village was very quiet, typical country, and the people very pleasant so that we soon made many friends. Cor, although he hated his job as a mechanic, was not unhappy and we felt that we had finally found some peace. The children liked the school and quickly developed their own friendships. I continued to be a member of the CWA and we actually met some Dutch people from other districts when the CWA had joint meetings and lunches. One of those meetings was in a beautiful, large, country house in 'Bold Knob'. We had all brought the usual 'plate', "with something *on* it please", they said to us 'Dutchies' - thereby preventing that we would bring an *empty* plate (a common cultural misunderstanding). Unfortunately, I hadn't learned to bake like the Aussie countrywomen, so I made a 'ginger log' with bought biscuits and cream and hoped for the best. Would you believe it?! - Using commercial biscuits in a country area was such an unusual way of making a cake that it received special comment at the meeting and it turned out to be a great success! It was a lovely time and occasionally we are still going back to this quiet little place.

We managed to buy a very old 1923 model car, a six cylinder Chrysler, which Cor converted into a utility. We went everywhere with that car - to Somerset Dam for picnics, to

the beach, to Brisbane and eventually we sold it to Dutch friends. My sister whose husband still had a job in Indonesia came to stay with us because her little son had become ill over there and needed to recuperate in the dry Australian climate. She and her three children stayed for six months so there were ten of us in the one house but we managed.

Cor's papers recognising him as engineer finally came through and he managed to get a position with TAA (Trans Australian Airways) in Brisbane. We moved to Mount Gravatt. The children went to high school. Louise joined the Marching Girls, which in those days was an Australian institution. It provided excellent training in music and self-control to teenagers. Although it was more civilised in Brisbane and there was more to do. The children were initially longing for Landsborough. Brisbane was the 'big smoke' and they were not used to it.

In 1960, we moved to Sydney except for our second son John. He took on a pastry cook apprenticeship, married and stayed in Brisbane. Keith (Kees) married and settled in Sydney. Peter (Koos) became technical officer with Australian Post, joined the Reserve Navy (quite a feat in those days for a migrant), married, lived in Holland for a short while and eventually settled in Gladstone, North Queensland. Louise married a navy officer, lived in Papua New Guinea, England and wherever the navy took them. After suffering for a long time, she died of nasal carcinoma when she was forty. I stayed for a while in Sydney after Cor died and eventually and came to live in a retirement village in Brisbane. I have ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren at present - perhaps more to come?



Our daughter Louise as marching girl

I have been back to Holland several times to visit relatives and friends. Frankly, I think that although the Social Services in Holland seem to be better than in Australia, the actual financial and living standards here are quite high and compare well. Overall, I am probably better off here. Then there is the climate over there - I hated the Dutch wet and miserable cold weather. I would never be able to settle again in that 'kikkerland' (*country of frogs*). I like to stress, however, that although I use mainly English to my family, I speak Dutch to all my Dutch friends and I will always be 'Dutch' in that respect.

The following anecdote illustrates that the Dutch language always stays with us: Cor went back to Brisbane in 1963 to visit friends. He boarded a tram in the city to go to Mount Gravatt where he was staying with other friends. He sat there half asleep when the conductor woke him up. "Oh", he said in Dutch: "Ik moet naar Mount Gravatt." The conductor's response was: "Ja, da's goed," adding, "Dat kost twee shillings en tien pennies. Je bent hier zeker nog niet zo lang? Ach, ja de eerste paar jaar zijn wel de ergste, hoor." ("*I have to go to Mount Gravatt*" ... "*Yes, that's all right. That will cost two shillings and ten pence You haven't been here very long yet, have you? Ah well, the first couple of years are the worst*"). Cor said later that it must have been the conductor's Dutch-looking face that triggered his Dutch speech; after all, he had at that time already been in Australia for thirteen years!

September 2000

WE CAME HERE BY CHOICE

Sabine van Baarskamp

We arrived in Australia in 1950, Henri, my fiancé in January and I in August. Henri had spent 7 years, including the five war years, in the Dutch Merchant Navy. He did not want to spend the rest of his life at sea and therefore decided, once he was back on land in Holland, to learn a trade. He loved anything with wheels and therefore studied at the Institute for the Automobile in Driebergen. At 23 years of age, he was one of the few mature-aged students and gained his diploma after two years. He quickly found work at Kromhout in Amsterdam, a company that manufactured chassis for trucks and buses.

At his parents' hotel in Haarlem he had met and become friends with a young Australian KLM pilot, Freddy, who told him glowing stories about his homeland. Henri was restless - Holland was too slow, too small, too constricting and migrating became gradually more attractive to him. Freddy's parents owned a sawmill in Nanango, a small town in Queensland, and they were willing to sponsor his migration.

Henri was not planning to go to Australia alone - his sister Mia and I were, and still are, very good friends, since the beginning of high school. Henri and I had known each other for years but now looked at each other differently - we fell in love and knew that we would marry. There were problems though, I was an only child. A son-in-law who wanted to migrate to the other side of the world was not exactly what my parents had in mind for me. I too, was not committed to the idea of migrating and leaving my beloved family but I loved him too much. I felt that I had to go with him and we became engaged against my father's wishes.

Henri left on the 'Volendam' on the 16th December 1949. It was a miserable cold day and things were badly organised. The passengers had to be at the quay at 10 am when their papers were to be processed and they were immediately required to board. However, the ship that was supposed to leave in the afternoon did not leave until about 10 pm. Mia and I tried to warm ourselves at the glowing embers in braziers made from old oil drums. Shivering on the dock, I could only wave to Henri who was standing at the railing. We stood looking at each other from ship to shore for hours, devastated at being parted and not knowing when we would see each other again. I had to leave when it got dark, with the ship still docked - a terrible experience.

I had started a 3-year arts course in Amsterdam, which I had to sacrifice because I needed to earn money for the trip to Australia. I found work with a small enamelling firm making decorated ashtrays, broaches, plates and decorative ware. I used my art skills but had to stick strictly to design regulation. My working days were long. In June, I received a telephone call from the migration office telling me that if I could get my papers ready within a week as they could get me on a British migrant ship, the 'Ranchi'. The fare would be reduced because it was subsidised by the British government - 1,000 English passengers had their papers completed but 200 Scotsmen had not - 200 Dutch people could take their place.

The Australian embassy was very helpful and by the end of June, I found myself aboard the 'Ranchi'. Saying goodbye was naturally very painful. I was not yet 21 and needed my parents' permission to marry. My father continued to refuse but at the very last moment, he

relented and gave his consent, I have never overcome the guilt I felt at leaving my parents. On the other hand, I was joyful to be going to Henri. Except for getting food poisoning in Aden, my stomach liked the sea and I was not seasick. The trip was actually fun with all passengers invigorated by their hope for a better life in Australia.

When the 'Ranchi' arrived in Melbourne, the 'wharfies' were on strike, as occurred frequently at that time. I had to get a message to Henri so I sent him a telegram. He had previously booked himself on a plane to fly to Sydney to meet me but now he had no idea when I would arrive. The strike only lasted a few days and on the 7th August we arrived in Sydney. All the passengers left the ship and I was the last to leave. I remember standing alone on the quay thinking: "What the hell am I doing here?" I found a telephone and rang Ipswich; then organised a taxi to take me to the airport in Melbourne and from there I flew to Brisbane. My stomach may have liked the sea but it definitely did not like the air. I arrived in Queensland with my face a very unbecoming shade of green. My pallor did not seem to bother Henri though, as he illegally hurdled the fences to meet me on the tarmac. It must have looked like a scene from a romantic movie. We were together again.

Henri had settled in Ipswich. When he was delivering a parcel there, he had been told that there was a great shortage of motor mechanics and there would be an opportunity for him. He found work at the biggest garage in town and lodgings with a Dutch family he had met on the 'Volendam'. We were married on the 10th August - or at least, I hope we were. The Minister was another immigrant, a highland Scotsman whose broad accent, my high school English could not fathom. We started our married life in a flat, which was actually just a grand name for part of a verandah. Our landlady, Mrs Bullock, was lovely. She was so afraid that I would pick up unpleasant sounding 'strine' pronunciations that she insisted that the English spoken by the cricket commentators would be good to emulate. To this day, I can say, "bowl a maiden over" and "silly mid on" but have no idea what those phrases mean.

After two years, we were able to buy our own place. As with many migrants, we were happy with our half-finished garage, with the daylight shining through the slates, on a big block of land in the bush. Henri kept on working for his boss and he worked for himself in the back yard after hours. The neighbours were very tolerant of the noise he made at the weekends and they were generally welcoming and understanding. I was pregnant by this time and missed my mother enormously. We had made good Dutch and Australian friends by then. In relation to childbirth, they were all just as young, inexperienced and naive like I was. I really had no one to tell me about giving birth and bringing up children. Therefore, I read every book I could lay my hands on. After a lonely labour, when I was constantly worried that the doctor would give me an instruction I could not understand, our first daughter Minke, a beautiful healthy baby, was born on the 10th of June 1953. At that time, there were no florists in Ipswich but when we brought our baby home there was a floral tribute as the silver wattle surrounding our shed was in full bloom and we felt that nature was rejoicing with us.

Henri worked now for himself as a mechanic in the backyard. Initially, business was slow but as his reputation spread work quickly picked up. Our second daughter, Paula, was born on the 29th March 1955. This time, I was a much more confident mother. We proudly brought her home in our 1925 Buick.

Our business was now expanding and rapidly outgrowing our backyard. In 1956, we had a chance of leasing a service station and garage in North Ipswich. The driveway was a bit awkward and the goodwill non-existent but the building was sound and the workspace

enormous - big enough to let part of it to a panel beater. It provided a good living for nearly 25 years. We saved madly for a real house, as the leaking shed was far too small for two adults and two lively little girls, a dog and a cat. Thanks to the good advice of a young customer, we were referred to a building society and built our new home in 1959. The white four bedroom split-level home seemed huge, more so because we had minimal furniture. It was built to our own design and we were thrilled to show off photos to my parents in Holland. We became Australian citizens in January 1959. This, together with our new house and our Australian daughters, gave us yet an extra feeling of belonging to and being part of Australian society.

In 1960, our third daughter, Henriette, was born on the 7th October while Henri's mother was staying with us. She was the first of many Dutch visitors. Henri's father had passed away in 1959 and my father died in 1960, neither of them having seen their grandchildren, which has been one of our deep regrets. Henri's sisters also migrated, one to New Zealand and Mia, my dear friend, also to Australia. The grandmothers visited us regularly. Having them live with us for months on end was not always easy for any of us. Yet the children's relationship with their grandparents was sincere and strong and their love for each other a joyful thing.

From the time Henriette was at primary school, I worked part-time in the garage doing the books and serving petrol. Not very exciting work but necessary and it allowed me to contribute to the business. Each of the girls earned their pocket money by serving petrol on Friday after school and on Saturdays. They also felt a necessary part of the business, which I feel, would have contributed in no small way to their work ethic and their successful careers.

Minke became a nursing sister and now works for the Blue Nursing Service as Respite Care Co-ordinator in Ipswich. Paula started work as a secretary but quickly moved on to teaching. She now works as a Business Advisor for the Queensland Department of State Development. Henriette first worked as assistant at a veterinary clinic but she has now followed my example and works in the car repair business, she owns with her husband. All three are happily married and have given us seven wonderful grandchildren.

In 1979, we sold the garage and the year after we sold our White House on the top of the hill. As a sailor in the Dutch Merchant navy, which became part of the allied forces, Henry had taken part in the invasion of North Africa and Normandy. This made him eligible for a veteran's pension at age 60. Retirement - I can heartily recommend it! We built a smaller low set house at Noosa, close to the sea. We love our home and the yard is a haven for birds - it is amazing what you can grow on pure white sand.

I was born in Gorredijk in the province of Friesland. When I was a little girl, my family moved to the province of North Holland but we continued speaking Frisian at home. When my mother visited us in Australia, we would sometimes speak in Frisian but not very often as Henri, coming from Haarlem, couldn't understand the Frisian language. I recall one of my return visits to Holland, having a meal with my mother and her second husband at a restaurant in Holwerd in the north of Friesland. We stood in the car park looking to the flat, lush meadows dotted with cows on one side and the grey, choppy Waddensee on the other side. It was overcast, almost raining and very cold. Then, entering the restaurant and hearing Frisian spoken by every diner in the room, I suddenly had an overwhelming sense of belonging, of knowing "Here are my roots". I had been homesick that first year on Mrs Bullock's verandah in Ipswich when our Scottish postman and I cried on each others shoulders when he delivered

the Christmas mail in 100° F (38° C) heat. I thought that I had overcome my homesickness completely but now I know that Friesland will always be lurking in the back of my mind.

The last time Henri and I went to Holland was in 1990. We stayed for almost half a year. The last few months, however, I was homesick again, this time for Australia. Not only for our children and our grandchildren, but also for the country, the people and the space! The combination of the Dutch houses being so close together, the traffic and the sheer volume of people caused me to feel really claustrophobic now.

Holland will always be very dear to me and it will always be a part of me. Looking outside now, I see a vivid blue sky, I hear the noises in our garden and the sound of the sea in the distance. My nose twitches to the smell of recent bush fires. It is 50 years ago since we arrived from Holland. Did Henri make the right decision to migrate? Did I, in following him? We are contented here and cannot imagine ourselves living anywhere else in the world. They say that home is where the heart is. We must be home.

September 2000



Sabine van Baarskamp with her three daughters, from l to r: Paula, Sabine, Henriette and Minke.

MINKE'S STORY

Minke Koch, nee Geurtsen van Baarskamp (Sabine's eldest daughter)

My name is Minke Saapke Koch (nee Geurtsen van Baarskamp). I am 47years old, the eldest of three daughters born to Dutch migrants. My parents, Henri and Sabine Baarskamp, came to Australia three years before I was born. Two more daughters followed me - Paula within two years and Henriette five years later. Apparently while I was learning to talk, I became totally confused and could neither speak Dutch nor English. My mum had to make a number of trips to Brisbane by train to take me to speech therapy, which concentrated on one language - English. Today I can understand Dutch quite easily and I can say a few words in that language but can't write it.

Both our Opas died before they could make a visit to Australia but this didn't stop our Omas to come. When they visited us, it was for 6 months at a time. I remember our trips to Sydney to pick them up from the ship. What an adventure that was for us girls! We always loved the visits of our Omas but I think that it would have been a stressful time for mum and

dad. Three generations under one roof, without a common language and with three little girls who used to say inappropriate words. Our poor parents had to keep the peace.

We had no relatives here but a loving 'extended family' as mum and dad had many Dutch friends, whom we called Tante [*aunt*] and Oom [*uncle*]. I still call these friends by those Dutch terms, although they have asked me to call them by their first name but old habits die hard. I remember that we went to visit them, we children being bundled up to sleep in their beds and being taken home in the early hours of the morning. Having a close network of friends must have made this country seem so much friendlier to mum and dad.

I remember that our clothes were different from the ones worn by our friends. Mum is an excellent seamstress and she loved to sew for her three daughters, while our Omas often sent clothes from Holland. We were always dressed in the same style but in different colours. How proud Mum must have felt to have her daughters dressed in clothes from Holland. Every day we went by bus to a small school. We were definitely not allowed to use a pushbike, although our parents rode one when they lived in Holland. Mum was afraid we would speed down the hills but she still regrets not allowing us to ride a pushbike as all our friends had one.

I remember a funny story - A customer asked Dad whether he would like some pigeons. Dad said excitedly "yes", thinking that these birds were dressed. No, these birds were alive and weren't meant for eating. A birdhouse was quickly erected and we had those pigeons for years.

We had a happy childhood - I really didn't feel very different to my friends. When I grew older, I became more aware of my European background. My name caused, and still causes, many a comment. I remember that during my high school years I changed the spelling because it was pronounced wrongly so many times and I didn't like that. As my name is Minke, there is a 'whale' (Minky) encapsulated in my name, so needless to say, I receive lots of ribbings.

My husband recalls being introduced to my parents for the first time while Oma and her second husband Oom Roelof were visiting. He remembers feeling quite left out because of the language and unfamiliar mannerisms but he quickly became part of a loving family who lived and ate differently. Dad in particular was pleased as he now had a male ally. My husband always asked for second helpings of mum's cooking especially 'hachee' [*spiced meat dish with onions*]. Even now every birthday Mum, bakes an 'appeltaart' for which she is famous within our families. For New-Year's-Eve there are 'bitterballen', 'oliebollen' and homemade 'advocaat'. Each Christmas, mum traditionally bakes 'kerstbrood' while huzarenensla is often made for lunch. These are big hits with my family. I remember that on Saturdays - Mum baked for the whole week. She would make Nasi Goreng for lunch after baking speculaas, sprits biscuits, koek [*honey-bar*] and much more. Not to forget her famous Dutch pea soup - so thick that a spoon would stay standing up. Such delicious memories!

Our home has many Dutch trimmings and visitors can readily identify my background. I have a collection of Delft blue china for which my son built a glass display cabinet. I am very proud of my Dutch heritage and so are our two sons. They enjoy listening to stories which Oma and Opa tell - some sad and some humorous. We all like to listen to those stories. Our children have grown up with two cultures. For as many years as I can remember, it has been a tradition to spend Easter with Oma and Opa, while Christmas is spent in rotation at my parents' house or the place of their three daughters.

I am glad my parents came to Australia, otherwise I wouldn't have met my husband and we wouldn't have our two great sons. One day I would like to visit Holland and travel to my parents' country of origin and I feel the need to visit the land of my ancestors. Yes, Australia has been a good country for Henri, Sabine, and their family.

September 2000

PAULA'S STORY

Paula Alma Knudsen nee Geurtsen van Baarskamp (Sabine's middle daughter)

I have always felt that our lives were different. We looked different and I was always heads taller than any other kid, which was rarely to my advantage. We ate exotic food, had unpronounceable names, we danced differently when we partied and our grandparents came from a faraway country. On virtually every level, we did things slightly differently, yet I can't remember a time when I was ever ashamed of or embarrassed about my heritage (well, maybe it would have been nice if I had been a few inches shorter, especially during my teens).

My parents quickly adopted the best things of the Australian lifestyle. We were the typical Aussie baby-boomers, free-range kids of the 60s and 70s, except that we had to go home when Mamma rang our massive Swiss cowbell, hanging off our back veranda. We felt that we really were badly done by, because we were not allowed to have a bicycle. Poor Mamma could not conceive of us riding on our hilly streets. At the weekends, we had our hot meals in the middle of the day while enjoying a barbecue at night.

Very occasionally, I felt animosity but rarely from schoolmates, more so from their parents. In a very blue-collar town, my hard-working migrant parents ran a successful business, built a big white house on the hill (let's forget the garage cum lean-to we first lived in) and raised three strapping daughters - cause for envy. Occasionally that green-eyed monster directed its sharp tongue at the children or maybe more so at me, because I was so much taller and more aggressive than my sisters were. However, when I was hurt by what someone had said or done, my parents were able to turn the hurt around, so that even I felt sorry for the culprit. I now see that this protected me from what actually may have been quite savage attacks but the concept of 'envy' became my armour and I have actually used it to explain hurtful comments to *my* children on the very odd occasion when they too have come home crying.

I am the only one of the three daughters to have travelled to Holland, on two occasions - the first time living there as a single woman in my early twenties and later on holidays with my husband. It was always incredibly important to me to visit Holland and I saved madly from my very first pay cheque. The minute I could afford it, I went. I recall stepping off the plane into the loving arms of my grandmothers. I looked like everyone else and it seemed that I belonged to everyone, simply as Sabine and Henri's daughter. I remember how overwhelmed I felt by a sense of heritage on my visit to the family-graves in my mother's family town of Nieuw Beets. I was nevertheless also fiercely proud of being an Australian and of my Aussie accent, thick as syrup in my very dated Dutch.

I know that my sisters intend to travel to Holland but I am sorry they didn't do it when I did. My mother was an only child and both my father's siblings emigrated from Holland. Twenty years ago there were still plenty of family members, who knew and loved my parents but most of those relatives have passed away and with their passing, the stories of my parents' childhood were lost. I had the privilege to have known those people.

I am married to a Danish migrant and I believe that our twin son and daughter, are the true 'new family' of Australia - proudly Australian born yet with the memories and heritage from both our families. I hope that they will soon gather their own experiences by travelling throughout the world. To be truly conscious Australians, I believe they need to experience the alternatives and understand what it means to *choose* a country. Only in this way can they truly appreciate their home and the sacrifices their grandparents made in order to come to this country and give us the lifestyle we all enjoy so much.

September 2000

HENRIETTE'S STORY

Henriette Kinnane nee Geurtsen van Baarskamp (Sabine's youngest daughter)

When I compare my childhood with those of my 'Aussie' friends, I think the biggest difference must be the lack of extended family, although as a child I was not aware of that difference. We went to a small school with about 100 children. In each class there was at least one child of Dutch parentage. I can say in all honesty that there was no animosity or feelings of 'them and us' - we all mixed well.

We didn't have a lot of contact with my father's sisters and their families as the nearest of them lived in Sydney and my mother is an only child but there were many people we called 'Oom' and 'Tante'. These people were my parents' Dutch friends and they were special people. We often had get-togethers at either their or our house. The children would play until bedtime, when they would climb into the bed of the 'Oom' and 'Tante' we were visiting. We didn't need stand-in Omas and Opas as both of our Omas visited often enough to have a special place in our hearts. We did not need anyone else to fill that role.

As an adult I do miss that I never have known any of our more distant relatives (my parents' cousins etc). It's sad when you see how upset my mother was at the passing away of a relative and I could not feel that same loss so deeply. I regret that I have never seen the place where my parents grew up and that I never have touched or even seen snow. My mother also missed these things at Christmas time.

I feel that I won't be complete until I do make that trip to see those places and touch that snow. I have a sense of pride when I see my sons with their fair hair, blue eyes and the eldest, at 15 years, already 1.85 m. tall. They love *speculaas* and other Dutch specialities. I like them to be as proud of their Dutch heritage as I am.

September 2000

WE HAD A GOOD RUN

Ninette Floris - Haremaker

A year after World War II the Netherlands was still recovering from five years of German occupation. The country had been systematically plundered by the invaders resulting in widespread damage and devastation, and re-building was desperately needed. When in 1945 my husband Sven returned to Holland from four years in German prison camps, he had no difficulty finding a job. However, the job did not last very long. Sven had received military training before the war and was called up to join the Dutch army in order to go to the Dutch East Indies. The troops had to establish peace and order in this country, which was in disarray after Japanese occupation.

Two months before Sven left we were married in Haarlem; it would be more than three years before we were to meet again. That would happen when his army unit, the '7-December Division', returned home. Sven Junior was born eight months after Sven Senior's departure.

Sven and I grew up on Sumatra and Java when it was a Dutch colony and we always felt the urge to live there again. After Indonesia's independence, this was no longer feasible. Just after the Second World War, housing and employment opportunities in Holland were restricted. Consequently, we looked around the world for a country to settle and really start our married life. Canada was too cold, USA took only a very small quota of migrants and South Africa seemed too uncertain.

A friend of my husband, a fellow ex-prisoner of war, migrated to Queensland, Australia. He wrote to us, "This is a good country with a great climate, plenty of work and anyone with initiative and will to work can make it here." It did not take long to make the choice - Australia it would be!

By August 1950 all necessary documents had been submitted, conditions met, furniture packed in a large container to be shipped. Being in a hurry to get there, we decided to fly and chose KLM-Royal Dutch Airlines. The plane was a Skymaster, it took six days with five overnight stops and sometimes we even made lunch-stops. There was no change of crew. Emigrants could take only a small amount of money - £30 per person and £15 for a child. These amounts would be doubled due to a grant from the Australian Government. This meant that for us the starting capital was £150.

After we arrived in Australia, we were only five days in the Bathurst Migrant camp. This was because we had the good fortune of being met on arrival in Sydney by two members of our church who secured temporary board and accommodation for the three of us. In exchange I had to do domestic and child care duties in the 'Helen Keller Home' for blind ladies and children. A family in Manly, with a large house, advertised for a live-in couple to help. That house became the next port of call. Sven secured a job in a radio factory in Sydney. The friends in Queensland kept in touch. They had now rented a house large enough for two families in case we wanted to share. Lack of housing in Sydney and the inevitable key money required for renting, prompted us to accept this offer.

We wanted to go to Queensland but had to face the problem of transport to get there. The cost to move the container with all our worldly possessions from the wharf in Sydney to the address in Queensland would have been prohibitive. The solution was to be found in the motto for living in Australia: 'DO IT YOURSELF!' Sven bought a 3-tonne Ford flattop army disposal truck. He fixed the truck with the help of another Dutchman who was a motor mechanic. Once a truck driver's licence had been obtained, he drove to the wharf to load the container and off we went. We took the New England Highway, direction north, camping along the way. That trip took five days. We have kept our letters to Holland about this adventure and they have been translated and handed to the grandchildren. The most memorable encounter took place in Glen Innes where our cash had run out. A young Dutch barber hearing about our predicament, offered to lend us his savings, the princely sum of £10.

In those years, overseas diplomas were not recognised. Sven's diploma of Electro-technical engineer, his three years experience as a Signals Officer, his building of a high-powered radio station in Garoet, Java counted for ... nothing. He had to fulfill a year's apprenticeship to obtain electrician's qualifications. On arrival in Ipswich we were 'pretty broke'. A few weeks before Christmas there was no work available except potato picking. Off Sven went to taste life as a farm labourer. While working without a shirt, he became very sunburnt. The farmer was friendly and after a day's work in the hot Queensland sun, his wife's cooking tasted great!

The owner of a radio shop in Ipswich was quite happy to let a migrant do his radio repair work as Sven obviously was a radio mechanic. He knew what he was doing and he was eager to improve the sound on the radios he worked on.

Within four years of arriving in Ipswich Sven set out on his own, calling his business 'Corona Radio and Electrical Sales and Service'; the word Television was added later. He would not work for wages again. Initially, our house and vehicle were financed partly by money transferred from Holland. The business provided our family of two sons and two daughters with all that we needed although there naturally were times of ups and downs. I felt lonely in the early years but soon became involved in the business and the family of four demanded my attention. Joining a women's public speaking club offered friendship. Learning to do things, the way Australians do gave me a growing sense of belonging to the community.

In hindsight, from the secure vantagepoint of retirement, we can be philosophical and say- "Yes, we did make the right decision 50 years ago". We are grateful to have been part of Australia's tremendous growth in the second half of the 20th Century. Migrants have adapted to their new homeland and Australia has adjusted to the influx of newcomers. In the 1950s and 60s this country offered a good environment to bring up children. Some families have sad stories to tell. We certainly have had 'a good run'. Our religion has provided strength and support in this respect. We have had the privilege of having our mother come over to visit us and eventually she lived with us for several years. Perhaps the pictures in our home tell the story succinctly. There are paintings of Friesian great great grandparents on the wall and there is a picture of nine grandchildren with the logo 'House of Floris, Makers of fine Grandchildren' on their t-shirts. Sven's heart's desire to fly his own ultra-light aircraft has been fulfilled. We feature on a photograph at the Borobudur on a sentimental journey to the country of our childhood and there are photos of my class of 1944 reunion in Holland. **Who would have ever imagined that all those things were to happen to us?**

September 2000

A LIFE IN THREE COUNTRIES

Wilhelmina Frederica Hoog Antink - Boterhoven de Haan

We have lived here for 50 odd years and have become naturalised but my Dutch heritage is still important to me. I don't see myself ever to become a 'real Aussie'. I am still homesick at times and wouldn't mind returning to my country of origin - given the chance - so that I could talk to people in, be it old fashioned, Dutch!

My father, an engineer trained at the university in Delft, had just started as engineer with the Dutch East Indies Gas Company in Batavia (*Jakarta*), the capital of the Dutch East Indies, when I was born, on 28th February 1921. The climate did not agree with my father and he died in Batavia hospital only three years afterwards.

My mother and her three little daughters returned to the Netherlands. We first settled in The Hague but then moved back to Amsterdam, her hometown. In 1933, my mother remarried a Jewish young man, The Honourable John Kalker. During the war years and the German occupation, my family lived in an apartment in South Amsterdam. My stepfather - a Jew - had to wear a yellow 'Star of David' on his sleeve whenever he went out. He was not deported but being in a 'mixed marriage', he was given reduced rations. I learned how to do office work and studied foreign languages during the war.

The war over, I couldn't wait to escape to West-Germany, where the British Army Over the Rhine (BAOR) in Peine was recruiting staff for the Intelligence section to carry out decoding, translating and interpreting. After a few years working and travelling there, I went back to Holland. There I learned that the Royal Dutch Navy in Batavia required staff with similar skills to mine. I was accepted for the job and was happy to return to Batavia, in the country of my birth. Admiral Pinkel, Vice-Admiral of the fleet, happened to be my great uncle and I was made to feel very welcome. In September 1949, I met and married an officer of the Dutch East Indies Army (KNIL), Captain Joop van Dam. We spent a happy time living in a cottage in Bandung, while we were both working in Batavia. Then the Dutch East Indies became Indonesia and we were both demobilised. After a short stay in Biak, Dutch New Guinea, living in a 'kwonset hut' [*nissen hut*], we returned to Amsterdam but found it difficult to settle there.

The migration officers offered us a choice of three countries to migrate to: Canada, South Africa or Australia. As they claimed that Australia had no class distinction, we selected that country and in November 1950, we landed in Melbourne. My husband purchased a hamburger shop/milk-bar in Fitzroy, Melbourne. Although I had not anticipated that I would have any trouble with the English language, as I had spoken it while working in Germany, I had trouble with the Australian accent of our customers. Besides, I found the work in the shop very hard as I also had to look after a baby and there was no family to help me. Meanwhile my husband drove around in a little Fiat to get supplies for the shop. Simultaneously he would orientate himself about the Melbourne girls. Eventually, I had a breakdown - a post-natal depression - and was hospitalised. My parents in Amsterdam encouraged me to come home with the baby, so I could recover. They bought a new pram and strolling around in the nearby Beatrix Park in Amsterdam, I forgot that one should not sit on the lawn and I was nearly fined - except for the fact that the policeman's brother had just left for Australia!

My husband and I had grown apart but when he kept writing and insisting that I come back to Australia, I finally gave in and returned in 1954. We settled in Chelmer, Brisbane. In the mean time, my husband had started an electrical business in Woolloongabba. I had always wanted to study and I enrolled in an Arts degree at the University of Queensland, which I enjoyed very much. While studying, I was lucky to land a job as secretary to Professor Davis in the Mathematics department. He had just returned from a maths congress in Amsterdam.

Eventually I divorced my first husband and in 1959, I married another Dutchman, Theo Hoog Antink, who came from Twenthe. He worked for the Royal Dutch Shell Company as personnel officer. We moved to Aspley where Theo had built a house. Theo liked his work with Shell, mainly because it gave him social contact with other members of staff. He left that job when computerisation took over and bought a news agency in Samford. This is where we spent one of the happiest periods of our life. Theo got to know his customers, while I became involved in the Samford Progress Association and I also became director of the Country Club that we founded with other members. In addition, I received a mature age scholarship for Teachers College and eventually took up teaching French and German. My first school was a Catholic Boys School at the Redcliffe Peninsula, the 'de la Salle College', where the Brothers made me feel welcome. The boys came mainly from the bush and didn't seem interested in learning French - they didn't believe the cows at the farm would like to converse in French. During 1959-1965, I enjoyed teaching at the Brisbane Girls Grammar School on Petrie Terrace and found that the girls were more motivated to learn foreign languages compared with the boys I had taught. On 3rd March 1963 my second son, Timothy John, was born.

At the grammar school, it became apparent that aboriginal children in Spring Hill were disadvantaged with their schoolwork. They often had a lack of self-esteem and the teachers seemed convinced that they had a low IQ. With permission of the principal, the sub-senior girls (grade 11) sacrificed their Saturday morning and organised special classes at the school to help the aboriginal children with their homework. Many other schools followed this example, leading to the project which became known as the Aboriginal Education Scheme. The whole enterprise made me aware that these Aussie teenage girls had much more social awareness than my generation ever had. I became better acquainted with some of the girls when I accompanied them on a bus trip to Ayers Rock (Uluru). We returned via Adelaide, which opened my eyes to many unexpected beauty spots in Australia. The whole trip was fascinating.

Theo's health problem - the eternal asthma - wouldn't leave him and forced us to move again. Finally, we settled in Bardon, where we still live in a pleasant home near Government House, overlooking the city and the TV towers on Mt Cootha. My husband and I have separated amicably. We both enjoy the contact with our four grandchildren, two by each son.

When I retired, I asked the 'Pensioners League' what they could offer us - "Bingo and Bus trips" was the answer. In common with elderly ladies in France in similar circumstances, some of us decided to start the University of the Third Age (U3A) for all those elderly people in Brisbane, who still wanted to learn or teach. The movement became very successful and spread all over Australia. I still teach French and German at home for a growing and changing circle of friends who want to keep their brains active and who don't want to slip into apathy!

September 2000

STARTING A NEW LIFE

Lisa de Graaf

As I look back to 42 years ago, when we arrived at Sydney Harbour in 1951 with three children and a fourth on the way, a whole new life had opened up for us. We arrived at night but could go on shore to do some sight seeing. The next day we would travel on. With a few table-companions, we went to town to do some window-shopping. We couldn't believe our eyes as we looked at the shops. It looked as if we had gone back in time! Everything was old fashioned, the shoes, not to mention the baby clothes with the little nighties and even bonnets.

The next day our new life started. We were directed to a bus. The oldest, rustiest bus I have ever seen. It rattled and also leaked as it was raining very hard. Out of the city we drove and into the country. Our hearts sank as we saw the desolate countryside of burned trees and dead grass. We finally arrived at 'Camp Skyville' which had been a former army camp. We slithered through the red clay into some forlorn cement buildings, which looked more like war bunkers than houses. We were allocated two dirty looking rooms, measuring 3 by 3 metres, containing five cast iron beds with loose hanging springs, louvre windows with broken glass, a cupboard and two small collapsible tables. My husband and I looked at each other but kept our thoughts to ourselves. This was our first 'home' in Australia.

We were told that there was a shop down a bush-track and here we bought cleaning materials and buckets, a mop etc, went back and cleaned our rooms before unpacking and settling in. We made a large table from the two small ones, stacked suitcases on top of each other and added a tablecloth to make another table and put some knick-knacks on it. We bought Nescafe and milk and we actually started to feel at home. Suddenly one of the camp supervisors arrived and asked for us. He was very surprised to see us all ready and settled within such a short time. He brought the Dutch Australian Weekly especially for the newly arrived Dutch people. Obviously we had coped much better with the difficult conditions than some of the other new arrivals whom we found sitting totally dejected in their dirty rooms, suitcases still unopened. Two years later some people were still in the same rooms, feeling sorry for themselves and not making a home life for themselves or their children.

We stayed three weeks in Skyville. Through help from people in our Reformed Church, we moved to a garage in Blacktown. When it rained we had to put an umbrella over the children's beds as it leaked so much. From bed sheets and curtains I made mosquito nets for their cots. We cooked on a wood stove but I first had to learn how to saw the wood. Going shopping was difficult initially. Again, I had a lot of help from the people of our church. They were not always available of course, so I had to go by myself, knowing little English. Nevertheless, I trotted off to the shops and asked for two pounds of 'pones'. He gave me a queer look and said: "Lady you just point out what you want." So I pointed to the carrots, thinking that if a 'been' is a bone and a 'steen' is a stone then a 'peen' must be a 'pone'. We laughed a lot about it later. Then there was the time I cooked 'erwtensoeep' (*peasoup*). I managed to buy all the ingredients and put everything into the saucepan including the necessary pig's trotters. Finally I added the split peas and thought they looked a bit orange but then everything is different here in Australia! A friend had been watching me preparing the soup so I offered him a plate of the soup, which he refused because he didn't like the idea of eating cooked bird seed.

Two months after our arrival our fourth child was born. Going to hospital was quite an experience. My husband was not allowed to come into my ward or stay for the birth of our child. I did not have a clue what they were talking about. I kept trying to make them understand that the baby was coming and the sister, looking like a flying nun, came and patted my hand and said: "You'll be all right, love." A Dutch nurse was called in and I finally managed to explain that I was ready to deliver. In great panic, they then rushed me to the delivery room where the baby was born as we entered the room.

The next day the senior sister told me to have a shower but I didn't know what that meant, so by evening I was feeling very uncomfortable when my husband visited me. He couldn't do anything about it either and he didn't even see our new baby daughter because we didn't realise that he had to go to the nursery to see her. The following day, the lady in the bed next to me guessed that I had not understood anything and finally managed to take me to the showers. I was surprised as in Holland women were not allowed out of bed until the fifth day after giving birth. She just had twins, was walking around and appeared to be all right. I had my shower and felt great afterwards. On the fifth day I went home with my baby, did the washing and other household jobs and never felt better after a birth. I wrote all this to my mother who was deeply concerned, warning me to be more careful! We had two more children after that, bringing the family to six.

After a car accident in 1970, my husband was classified an invalid but he was not compensated for this. After two years, he became an insurance agent until 1973, then we sold the house and returned to 'sHertogenbosch in the Netherlands. We had a cafeteria there for seven years but the children were so homesick for Australia that we packed up again and moved back to Australia. We bought a bus and my husband remodelled it into a mobile home. We travelled around for ten years and came to Brisbane in 1983 where eventually we retired and are now renting a house in Capalaba.

We have had many battles to conquer and never became rich but our children were healthy and all have good jobs now. We have twenty grandchildren and three great grandchildren and celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary last year and we are still very happy together. Forty-two years ago we migrated to Australia because we did not see a future for our children in Holland. I must admit that, at first, I would have crawled all the way back to Holland if I could have done so. Even twenty years later, when we went back for a holiday and saw how everything had changed and how good it had become in Holland, I wondered at first if we had done the right thing to come here. However, as we talked with our Dutch friends and relatives, we became aware of the many complications of life in Holland. A small country, people living so close together how narrow minded they are and how much they criticise everything. Then we concluded that as an immigrant one not only starts a new life but through the struggles and coming to terms with this new life, one develops a new character and appreciates all that has been achieved. We have learned from our migration to be thankful for every day God gives us and to pass this on to anyone who may be in need of this reassurance. There are so many people in need of love and a kind word does not cost money.

Our country of birth will always have that special spot in our hearts but we are happy here and have no regrets that we made such a big step many years ago.

May 2000

DON'T LOOK BACK – LOOK FORWARD

Cor Frederiks

I was born on the 10th November 1927 at Nijmegen, in the Central-Eastern part of the Netherlands, where I went to primary school and completed my secondary education at a type of grammar school (*Gymnasium*) by attending evening classes in Arnhem and Rotterdam.

In December 1944, after the Southern provinces of the Netherlands were liberated, I went to England, joined the Dutch Navy under allied command, and was trained as a wireless operator. I obtained an honourable discharge in 1947 to further my evening studies. In January 1951, I received a scholarship to study at Perth University, Western-Australia, leaving the Netherlands on the MS 'Sibajak' and arrived in Perth on 3rd March 1951, when I was 24 years old.

I obtained a position as Government Clerk in the Chief Secretaries Department and continued to study part time. A year after my arrival I went to visit my brother who was a carpenter in Thargomindah, Qld. To get there, I crossed a desert - the 'Nullarbor Plain' - travelling 3,500 km on a 350-cc BSA motorbike and this epic journey took me two weeks.

Once there, I helped my brother build some houses for the local Shire Council as I had run short of money on the trip. In late 1952, I obtained a position as bookkeeper at 'Charlotte Plains' station near Cunnamulla and the next year I went on to Brisbane to continue my studies at the University of Queensland. In 1954, I married my wife Pauline. Our family would eventually consist of five children - three boys and two girls.

I was appointed as Assistant Accountant at 'English Electrics' and qualified as an Accountant (AAUQ) in 1955 after completing my studies at the University of Queensland. Next I worked as accountant with Alfred Grant Real Estate Developers and was later promoted to office manager/controller supervising a staff of forty people. In 1957, while staying in that position, I commenced an accounting practice in Moorooka while conducting that business outside office hours. In 1959, I became Company Secretary of the Marsh Group

of Companies and continued in that position for three to four years. As I built up my accounting practice, I eased out as company secretary. In the late 60s, I developed various shopping centres and industrial estates.

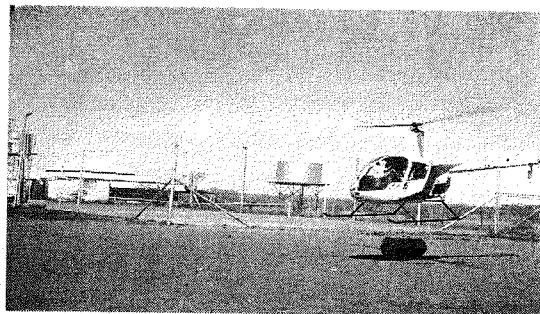


The Marooka shopping mall, which I developed in the late 60s. Other developments followed, among which the Daisy Hill shopping Centre.

In 1970, my wife Pauline sadly passed away. She died of Myeloid Leukaemia, aged merely 34, and consequently I looked after five children aged between three and fourteen. In late 1972 I remarried and we had a child. That marriage failed and we divorced in 1978.

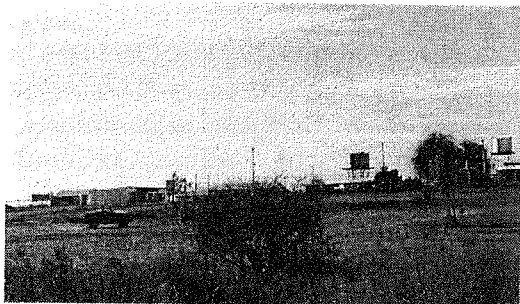


Some of the 15,000 sheep mustered ready for shearing



The Robinson 22 Helicopter, used for mustering

In the mid 70s I purchased a cattle property of 12,800 ha freehold land at Nebo in North Queensland which carried 2500 head of cattle. In 1977, I also bought the 400,000 ha Vergemont Station, which was located 145 km west of Longreach. Due to the long distances it was necessary that I learned to fly my own 182 Cessna plane and a Robinson 22 helicopter. Later I would develop the property into a tourist resort.



1980 - 'Vergemont Station' West of Longreach

After selling my Moorooka practice in 1978, I moved to Vergemont and managed the property for 10 years. It carried then about 8000 head of cattle, I built a shearing shed and bought 15,000 sheep in 1984/1985. This was also a successful operation. In 1987, I sold Vergemont station and retired to Brisbane.

Living in Brisbane I commenced voluntary work as Chairman for the Australian division of the 'Haggai Institute' and have known the founder of this organisation, Dr John Haggai, since 1973 and have been a supporter of his ideals ever since. I was instrumental in transferring the administration from Australia to Singapore, a task that took four years to complete. The aim of the 'Haggai Institute' is to train third world leaders in 'How to evangelise the third world leaders and training others to do the same.'

In 1991, I established another accountancy practice, which has developed into an efficient, modern accountancy and financial planning practice. I continued further studies and my book 'The Money Bible' was published in 1998; a second edition is envisaged. The book's focus is on 'how to save money, how to keep it and how to grow it'. I am continuing my involvement in the development business and make plans for future projects.

During the last three years I have served as Secretary/Treasurer on the Board of the Netherlands Retirement Village Association of Queensland Inc, operating the Prins Willem Alexander Village in Birkdale. This voluntary position and my continuing involvement in my accountancy practice, while retaining an interest in property development, keeps me happy, healthy and busy, doing what I like - assisting and helping people to maximise their potential.

September 2000

The Author donated the book The Money Bible to Daca's Resource Centre.

WILHELMINA'S STORY

As told to her daughter Hanny van der Mark

When Jo and I married in 1936, he had just started his own electrical contracting firm. We moved into a pleasant house on the edge of Bussum, a large village. Our business went well, we were able to employ a few tradesmen. Life was secure - until 1940 when Holland was invaded.

Why did we migrate? The simple answer - world events beyond our control. Five years of war had left Holland devastated. Our family of four had survived but our business was gone. We tried to start again in a country now suffering post-war shortages, restrictions and red tape. Then, a friend advised us that the Dutch Government needed well-qualified people to work in Indonesia. This sounded like an excellent opportunity. We first went to New Guinea, then to Java. Jo's work in charge of electrical installations in major harbours was challenging and responsible. After two good years in that beautiful country history caught up with us again - the 1949 Transfer of Sovereignty. Like thousands of others, we were caught up in the so-called 'geld sanering' (*money conversion*). By law, all paper money had to be cut in half - one half going to the Indonesian Government. This effectively halved people's income. Money held in private bank accounts was similarly treated. This was a major setback for many families. We never saw any of this money again.

In March 1950 we were repatriated to Holland. My parents opened their house to us. We applied for our own housing, only to find that since we had somewhere to stay, we were very low priority on the waiting lists. However as a long-term arrangement, this was not good for either my aged parents or our family. A solution had to be found Fast.

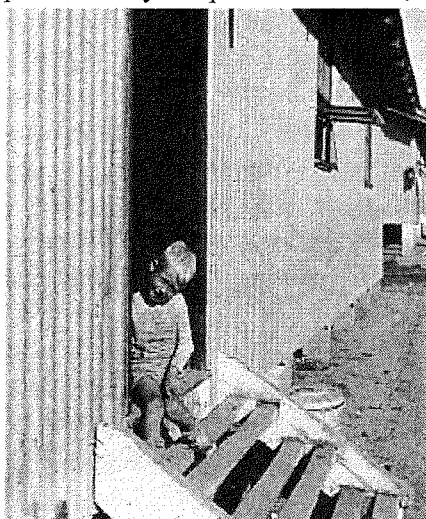
The clarion call in 1950 was - migrate. Holland was overcrowded, no future for the children, the Iron Curtain an ever-present shadow; the new countries desperately needed good people.... The propaganda was convincing. We applied for South Africa, Canada and Australia; approval from Australia came through first. We took this for a good sign. We visited the Australian Embassy to have Jo's employment documentation properly translated and certified. "Very good qualifications", said the Embassy staffer: "You will do well in Australia". We received no warning at all that these qualifications would not be recognised in Australia.

We were considered too well off to qualify for Government help. Therefore, we paid our own passage, which took most of our remaining money. As it was, we could take only a limited amount with us - currency regulations and restrictions in 1951 allowed only £30 per adult, with an additional £15 per child. This meant less than £100 for the five of us. A tradesman in Australia could expect that time a weekly wage of £10-£12. In retrospect a very slim financial base for a new future. However, we were not quite forty years old, optimistic about Jo's employment prospects, and we looked eagerly to the future.

In January 1951, we left Southampton on the P&O liner 'Maloja', with our daughters aged ten and six and son aged four. This was to be our last experience of leisure for along, long time. Most of the passengers were subsidised migrants. An epidemic of measles swept our ship - a sick child had been smuggled on board. Our two youngest children contracted the disease and were sent to the ship's isolation-ward. I had to look after them there. Unlike the

subsidised migrants, we had to pay for medical assistance. Before long, I was acting as interpreter for the Doctor. We arrived in early March Sydney Harbour is truly beautiful. However, we had little time to take that in. We did not know anyone in Australia but were allowed to go to Bathurst Migrant camp, a long, crowded train journey away from Sydney.

Long rows of corrugated iron barracks - no grass or flowers. Bathurst camp had been a military camp during the war. Our family of five was given one room, divided by a partition. Double-deck stretchers, a cot for my son, army blankets. Meals, prepared by Eastern European refugees, were served in a communal barrack and were quite reasonable. We provided our own crockery and cutlery, washing them in long, steel troughs. This sometimes created confusion. The first day I was only just in time to prevent my daughter's cutlery from going off with another family. Toilet facilities were earth closets in a large shed. Privacy was provided by strips of sackcloth, hanging between closets, some even had a strip in front. The



male toilets lacked even this. We were told that the well-paid job of emptying the night-soil barrels was reserved for professional people with refugee status to enable them to undertake further studies and possibly regain their former employment status. Considering the circumstances, the camp provided a reasonable standard of emergency accommodation. There were some pleasant moments. We made good friends, whom we still have. One day we even went for a walk, with permission, on the adjoining property and found an interesting creek where a goldminer was reputed to live. Him, we did not sight. A day to remember.

1951 - Wim van der Mark in the Bathurst barracks

Our stay was brief. We found our way to what we thought was an information session. To our surprise, we were asked for our personal details. Immediate work was available on the railways. There was a house. This sounded promising. Further particulars? There were fortnightly drops by train of essential groceries and there was no doctor but a nurse lived sixty miles down the track. Schooling for the children? This was by radio - School of the Air. What did the work involve? It was laying railway sleepers. Jo pointed out that he was well qualified in the electrical field and declined the job. "You have no choice" he was told. Subsidised migrants at that time had to work wherever ordered for two years. We had paid our own passage and the Government could not compel him. The gentlemen were furious at our refusal. Jo was ordered to leave the camp first thing the next morning. I was allowed to stay because of our three children until he could make arrangements for us.

Together with a friend he had made in the camp, my husband hitchhiked to Sydney. There was plenty of work, even without recognised qualifications. However, there was another problem - housing. Without children one could rent something, but mention the word 'Children' and every door closed firmly. Then Jo had a brainwave - tourist information. Nice 'holiday-chalets', reasonably priced, were to be had in Tasmania. The two men found their way to Tasmania's North coast. The 'chalets' were small, rectangular cabins, a double bed on each side, a small round table and a basic cooker. They cost £4 per week, off-season to rent. A tradesman at that time might earn about £11 per week. We would have to be out before Christmas - rents tripled during the high season. It was not great but it was a roof. The two families could now leave Bathurst.

In early May we arrived in Sydney. The Melbourne train did not leave until late afternoon. We had arranged to spend the day with friends living in a rented flat under a high-set house. We were met at the door - and led to a bench in a small park. What was up? They had mentioned our visit to their landlord, who promptly said: "no children inside!" Sydney was not at its best - cold, dreary autumn weather. Fortunately, the landlord had a change of heart and said that we could come in, just so long as the children kept very quiet - poor children, they were already tired from the long journey. This incident illustrates just how hard it was for families to find housing.

Seas were rough for our crossing to Tasmania on the 'Taroona', but we had finally reached our destination. We were one of the first migrant families to arrive in this small town. This did not make things any easier. Tasmania in 1951 still had a very homogenous population and gave us the impression of being in many respects very isolated. Finding our way in this community was not to be easy. Our friends, also with unrecognised qualifications, returned to Holland.

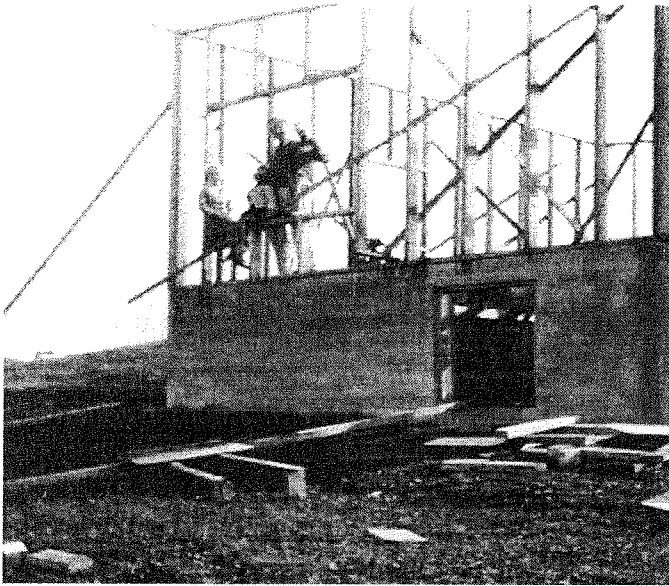
Jo quickly found work with the major electrical contractor, who no doubt realised that Jo's unrecognised papers represented a high level of skills. Regulations then permitted this firm to employ him for three months as an electrician. Then he would have to sit for the Tasmanian State exam for his trade. If he passed, he could continue as an electrician but if he failed, he was out. The boss wanted to keep him, so was willing to help, going through old exam papers with him. Technical terms were still a problem for Jo but once he had worked out the English equivalents to Dutch terminology, this problem disappeared and he passed easily.

Despite this promising beginning, this was not to be long-term employment. The year 1952 brought an economic downturn, a 'slump'. Migrants usually were the first to go. The boss summoned Jo. He was sorry and knew there were people who had been taken on later and who did not have a family to support, but... Business was business and he had already received complaints about keeping on a migrant whilst Australians were unemployed. Six weeks later Jo found another job - in the aluminium refinery at Bell Bay. The workers, mainly hard drinking single men, lived in barracks. Once a fortnight he would get home for one day by train. This was not an ideal situation. About half a year later, Jo found employment closer to home - a ninety-minute train journey each way.

Getting a place to live was top priority because we had to get out of the cabin before the rent skyrocketed. What did other people do? Buy land and build something themselves. The so-called 'shacks', inhabited garages or sheds were sprouting up like mushrooms after rain.

We took out a loan and bought a building block on a splendid location overlooking Bass Strait! There was one drawback however - no water. "Water is going to be connected any day now", they said. We spent our last cash on building materials. My husband checked building sites to see how it was done. Then the bad news broke, the water would not be connected just yet. We could not afford to delay. Mixing concrete requires water. A request to our closest neighbour to let us run a hose from the garden tap was declined. Our other neighbours were Ukrainian refugees. They spoke no English, only a smattering of German. Their shack was just finished and we were allowed to use their tap. We hired a hand-mixer to make concrete. I turned its handle and Jo shovelled in the right proportions of sand, gravel and cement.

We had bought five large drums full of water. This supply ran out halfway the final wall! My ten-year-old then carted up more water on her scooter from our neighbours. Working like this, we completed the foundation. We then assembled the timber frame and, section by section, it was lifted and bolted into place. When in doubt as to the next step, we looked at



nearby building sites. The outer walls of our house were clad by fibro-sheets (*asbestos cement*), considered quite safe in those days. The result of our work was quite an acceptable little home, divided into living room, tiny kitchen and two small bedrooms. We achieved this with no outside help. A complicating factor was the weather - rain, biting cold wind and even snow, a rare event in Tasmania! To keep warm, I wore my pre-war fur coat. It had survived the 'hunger winter' of 1945 but came apart under this rough usage. At times, this just seemed like an incredible dream from which we would awake.

We had another difficulty to deal with. When the home was half-completed, a letter arrived from the Council, informing us that our building permit had been withdrawn. Our previously approved building plan had been rejected. What to do now? We had put all our money into the land and building materials, not to mention the loan to be repaid. My husband went to the Council to seek a solution. "The best course of action would be to demolish the work already done", he was told. Where would we live then? That was not *their* problem. By the way, they had heard he had held a responsible position in Indonesia. How did authorities there react if people built without a permit? Jo replied that Dutch officials did not withdraw a once-given permit but kept their word. This reply did not go down well! We continued building as we couldn't do anything else. More letters came, threatening dire consequences. Both of us were bundles of nerves. Our home was now ready to move into. Jo asked for an appointment with the mayor and explained the situation. "What would you like me to do?" the mayor asked. "See the house for yourself and say whether we could live in it", was our reply. He came in his official car and complimented us on what we had done in such a short time. As far as he was concerned, we could move in. "You can live here very comfortably indeed," said he.

We still had no water. Our urgent application was turned down. "No funds" - was the story. We had to carry up household water from the kind Ukrainians for over a year. I was fortunate to be able to do my washing in my Irish friend's laundry. Not even the nice Mayor could help. Then rescue came! The official controlling the water supply was dismissed. He had been using Council staff to work in his own business in Council time. We were connected to the water supply the very next day! It was just one man's misuse of power, which had left us without water for so long.

Our luggage, all 16 cubic meters of it, had been in storage. We had been charged more for shipment from Sydney to Tasmania than for the Holland-Sydney transport. The owner of the storage-depot had seen the shipping company's account and said he would not charge us for

storage. "You have already paid enough!" said the very decent man. We could now unpack furniture, books and ornaments unseen since we left Indonesia two years earlier.

Time to settle in. In some respects, our lifestyle differed from that of the local community. The house had a large window overlooking the ocean. In typical Dutch style, I just had lace curtains and closed the main curtains only at night. I just could not bring myself to adopt the coffee-coloured 'Holland' blinds then standard in Australian homes. My window drew a lot of comment and quite a few visitors came to see how these Dutch people lived. I would give them a cup of coffee, like I had always done in Holland. Once a neighbour asked me who was sick. She had been up late and noticed the lights on in our house. I confessed that we rarely went to bed before eleven!

Some things were quite funny. One day I decided to treat myself to a cup of coffee before the long walk home from town. My request caused quite a stir. Tea was available of course, but coffee?? Definitely an exotic brew in those days. Sometimes problems arose in unexpected ways.

The children needed shoes. Fractional fittings could not be obtained as readily as now. The available stock came out. We had a problem: non-conforming feet! The sales woman shook her head. "It is because you wore clogs in Holland that these children have such funny feet ...".



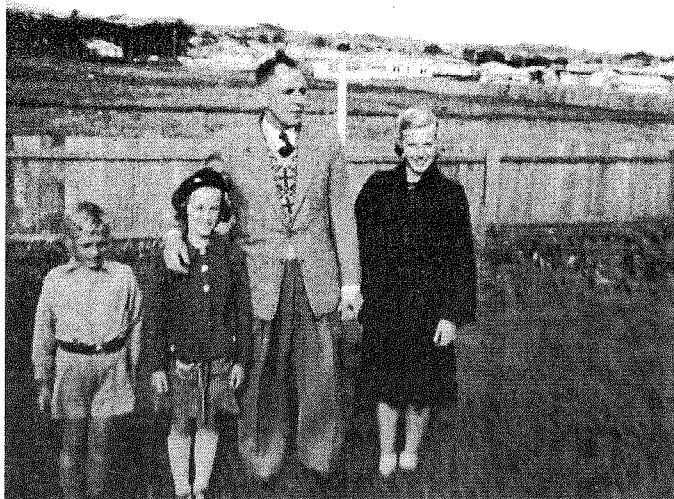
Wilhelmina settled in her comfortable self-built house when it was completed.

A note arrived about a Parent-Teacher meeting. A good thing to go to, I thought. I introduced myself to some of the women but ended up on my own. It is not easy to get into a group where everyone knows everyone else. I tried a few more times but was left out of the group every time so I did not go anymore. Was it just that these women saw me as 'different'? The only friend I made in Tasmania was an Irish woman, who lived nearby and I am still in touch with her daughter.

For the children the adjustment was also difficult. They learned English quickly - sometimes too quickly. Within days my small son was banned from kindergarten. He had been repeating words the other children had been teaching him. I visited the school and, pointing out that he could have learnt such words only at school, managed to get him re-admitted. My small daughter came home upset - the other children had been calling her 'bloody basket' (*bastard* - *Ed*), What did that mean? I did some quick thinking and provided a literal translation. We decided that those children said very silly things. Schooldays were not always happy. Things like schoolbooks belonging to the children having covers torn off, buttons being ripped off their clothing, having stones thrown at them. Incidents like that were not easy to cope with for the children. Speaking with their teachers did not help.

Speaking languages other than English was very much discouraged for migrants. Ideally, adults as well as children should shed their language of origin completely. It was said that

children could not cope with more than one language. Well, I spoke five languages, including Malay, why limit my children to only one? We spoke Dutch at meal times and we encouraged the girls to write to their grandmothers. We also encouraged reading - in either language. The result was truly bilingual children.



Life always has its lighter moments. Our little home was close to a headland and two beaches, one still unspoilt. Good for Sunday walks with the family. We gave the girls 'Enid Blyton' books for their birthdays. The children had a dog while I kept hens - we even had chickens hatching a couple of times. I remember that once a cow from a neighbouring farm wandered into my vegetable plot. I tied it up and awaited the owner. Poor man, I insisted he refund my spoilt cabbages.

1954 - The van der Mark family - from left to right: Wim, Anja, father Jo and Hanny in their Tassy back yard.

After three years in Tasmania, we assessed our situation. Things were better than when we arrived - but to spend the rest of our lives there? The thought of returning to Holland most certainly crossed our minds. However for a family of five, this would be very expensive and we knew only too well that in 1954 the housing situation there was still very bad. A friend who had returned to Holland told us later of one very cold January day when she was told: "You should have stayed in Australia", when she applied for housing.

We decided to try out what Tasmanians call 'the Mainland'. Jo went ahead, ending up in Brisbane. We followed in December 1954. When the ferry arrived in Melbourne, we had to get to the railway station. Taxis raced past our little group, without stopping. Some wharfies were sitting nearby and I asked for help. One of them strolled to the middle of the road and extending a hairy arm, halted a taxi. His mates loaded luggage and children into the taxi - true gentlemen all!

Our first Brisbane address was a room in a boarding house. The owner charged just a little more than Jo's weekly wage. Buying a house was beyond our means and we would have to rent. After six weeks of house-hunting, we found in Salisbury a neglected timber house, dirty and cockroach infested. For us it was a pearl of great value. We cleaned it and moved in.



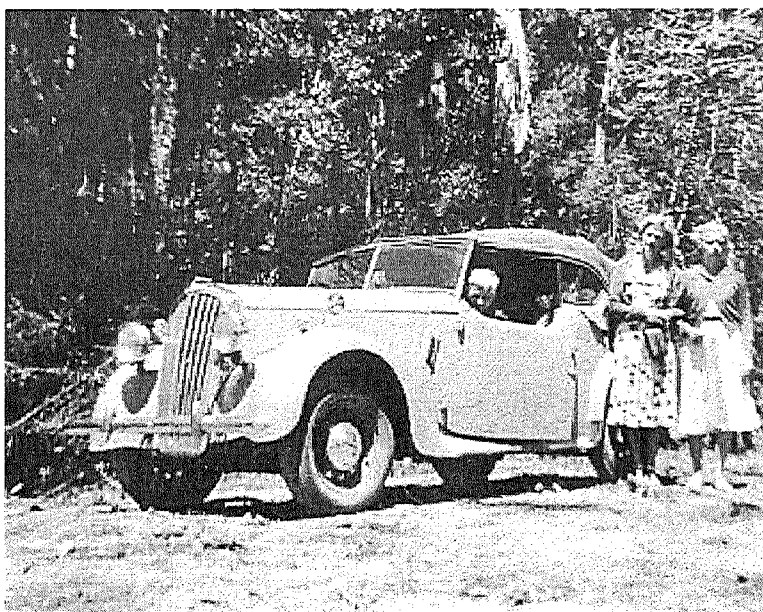
1955 - Hanny van der Mark on the front steps of the neglected house in Salisbury.

My husband's Tasmanian certificates were not recognised in Queensland, so once again he had to sit for examinations. After a couple of jobs, he applied to a Government Department where he also showed his Dutch qualifications. These were looked at with great interest but he was warned that for a migrant promotion was unlikely - not whilst an Australian was available, they added. Such was the climate of the late 'fifties.

However, things improved for him when a few years later he was appointed Safety Inspector, more responsible work that he did until he retired. Wanting the security of our own home, we had again started building - a three-bedroom timber house this time. We could now afford a bit of help. Even so, it took up all our spare time for the next two years. We travelled there by train. It was not much of a life for our children. The eldest would stay home doing her high-school homework; the younger two went to the new house with us. We ended up selling this house and buying the home in which we were already living. We modernised this house and were to live there for forty years.

What else happened? Well ... In 1958 we bought our first small car. We could now take our family on outings, enjoying some of the pleasant spots available around Brisbane. Later, camping and travelling with a caravan, we saw a lot of Australia. In 1968, both our daughters visited Holland - my mother was still alive then. One of them met her husband there and made her life in Holland.

In 1974, almost a quarter of a century after arriving in Australia, Jo and I had a wonderful visit to Holland, meeting our two grand children and surviving relatives. In 1982, we had our second and final trip to Holland. This was the last time that we saw our 'Dutch' grand children. In 1995, finding it increasingly difficult to manage in our high-set home, Jo and I moved to a unit in Prins Willem Alexander Village and in 1996 we celebrated our Diamond wedding Anniversary there.



1958 - Our first car! Wim in the car, standing Wil and Hannie van der Mark.

MIGRATION AS HANNY REMEMBERS

Hanny van der Mark

What was migration like for the children? I remember that day in 1951 when we said goodbye to Opa and Oma. "You will not see them again", father said. My bicycle, a present from Opa on our return from Indonesia six months earlier, stayed behind. How did those old people feel? The bike was given to my best friend, whom I also never saw again.

On the ship, we shared a cabin with another family. Father was in a separate cabin. The children were summoned to 'school' on board for English lessons. We gathered in a sheltered spot on the deck but had to make way for an English group who also wanted that spot. Our first experience of being less than equal. The lessons were pretty boring. I quickly learned to disappear with a (Dutch) library book.

How was school in Tasmania? Those first weeks we were fussed over, three small, very blond children, who spoke no English. Living Dutch dolls? I was introduced to a new diversion, 'swap cards'. It worked the same as 'pigeon rings' of the Dutch playground and I quickly built up a collection. However, our background set us apart and the initial friendliness did not last. Words like "why don't you go back to your own country, we don't want you here", and worse, became part of school life. The harassment was particularly bad on the school bus and the ones which the driver put off the bus to walk home, were always the migrant children, not the perpetrators! My grade IV teacher was an elderly woman who paid more attention to her knitting than to her pupils. When things got too noisy, she reached for her cane. We had one page of homework each day, which she usually told us to set ourselves. This made for easy sums. She checked this homework by asking us to hold up our exercise books. It did not take me long to discover that I could display the same page next day! Perhaps this teacher was unusually lax.

For migrant children of that period the 'tyranny of distance' also meant the absence of real relationships with grandparents and extended family. While young children might not consciously miss such relationships, it no doubt had an impact at a deeper level.

During those early days we were contacted by a well-meaning woman from the Good Neighbour Council, who had a daughter of my age. Two ten year olds were introduced and told that they would be great friends! Not surprisingly, we failed to click. Later, a Christmas party was organised for all the migrant children, I recall a noisy hall, harassed helpers and lots of food, which everyone just grabbed at. Things were not done like this in Holland in 1951 - I did not do well in the food-stakes.

In 1954, I started High school at which I was accepted better than at Primary school and I made some friends. Circumstances, however, decreed a move to Queensland necessitating again a total uprooting. Once again I was a total outsider. I remember from this time the negative attitude towards speaking a language other than English. Knowing Dutch was something to keep very quiet about. Even my teacher in French and Latin expressed disapproval when I admitted to not only speaking but also reading Dutch. I still wonder how the woman would have reacted if my original language had been ... French.

It is now the year 2000 and I am part of the unique little community, which is the Prins Willem Alexander Village. My parents live here with me and I am happy that I have been able to provide the care, which they now need. I keep busy and enjoy life.

What more can be said after half a lifetime here? Our family migrated at a time of upheaval caused by war and de-colonisation. Like every generation, we had to meet the circumstances as best as we could. The message to migrants then was, 'shed your cultural baggage, assimilate completely'. Life today is vastly different, both here and in the Netherlands. Yet in one essential sense, we still feel ourselves to be Dutch; wasn't it nice to see so many medals going to Holland at the Olympics. We read Dutch publications, we read Australian news papers. We are people of two worlds, moulded by two different cultures, fully accepted now by neither. However, we have made our own unique lives. **Was it worth it? Let the reader decide ...**

December 2000

A CAMEO STORY OF OUR EMIGRATION

Johanna Burnet nee van Zuylen

27th March 1946: "Your son's a girl, 'his' name is Johanna!" The telegram from Den Haag in Holland to Soerabaja in Indonesia announced my birth. Mum's Freudian Slip was not far from the truth; I tended to be a tomboy as a child. The nurse took one look at my thick thatch of black hair and nearly handed me to a gypsy woman - fortunately mum intervened! If not gypsy by birth, then certainly by nature, I love to travel - like father like daughter!

World War II ... My parents' wedding was cancelled when dad was drafted into the army. May 1940 ... Special leave was granted (stretched to two weeks with the connivance of a sympathetic officer) ... A hasty telegram and the family came running from all directions to witness the marriage of Maria Catharina Elisabeth Rooijackers and Johannes Hendrik van Zuylen. Because of the uncertainty of war, mum had given her wedding dress to her sister. As the dress was now long gone, mum married in the most elegant outfit in her possession.

Although the war was not a ready conversation topic, I have gleaned some stories - some humorous, some not so humorous, some lucky escapes. Suffice to say when my parents met again five years later after the war, they had to readjust to each other. Their wonderful sense of humour would have helped. Communication services were still abysmal - dad arrived home before his telegram. Intercepting the belated document, he called out to mum, "Your husband is coming home."

Dad had developed itchy feet and men were needed to police the Indonesian crisis. A month before my birth, his regiment left for Soerabaja. It remained there for three years. Now at least my parents could keep in contact by mail - I remember frequent letters eagerly read. Dad's photo was always prominently displayed. "That is your papa," my mother used to say. My attention fixed on his uniform hence every uniformed passer-by was gleefully heralded PAAAA!!! What an embarrassment for my mum.

The advantages of not being with my father for the first three years are the distinct memories BP (before papa) and AP (after papa). Strings on door latches fed through the letter box for free child entry after a hard days play in the street, biscuits lowered down from the first floor window on a string, frozen shirts carried in from the veranda and much more. They were happy days even though dad was not there.

Great excitement! Dad was coming home! Steps festooned with flowers. Mum, plus the downstairs tenant and yours truly clutching a flowerpot at the top of the stairs, eagerly waiting ... In stepped this vaguely familiar stranger. Never a man of ceremony, dad flew up the stairs and excitedly swung me up into his arms. A gentle man, dad loved and attracted children and animals. We rapidly made up lost time and I became daddy's girl.

My parents were apart for most of the first nine years of their marriage. It is a complement to each of them that they celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1990, six weeks before mum died.

Dad loved the tropics. He couldn't adjust to the cold European weather and found Holland too cramped after his overseas odysseys. Years later I realised dad had a great love of

geography. He was invariably scanning the atlas, whether for a world trip or following a cyclone. He would use pins on maps to track cyclone movements. Ideally he would have liked us to return to Indonesia with him. When this could not eventuate, Canada or Australia was considered. We left Holland in April 1951, sailing for Australia on the converted troopship 'Sibayak'.

Mum often showed me the map of Australia to prepare me for our new country. My five-year-old mind did not comprehend the moving but I did wonder why mum insisted on showing me Australia upside down. To me the two bits that poked out at the top were really legs and should be pointing down. Each time I turned the map around the 'right' way, mum insisted on turning it back again.

The day of our departure came. The huge ship fitted snugly into the dock. We climbed the gangplank, waving our farewells to the family and Holland. Slowly the ship pulled away into the open water. This was exciting! The 'Sibayak' had Dutch officers and an Indonesian crew. We had no access to the first class section and children were not allowed unaccompanied into the lounge or laundry/ironing rooms. We did have our own supervised playroom where swings were strung up. I watched with awe when an older girl swung so high that her feet touched the ceiling. Our sleeping quarters were huge dormitories comprising long rows of double width, double-decker bunks. There must have been some six rows of these. When the weather was rough, crew would arrange cords on the outside of these bunks to prevent us rolling onto the floor. Seasick cartons could be connected to the bunks as required. When the lady in the top bunk was seasick, I was fascinated by the bulging carton and poked at it with the predicted result. Men and boys were segregated from women and girls, each in their own dormitories. Communal bathrooms adjoined each dormitory.

As I was ill when we sailed through the Suez Canal, dad bought me a little red leather elephant. It is still with me. Our first Australian port was Fremantle where dad had the opportunity to work in his own trade as fitter and turner. Rather than settle for working in such a noisy environment, we continued east and sailed on to Melbourne. A monstrous storm blew up in the Great Australian Bight. The waves were huge and all doors had been closed. Most people were seasick, not so dad or me. We watched the rolling waves through the porthole in the door - I was fascinated. When one particularly huge wave seemed to be heading towards where we stood, I judiciously bolted away from the door and seem to remember the wave drenching those still near the entrance. My parents had brought their warm winter coats from Holland. During the trip, our luggage was rifled and dad's coat was stolen. As mum very rarely wore her coat in Australia, it became a wonderfully warm doona on cold winter's nights for many years.

A winter day in Australia was like a glorious summer day to us. We in our summer outfits contrasted sharply with the warmly dressed locals. Mum loved Melbourne where she wanted to stay but dad yearned for the warmer climate of the cane fields. They compromised and settled in Brisbane, via several migrant camps, each in the middle of nowhere with poor public transport facilities, which were hideously expensive. Although I no longer remember their names, staying at Nelson Bay between Sydney and Newcastle became the trigger for my parents to decide, together with two other families, to 'go to it alone'. With only one child, my parents were more mobile than many others. Some families, especially those with several children, ran into serious financial difficulties during those first years.

Rudimentary English was taught at these camps. However, my parents continued learning English by correspondence; mum for many years. Initially she taught herself by reading novels with the help of a dictionary. A very intelligent woman, who loved reading, mum enjoyed these lessons and, needless to say, wherever she went she invariably searched for a library.

The camps from a child's perspective were great. Each new site was an adventure waiting to be explored. The camps were usually old army barracks. What fun to live in your very own igloo hut with a huge igloo as mess hall! Then there was a camp where the huts looked like doll's houses. The light switch was at a very convenient child height - how very thoughtful. In others, lights could be lit by pulling on strings. One night, I remember lying in bed being serenaded by cicadas - I had never heard anything in nature so loud. I hold especially fond memories of a deep, dry watercourse; a great favourite of us children and imagination ran wild.

The men had left their families in Nelson Bay to travel north searching for work. Two days later three families of women and their children decided to follow. Our first night in Brisbane was spent in a hotel at North Quay (long ago demolished). I was asleep in bed when mum saw a huge rat on the ceiling just above me. That was our first and last night at that hotel.

The women reunited with their men and managed to obtain three army tents, which were set up at Chermside. There must have been some six or eight children in all. The men made all sorts of things from timber and competed in bench making. Our bench was still being used some 20 years later. One man, particularly good at carving, made me a little boat - it was much cherished. One day a grass fire was heading our way. Belongings were hastily packed. I remember mum silently crying as she was packing. Wanting to help, I picked up the first thing I could find - a pair of socks.

Shortly after the fire, our family found lodgings in Bulimba. Mum, dad and I shared a bedroom in a lovely Queenslander home. French doors opened out onto a huge verandah, which was adorned with several squatters' chairs. The large garden had passion fruit vines discretely hiding the 'thunder box' (outside toilet). There were banana trees, sugar cane, vegetable gardens and a chicken pen (which made a great cubby house). On washing day, the wood-fired 'copper' outside the house was stoked and a stout wooden stick was used first to agitate the clothes in the boiling water and later to remove the hot wet load into concrete tubs where they were scrubbed over a scrubbing board and rinsed three times. 'Blueo' was added to the final rinse. The hand wrung clothes were finally hung on a clothesline, which spanned the width of the garden. To prevent sagging from the weight of the clothes, wooden props supported the lines in the middle. At Christmas the copper doubled as a boiler for the plum pudding. I don't know whether mains water was connected to the house but our own tank water was carefully conserved. The bath could be filled with only 6 inches (15cm) water.

My parents were both working, dad as a labourer with the Brisbane City Council and mum as a domestic. At that time, married women rarely worked and, as the family in Holland would have been concerned if they knew mum worked, she chose not to share that information with them. At kindergarten, I did not speak the new language readily, apparently learning by osmosis, and had become quite shy. Later at school, when I was forced to write with my right hand, my writing and confidence took a nosedive. Mum tried to intervene with her 1^{1/2} words of English but hit a brick wall. The teacher said she herself had to change to her right hand and so would I. What a contrast for a child who had begun at a Montessori school in Holland. Luckily, I had a great group of playmates in our street. I detested school, nature outside was much more interesting. This changed to ambivalence until grade five when

a fantastic teacher helped me realise school could be fun and so my grades improved markedly, opening the door to high school and tertiary education. My mother, who was still studying English and Maths by correspondence, was also a very good tutor. I was indeed lucky.

The early challenges spurred my parents on to save for their own home. Every spare penny was saved. Mum's employer became her guarantor and the Commonwealth Bank approved the loan to build a modest two-bedroom house at Carina. We often returned to the house while it was being built and finally, within two years of arriving in Australia, we moved into our very own home. To save money, dad himself painted the outside walls. Then came the rains and the fresh timber bled brown splotches all over the white paint. This was soon rectified. Over the next year, room by room, the brown berricboard walls inside were painted. My parents slept on a mattress on the floor and, as I could fit into the huge cot we brought from Holland, it remained my bed until the money was saved for a proper bed. Our first luxury was a small radio and four gossip chairs, two of which I still have, recently re-covered for the second time. Not having a heater, we kept warm in winter by sitting in front of the open door of our hot oven. One day my visiting friend noticed the milk being kept cool in the bath and realised we had no refrigerator. The next day an icebox arrived graciously donated by a wonderful neighbour. In those days, because women tended to be at home, various services were delivered. The iceman with two large blocks of ice for the ice chest, the milkman, the insurance broker, to name a few.

Conversely, some people reacted to hearing a foreign accent by either ignoring the person or shouting as if we were deaf. My mother sometimes said: "first we learn English, then we learn Australian." It took us a while to master the colourful Australian idioms and we even bought a book of idioms to help us. Which reminds me of an occasion when mum joined a group of women for a social outing - as they parted, the women chorused the typical Australian farewell ... "See ya later." Mum, taking this literally, prepared afternoon tea for her expected guests who of course did not materialise.

Australia had some interesting differences from Holland. Our first impressions of Brisbane were the brown houses on wooden stumps and outside 'dunnies', toilets in the back yard discretely hidden behind drapes of vines, often passionfruit. The toilets comprised of wooden boxes with a door and a lid. The round tin inside was replaced weekly. Sawdust was emptied from the fresh tins into a box beside the toilet. Old newspaper, neatly sliced into convenient squares, was hung on a piece of wire or string. Children could earn a little pocket money by delivering newspapers to the butcher or to the fish-and-chips shop for wrapping. Finished newspapers were frequently left in trams for the convenience of other passengers.

Other jewels of Australianism were: the number of posts, which needed 'to be held up' by men draped against them, the gambling, the six o'clock swill before the 'men-only pubs' closed, and the strict segregation of men and women at parties as they ogled, discretely or otherwise, one another across the room. The harsh climate and minimal skin care was evident in the faces of many women of the 1950s. Nor had the fashion houses found Brisbane, hence many women wore similar floral dresses. Mum and I shared a private joke about the numerous floral hats. Fortunately, all that has now changed.

Having no other family in Australia, we became a closely-knit unit. Mum and dad were 'the all wise' and what they said was '*the truth*'. As I matured, I learned to appreciate and value their wisdom at deeper levels. I was very privileged to be with my parents as each died. Nursing my father in his last days strengthened the special bond between us. Wonderful insights were gained into this quiet man with the beautiful singing voice, who lived for his family and attracted the neighbourhood dogs, cats and wild birds.

Mum was the vocal member and driving force of our family. Honest, outspoken yet sensitive, she distanced herself from gossiping women and kept her own counsel. As she had no close friends in Australia, I became her confidant although I was possibly a little young. My ability to listen may have been the basis of my attraction for complete strangers to share their confidences with me. Mum was an excellent socialiser. Her light hearted, good humour was well appreciated in any group with whom she associated. When I was older, mum changed her domestic work for the longer hours and shift work in the dining room of Royal Brisbane Hospital. The intention was to stop when the house loan was repaid. Her thrift ensured this was completed seven and a half years later. Loving the work and the social contact, mum continued to work. Finally the gruelling hours and responsibilities took their toll and she became ill when I was aged 16. After Senior (grade 12), I began my career in the Pathology department, working full time, studying part time at night.

Born into a shopkeeper's family, mum had a lifelong ambition of running her own needlework shop - long before they had come into existence in Australia. As this was not to be, she began the creative phase of her life. Adult Education courses were free those days and she eagerly participated in cooking, sewing, bobbin lace making, bark painting, weaving, tatting, millinery and lampshade making. Her special loves were counted cross-stitch, tatting, crochet and bobbin lace making and Ten-Pin Bowling. Naturally, I also became involved. Her example encouraged me to try everything from dancing, sport, yoga (which she later joined), organ/piano, art, joining and becoming involved with various organisations. I also inherited her great love of reading.

Soon after dad died, I saw a counted cross-stitch depicting 'The Village Handwork Shop.' I changed the title to 'Maria's Handwerk Winkeltje' (*Maria's Embroidery Shop*), which I completed on the eighth anniversary of her death, framed it and dedicated it to her memory.

Earlier this year I revisited the family in Holland. How nurturing to realise I shared features and temperament with both sides of the family. This became a very important grounding experience for me. I knew much from my mother's side. This time my involvement was more with dad's family and I discovered volumes. Although I knew the artistic nature of mum's family, I was thrilled to discover the vocal and painting skills which were also prevalent within dad's family.

As people of my parents' generation leave us, we become aware of the precious and wonderful stories, which could be lost forever. Some of our family's stories are already gone with the passing of my parents. Fortunately some of their stories are still with me and it has been a privilege to share a cameo of our story of emigration to Australia.

June 2000

GETTING TO KNOW QUEENSLAND

John van Riel

My brothers and I were raised in the city of Utrecht. As a young man I studied at the 'HBS' in that city and completed my secondary schooling aged barely sixteen. At that tender age I was expected to make a sensible career decision. My father, a maths teacher and deputy headmaster, wanted me to go to university. Understandably, he would like it if I were to follow in his footsteps and study science, maths, physics and chemistry. Although I had a flair for science subjects, I failed miserably. I was simply too young for University level and in those days the undertaking of a University degree did not require the fulfilment of any prerequisite subjects. Knowledge of calculus was required for University but it had not been part of the High school curriculum; it was introduced the next year. Small wonder that the result was that my presence on the tennis court was more regular than my attendance at lectures. I embarked on studying Dutch East Indian law instead - no calculus needed for law!

The East Indies - later to become Indonesia - was a Dutch colony in those days. There were many indigenous students of the Dutch East Indies among us and we would enjoy delicious 'Indonesian' meals such as 'Rijsttafel'. The food and conversation stirred my interest to visit that country. I completed my law course and although World War II delayed my departure to the Dutch Indies, I was optimistic that one day I would be in that far-away land. My fellow students and I hoped to work with the Indonesians in restructuring their country as an equal partner within a Netherlands Kingdom, a Dutch Commonwealth of Nations. This new place would be called the 'United States of Indonesia' and would include West Java, Central Java, East Java, East-Indonesia, Sumatra and Borneo. Each would have its own system of government under a Central Government. Sadly President Sukarno discarded that fledgling concept, despite the fact that an agreement to this effect was signed in The Hague by the governments of both Indonesia and the Netherlands. I was amazed how rapidly good intentions, although ratified, signed and documented, could so easily be set aside.

I will not belabor my family's Indonesian experiences (1945-1951). It soon became apparent that there was no future in continuing our careers in Indonesia. Recent history has demonstrated that. We realised that our stay in Indonesia would be temporary, as future turmoil would threaten our safety and preclude our participation in the welfare of Indonesia. We requested resettlement back to Holland. Unfortunately, the reply was negative as 'Indonesian' public servants could not easily be accommodated back home. This was due to the inability of the Dutch to cope with a large influx of ex-patriates. There was a severe shortage of appropriate positions in The Netherlands. Our employer, the Indonesian Department of Justice, did not know what to do with 'superfluous' Dutch Public Servants. Whilst the Head of the Department of Justice wished to retain my services because of my expertise in Indonesian law and language, my family and I decided not to return to Holland.

You may wonder what all this has to do with my arrival in Queensland? At the time when we had to make these momentous decisions, who could have foretold that I would migrate to Australia with my family? I wasn't even aware of the name of its capital city. The idea of going to Queensland was like a decision to jump into what at the time seemed a 'black hole'. My family and I were used to a life-style and comforts in Indonesia, such as having servants, bonuses after three years and free overseas air travel. Those comforts were certainly not applicable to the situation we had to get used to in Australia.

This decision to move to Queensland was fraught with difficulty. At that time the 'White Australia Policy' frowned on all migrants arriving from Asian countries. I will always remember being required to show our second daughter, Joyce, born in Surabaya, to the authorities to prove she was the 'right', i.e., white, colour. Eventually, we were granted a Landing Permit for Australia, which was granted on the proviso that we have permanent accommodation in Brisbane. Finally, all the requirements met, we boarded a Qantas Super Constellation on 31 August 1951 to depart for Brisbane.

Our first contact with an Australian occurred during a 'stopover' in Darwin. In the bungalow serving as the terminal, refreshments were served and a drink waiter approached us. You should have seen the children's faces! They simply could not understand being waited upon by a white person. After all, the greater part of their young lives had been spent being served by Indonesians. We arrived in Sydney at 7 am on a freezing cold morning and we were wearing only tropical clothes. Aad de Haas, an ex-colleague from Bali, welcomed us before we boarded an old DC-3 for a very rough final flight to Brisbane. During the flight four family members were airsick. Looking out the window I had the feeling that we were arriving smack in the middle of a lot of dry bushes. Everything was so brown, so dry.

We had arranged to meet friends Willem and Arendine at the northern end of the Hornibrook Bridge. They had booked a holiday flat for us at Woody point. To get there, we hired a taxi and the journey seemed endless. What we saw on that trip seemed unbelievable – streets with houses on stilts, which looked more like haystacks than houses. The driver took us through the city. It was a Saturday afternoon and there was not a person in sight! Continuing on through the suburbs, we asked the driver about those cute little buildings behind the houses. He replied curtly: "They're out-houses." At the time we had no idea what an 'out-house' meant - after using them frequently we got to know their purpose very well. After what appeared to be a long, long journey through the countryside, we crossed the Hornibrook Bridge. Paying for our taxi-fare almost ruined our finances.

At last we met our friends Bill and Arendine. I first knew 'Bill' as Willem. But his new name transformed him into a 'dinkum' Aussie. With our taxi trailing their car, we ultimately arrived at the place, which would be 'home' for the time being. It was a rented 'flat' on stilts, with a kitchen, two bedrooms, plus one bedroom on an open verandah, which Bill and his wife called a 'sleep-out' and, of course, in the garden some meters away from the house, the 'out-house'. Having just come from Jakarta, a city with thousands of people on the streets day and night, ringing bells, blowing their horns and screaming out their wares for sale, this little flat on stilts in its quiet garden, seemed paradise and the climate was cooler. We were within walking distance from 'the beach', where soft waves broke on a strip of sand. There it was! The mudflats of Redcliffe did not resemble the Surfers Paradise beach at the Gold Coast!

We were elated but it did not take me long to return to earth. I had to find a job to provide for my family. With a little guidance from Bill, I was let loose on the city of Brisbane to try my luck. Unemployment was low but it was difficult to find a position for someone with my experience. Nevertheless, I obtained a job with the City Electric Company as a technical clerk. I had to work out what length of cable and which transformers and connectors were needed for consumers to connect to electricity. It was a difficult time for us. To get to work I walked 4 km to the nearest bus stop and caught a steam train for the remaining 23 km to the city. Our flat was 'holiday' accommodation, which could not be extended beyond a few months so we had to find something more permanent.

Even attempting to buy our own home was to cause problems. Whilst I had saved £750 for a deposit on a house in Brighton, we were told that as 'aliens' we did not have the right to purchase property. We may as well have been from another planet! It was possible, however, to purchase property in the name of an Australian trustee. Luckily I found an agreeable man at work prepared to act as trustee for us, without expecting payment. I think I offered him a dinner for two. What we did not know then was that the house had no town water; the taps were connected directly to the rain water tank and we also did not know about the drought. Titia was about to come home from hospital after the birth of our third daughter, Patricia, and there was virtually no water for washing the new baby's nappies. Every day I traveled to work in Brisbane City and was away from 6.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. In an attempt to reduce traveling time, I acquired a second-hand bicycle. With this 'luxury' I could ride to another bus stop, leave my bike in a ditch, and catch the bus directly to the city. This meant I could cut travel time by almost 90 minutes a day. Any person who had a wish to 'take' this bike would on closer inspection have decided it wasn't worth the effort. It had no brakes and the handlebars sat loosely in their frame. Which would-be thief could have known that my brake was a pale coloured plastic cable, which had to be pulled to stop?

Fortune sent us an amount of about £200 from Holland. I think it was a part of an inheritance and it was very welcome at the time, since we had no spare cash. We were living solely on my income and we were just coping. The £1,500 lent to us at the time by the Commonwealth Bank to purchase our house was luckily covered by the child endowment, which Titia received. The £200 windfall from Holland purchased our prize possession, our first car, a 1936 Austin Tourer. In my spare time, I studied accountancy by correspondence so we could not take full advantage of the car. The furthest we traveled was 35 km, which was perhaps the right distance for us at the time. When we moved closer to Brisbane, we transported all our belongings plus our offspring in the car. On the road to this new abode, we accepted that the children needed to poke their heads through the canvas hood to get some fresh air. By the end of that particular day, we thought that we should replace our car with a later model because, after the 'big shift', the Austin A40 had come to the end of its useful life.

By this time I had completed my course and becoming a qualified accountant, I gained a number of clients around Brisbane. Our financial position began to improve and so did our standard of living. At that time, the local press was interested in publishing stories of 'successful' newcomers to Queensland. Hence, sometime later a reporter and photographer from the Courier Mail visited us. Placing Titia in front of the piano and supplying all the children with musical instruments, the photo was taken. This was the proof! ... 'That Dutch people were not only good at the assimilation process as well as becoming qualified professionals, but they were also able to produce musicians for the future of Australia'.

In closing I would like to tell the tale of becoming the true 'Aussie'. We were able to take the ultimate luxury of a holiday - in itself this was an achievement for an immigrant. All the family and their various friends went to beautiful Coolumb and enjoyed all the things one does on such occasions - relaxing, going to the beach, eating and drinking. We were on holidays with extra people in a little beach town, without plumbing and the 'Dunny Man' cometh but once a week. As a result I became truly Australian, full immersion, one could say. As head of the house, the odious (and odorous) task fell to me and sometimes fell on me. Yes, I was completely, utterly assimilated. With the help of my children's friends and no sewerage system, I finally, albeit briefly, became that Australian icon, the 'Dunny Can Man'.

October 2000

MY REASON FOR COMING HERE

Bob van der Zijpp

The beauty of a snow-covered country-side can be breath taking. The whiteness - so clean. The silence - so soothing. Rivers frozen stiff and icebreakers trying to take on a fight - exciting! That is how I remember the winters in the thirties and forties in Western Europe, in the Netherlands to be precise. To me however, there was a dark side to it all - the cold!

The first time I really became aware of it was on a skating trip with my parents on one of the frozen canals. I was only a little lad but I did have my skates bound under my shoes. Mum and dad pushed me. The beauty of a snow-covered countryside can be breath taking. Then gently forward. Later they pulled me with a long stick, which I needed to hold on to. And that's when I grew colder and colder till my hands and feet became painful.

That was when I realised the dreadful cold!

I remember when I was about twelve, I asked my mum and dad if I could go to my uncle and aunt in California. Their letters were always full of sunshine. Unfortunately the war broke out and the years passed by under the German occupation. Coal and firewood became in short supply and eventually dried up completely. Even inside the house we now felt the cold winter and the miserable rainy autumns. I have got to get out of this place!

After the war my work took me to Indonesia. What a revelation, what a change, what a delight! The wet monsoons might have been suffocating at times but overall the climate was what I had dreamt about.

Upon return to my native country, I went back to college. During that time I read about many (warm) countries, studied the temperatures and humidity scales and at last came to the conclusion that Australia was the country with the right variety of climatic conditions. And they wanted migrants!

I opted for Brisbane as my ideal place of settlement. Average temperatures for January were 25° C, June 10.7°C and the yearly average 20.5°C. Average humidity 66% and daily hours of sunshine 7.5!

In 1952, I landed in Sydney and was met by an old school friend. He praised the virtues of Sydney and said: "There is enough work here for you". "No" I said, "you don't understand. It is a matter of temperature and feeling comfortable."

Two days later I took the train to Brisbane. With a few (long) interruptions, I have been here ever since and I have never regretted it!

Sunshine has definitely been the key to my migration to this wonderful country that my entire family now calls home including my Aussie grandchildren.

May 2000

I'M PROUD TO BE BOTH DUTCH AND AUSTRALIAN

Lenie van Wyk - van Oudheusden

An aunt of my mother went, as an 18-year-old girl, with an English family to South Africa and remained there the rest of her working life. After the Second World War, I met her in Amsterdam where she had joined her sister in a home for the aged. She hated it there! One day she packed her suitcases and disappeared, possibly back to her beloved South Africa.

The stories about her fascinated me. Longing to travel myself one day, I went to the migration office in my hometown Dordrecht and made inquiries about South Africa. Unfortunately, I required a sponsor or a profession, such as nursing, to gain entry and asking further, the same conditions applied for New Zealand. However, the official asked why I did not consider Australia, as I was a qualified swimming teacher, working at the 'Sportfondsen' pool and Australia was 'mad on swimming'. I knew about the 'Australian crawl' (freestyle) stroke but very little else about Australia. I put my name down on the list, in spite of that. Only afterwards I told my parents. They said that I could go on the condition that I paid my own fare so as not to be tied down by the two-year work agreement. They thought that if I went assisted I would be bonded for two years; unable to return within that period if I did not like it there. When my sister married in November 1951, I asked my father how much this had cost him and suggested to him that if I did not get married he could consider giving me the same amount of money towards my travel. He agreed to this arrangement. Aged 22 years, I left Holland on the 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' on the 9th of May 1952. I had a marvellous time on board swimming, meeting people and dancing. On that trip, I also celebrated my 23rd birthday. I hardly found time to sleep. Finally, we disembarked on 16th June 1952 in Sydney.

A group of us went by train to Brisbane. That train-trip was an experience never to be forgotten. I was used to the wonderful trains in Holland but this was unbelievable. The train was slow and dirty with several stops along the way, which enabled passengers to buy sandwiches or pies and tea on the platform. About 18 hours later we arrived in Brisbane. With a family from Dordrecht, who was met by their son, we went to the Yungaba Migrant Hostel. I was not an assisted migrant and not eligible to stay there. However, when the son argued on my behalf, I was given a room for the night. Wishing to take a shower, I was told that the hot water had been turned off as it was after 10 pm. It was mid-June, the winter nights were cold but I took a cold shower and I slept like a log. The next morning I spoke with the Matron of the hostel who was most helpful. I took the ferry, walked to Queen Street and looked at the big shops. I bought post cards and sent a telegram to people in Calvert, near Ipswich. A young man at weekly dances in Dordrecht had given me their address and he had told me that I could stay with his relatives for a few days when arriving in Brisbane. Coming back to the hostel, I found a message that they would pick me up the following day. The matron allowed me to stay another day and I used the opportunity to explore Brisbane a little more.

My friends picked me up and we went to climb the stairs of City hall tower, at that time the highest building in town. As we collected my friend's wife Nel from a check-up at the Ipswich maternity hospital, I looked in amazement at the inner city streets. The main street had awnings over the footpath and water troughs for horses to drink from as well as rings on the awning posts so the horses could be tied up while the owners went shopping. When we

came to Rosewood, West of Ipswich, it was even more fascinating as the footpaths there were made of wood and raised about 30 cm of the ground. Again, there were water troughs and metal rings for the horses. After having done some shopping, we drove to Calvert. My friends lived in a very small but cosy wooden house on stilts. That night, by the light of a high-pressure kerosene lamp, we unpacked the Dutch goodies I had brought.

That weekend, Nel went back to hospital, believing that the baby was about to be born. On Monday morning, the fellows went to work in the mine and I was left with a little girl, two cows to milk and a large load of washing. Where was the little Hoover washing machine I was used to? Forget it! - Outside there was only a large 'copper' for the boiling of clothes. The wife of one of the railway workers, Min Maxwell, came along and helped me to light the boiler and we talked, laughing about my school English. She was a treasure, full of fun, and I really enjoyed myself those days. Later Nel returned on the goods train, as it had been a false alarm. Perhaps the goods train did the trick as she had to be taken in again the next day and her son was finally born. As was the custom then, she remained in hospital for ten days. When she came home it was time for me to look for a job and I went to the Ipswich swimming pool, not far from the station, but it was June and closed for the winter. Next, I went to the employment office to ask whether they had a job including accommodation available, such as a hotel. There wasn't but would I be interested to work in a hospital? I said "yes". That is how I started work as a trainee nurse at the local mental hospital on 20th July 1952.

I lived in the Nurses Quarters, earning £9 a fortnight and managed to save about half of it as I had promised my mother to save for a return fare as quickly as possible. I made many friends at the hospital. With one of them, an elderly nursing assistant, I enjoyed going by train to Brisbane on our days off, to see musicals like 'Annie get your gun' or 'Brigadoon'. We just loved going to 'Her Majesty's Theatre'. Other times I would go to Rosewood where my friends now had a share farm and I loved to help with the milking. I also befriended another Dutch family at Rosewood and they 'adopted' me. Their children called me tante (*aunt*) Lenie and I was always welcome there. Their father Martin patiently taught me to drive his car.

Other nursing assistants at work came from Germany, Latvia, Poland, Hungary and the Balkans. As a group, we used to go the German Club in Brisbane on a Saturday night and I quickly learned to speak German. We enjoyed the sauerkraut with wurst, the black bread with all that beautiful European style ham and sausage, a welcome change from the hospital food, although I did not dislike the tripe, crumbed brains or mixed grills served by the cook at the hospital. On the whole I coped very well I think. As time went on some shops started to sell Dutch coffee. This was a treat after trying to drink the hospital coffee, which was horrible - I had already switched to drinking tea. At work they used to put coffee grains in a saucepan with water, add salt, mustard, boiled and strained. However, a Greek cafe in Ipswich made good coffee with milk. When I managed to get Dutch ground coffee at Meyer's, I bought a funnel and a new pair of cotton socks, made a filter out of the toe-end and brewed my own filtered coffee. It was pure luxury. I kept up with the news by reading the daily newspapers, checking every word I did not know against the dictionary. In 1953, I happened to see a 'Dutch Australian Weekly' in a Brisbane paper shop. I bought it and have read it ever since.

When attending the nursing lectures I would write everything down as I heard it. Needless to say that neither Dutch people nor Australians, not even I myself, could read and understand these notes. Instead of doing the first year examination, I asked for deferment and repeated the year. It was a wise move as I had no further problems and obtained my certificate as a Psychiatric Nurse. After graduation, the Matron asked me whether I would be interested in

doing my General Nursing. I would remain on the staff and be given leave to attend the Ipswich General Hospital training course. Because of my first certificate I had to train only two and a half years instead of the normal four years but I had to sign a contract that I would return to 'Sandy Gallop'- as the Ipswich Mental Hospital was known - for at least four years continued employment. In 1960 I returned there as Assistant Matron. In 1968 all psychiatric patients were transferred to the Brisbane Psychiatric Hospital at Goodna and 'Sandy Gallop' became the 'Challinor Centre', a training centre for people with an intellectual disability. From 1970 to 1973 I was Matron there and promoted to Principal in 1977. I retired from that position in June 1994 after 42 years of very happy and satisfying employment in that field.



*Lenie van Oudheusden in the late 50s
when she became a registered nurse.*

I met my husband late in 1968 and we married in 1975. Most of the time he was away on construction jobs and, as I had just become Assistant Matron, the arrangement seemed to suit both of us extremely well. We enjoyed the times he came home on leave or when I visited him in Indonesia or Singapore. When he returned in 1978 he could not find work to his liking so we bought a property where he began breeding Angora goats. He became involved with several Dutch organisations and through him, I came into contact with the Dutch Community. We became involved with the Queensland Holland Festival Association, the Netherlands Association of Queensland, Radio 4 EB's Dutch language-group and support many other Dutch groups. I also belong to many local Australian clubs and enjoy life to the fullest, thanks to the many blessings given to me.

Would I migrate again if I could put the clock back to 1951? Yes, I would. Although I would make sure that I would use all the entitlements, which were available, such as assisted passage to Australia and receiving a land or house-buying grant, which appeared to have been available to migrants but apparently this was not effectively publicised. I was told about this last bit of information by a real estate agent on the Gold Coast when I bought land in Currumbin in the early sixties. However, I did no longer qualify because I already had bought my first house in 1956. Mind you, I have done all right even without these Government grants. Whatever I own now is obtained through my own work and savings. At present, I do not even qualify for an aged pension because of my private superannuation arrangements.

I have been back to the Netherlands about ten times for holidays and to visit my family. My two sisters and my brother still live there with their families. My sister came to Australia to be with me for my 70th birthday and to assist me while I was recovering from two major operations. My brother and his wife have been here twice and I enjoyed these visits. However, at this stage I can not see me return to live in the Netherlands in the near future.

For this reason, I don't know the answer to the question whether I feel more Australian than Dutch or vice versa. I suppose it is sort of equal. I have many Australian friends but I am very proud of the Netherlands and the accomplishments of its sporting groups, its culture and other achievements. I can see that country now from a tourist point of view. I laughed when I read that witty book "The Undutcheables", and yes, I am now also proud to be Australian!

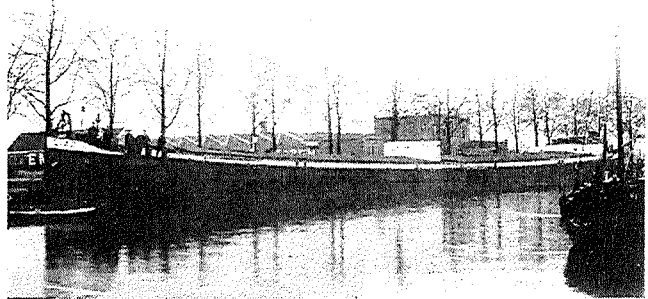
August 2000

GOING ABROAD

Dorothy Philipoom

Why did we leave 'good old Holland' to come to Australia? Easy! Leo, who was to be my husband for over 60 years, told me before we became engaged: "I would like to marry you *but* it's only fair to tell you now that I will not stay in Holland."

Leo was the eleventh of 13 children, his father died early of cancer. Social support was nearly non-existent, so everyone had to help to make ends meet. Although Leo was only 13 years old, he got a cart and sold fruit and vegetables door-to-door, like his older brother Henk. That way he gained experience in selling and meeting people, which later stood him in good stead. They lived in Utrecht, a city in the middle of The Netherlands. As many river barges were passing there, the boys would sell fruit and vegetables to the skippers when their barges went through the locks. Leo became friendly with one of them and was allowed to experience life on the barge. He liked it, the money was good and he could help his mother financially.



The barge 'Diaz' on which Leo worked.

He went to sea and worked for the 'Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland'. His ship, a passenger liner named the 'Jan Pieterszoon Coen', sailed on the Dutch East Indies route.



When he returned, the Netherlands was sliding into depression and he found that work was becoming scarce. Classified as 'breadwinner', Leo was put to work through unemployment relief to perform pick and shovel work, building dikes (*see photo, third from left*) until 1936. He later found a job in a department store and we got married in November 1938. Two years later, Leo lost his job but he did not panic, although I was expecting our first baby. He worked in his brother's drapery

shop until the war broke out. Eight days before the birth of our baby, Holland was invaded on the 10th May 1940. All went well for a couple of years, we even found a house with a shop attached. Leo continued selling his drapery door-to-door until this became too dangerous. In 1944 Leo was caught and deported to Germany. He returned in June 1945, just in time for the arrival of our second child, a boy. Drapery was difficult to buy but he could get some 'seconds'. From the imperfect material, I made children's clothes and aprons. As these items were not good enough to sell at our shop, Leo sold those at the markets.



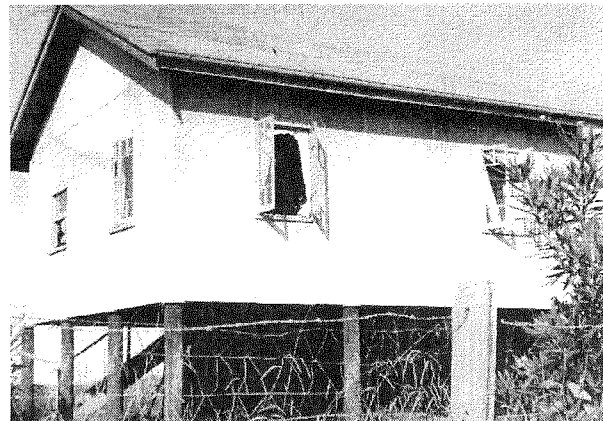
However, his old longing surfaced again and we applied for emigration to Australia. We now had three children and I was five months pregnant, when we applied. We were anxious to leave and the need for approval was urgent, as travelling after the seventh month of pregnancy was not allowed. We eventually boarded the SS 'Fairsea' on the 19th June 1952.

June 1952 – Foreground Wilma boarding, Dorothy walks behind her.

What a trip it was! The first two weeks were fine but after Aden, we had brackish water and the cooling installation broke down. It was hell! Many people became ill because of the poor condition of the water. There was no reprieve from heat and humidity. To top it off, we had a storm. It was hard to remain standing and I, being seven months pregnant by then, was seasick for the rest of the voyage. One lady died. The English doctor was often drunk. The crew was Italian and the Dutch cook usually prepared Italian food to which we were not accustomed. After a short break at Fremantle, we finally arrived at Port Melbourne at the end of July 1952. We disembarked there and were put on the train to Bonegilla, an ex-army camp turned into migrant centre, on the Victorian/New South Wales border. The journey took from 2 pm until 11 pm, with one midway stop. At this station, tables were set out with, I seem to remember, mashed potatoes, cabbage, sausages and fruit. That was a nice surprise and very welcome. On arrival at the migrant centre we were booked in and shown to our huts. We collected a tray and cutlery and then had a beautiful midnight dinner in the dining hall. At last, we could go to bed. Everything was fine, except for the flimsy grey 'horse-blankets'. It was impossible to get warm, despite the use of six blankets.

We were advised to remain at the 'camp' until the baby was born as board and lodgings were free of charge. We took this advice and our daughter was born at Albury Hospital on the 6th September 1952. After a few days in Albury, I, together with some other women, were taken back to Bonegilla Hospital to be close to our families. The hospital was almost empty and we were kept there another twelve days. Was this politics, to create demand to keep the hospital open? My stay was pleasant there but I would rather have been home with my family.

When I came home with the baby, Leo and a few other men were eager to look for work in Queensland. In Brisbane Leo found a labouring job in Coopers Plains, where a Dutch building firm was constructing houses. At work, he met a man from Thornside who told him about a vacant house and Leo rented it. We now had a place to go to so the children and I could leave the camp. On the 10th November - our wedding anniversary - we boarded an old train at Albury at 10 pm. It was very cold and we travelled all night. Finally, we were going to be united as a family again! On the 12th November we arrived at South Brisbane Station where a friend of Leo met us. Leo could not be there because he had to work. The rented house at the bay-side suburb of Thornside was a well-built, small fibro dwelling. It was small but we were happy.



1952 - Our first house in Queensland in the suburb of Thornside.

When the work at Coopers Plains stopped in June 1953, Leo started selling drapery again. First by motorbike, then from a small Ford-van and later a bigger Morris Messenger-van. Five years later, we bought our rental home for a reasonable price. Many alterations were made and a shop was constructed in the front yard. In 1976, following a trip to Holland, Leo was hospitalised after a heart attack. He never fully recovered and was allocated a pension. Despite those problems, we had some nice years at Thornside until my knees started playing up and I no longer could manage the steps. After having lived for 35 years in our house at Thornside, we decided to move to a lowset brick place at Thornlands where we lived another four years. In early December 1991, we moved to the Prins Willem Alexander Village, which was at the final stage of construction. We liked the life at the Dutch retirement village but Leo slowly but surely started to deteriorate and at the end of 1996, he became a resident in a nursing home, where he died aged 86 in August 1999.



1953 - Leo with his Ford-van, from which he sold his drapery

September 2000

DOORTJE'S (DOROTHY'S) STORY

Wilma Philipoom, Dorothy's daughter

My mother Doortje, my father Leo and three of us children migrated from Utrecht to Australia in 1952. Towards the end of WW II my father had been taken prisoner and was forced to work in labour camps in Germany. After returning to his home city, he worked hard to re-establish his drapery business. However, times were difficult. The country was in ruins and so was its economy. Selling drapery was difficult: everyone needed things, sometimes desperately so, but there was rationing and no one had much cash to pay for what was needed.



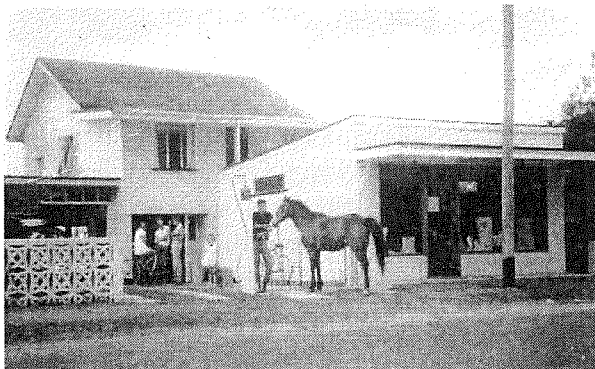
Leo, sailing in Loosdrecht

The Dutch weather left much to be desired and life elsewhere was beckoning. If emigration was to be, then my mother's choice fell on Australia for the following solid reasons. Australia she had heard, was a beautiful and plentiful country with opportunities for everyone who wished to look for them. It was a country of beautiful flowers, different animals and birds. It was a country with plenty of sunshine. Australia appealed also to my father's sense of adventure and private hopes. Australia then, was the country chosen to achieve a new life, to build a better future - both for the family and for the growing children.

My mother and her charges arrived by ship on Australian shores in the winter of 1952. Her immediate expectations were fulfilled: if this was 'winter', and temperatures in the camp of Bonegilla near Albury often reached daytime highs of 24°, then mum could see that she and Australia would get on really well. Mum spent some happy weeks at Bonegilla, during which time her fourth child was born: a daughter - the first real Australian in the family. In early November, travelling by train from Albury to Brisbane, along the East Coast of Australia, Mum woke up early in the morning on crossing the Northern NSW section of the journey, to a view of Jacarandas in flower. Purple trees! How beautiful! How strange and different they were. One of mum's loves - a passion really - was flowers. The various kinds of flowers, growing profusely in different ways, again fulfilled her expectations.

Arriving in the new home to be, was a shock. Dad had secured a rented house in Thorneside: a sleepy little village on the south side of Brisbane, high on the escarpment overlooking Moreton Bay. The view was magnificent and the setting idyllic. The house itself, though, was a mess. It was mum's first real encounter with another side of Australian life: Dutch virtues of scrubbing the street's footpath and polishing the brass doorknobs on Saturdays in The Netherlands were obviously not honoured here. The footpath and yard lay unmown. The house itself looked as though it had been lived in and not cleaned for decades. Mum's professed virtues were definitely in hygiene, cleanliness and 'gezelligheid'; these were really missing here. So mum got to work - coping with the heat as best as she could in temperatures reaching up to 38 degrees that November - she scrubbed and cleaned in between cooking for us and feeding the baby until the house shone like a diamond. People, who knew the interior of the house, would later exclaim, "I didn't know that the wood stove was green". Mum had to learn to cook on the wood stove, then on primus stoves and later electric hotplates and grillers. Holland's way had been to predominantly use gas as a source of energy. Coping with the cooking and the heat was hard for mum. We all needed lots of showers to cool down but there was only one tank of rain water and no more tanks could be bought until funds improved. The order of the day was not to waste water, and mum was insistent on that.

Learning the English language had to be done as quickly as possible. Luckily, the Government paid a retired schoolteacher to teach us and we all learned quickly and well, imbibing Australian culture, words and phrases. That teacher wrote a letter of introduction for my father to show to his customers. It started: "My name is Leo. I've come from Holland and would like to show and sell you my drapery." Included were a list of words for him which stated the names of things, like 'vest, cardigan, singlet, trousers, shirt' together with the Dutch translation so he could use the right words to sell his goods. He sold his drapery from a van, he drove around the district. Mum also learned these words very quickly. A shop was



The drapery shop attached to the house in Moorroondu Rd. Thorneside.

constructed in the front yard in which she also sold drapery to augment the family income. She had run a similar drapery shop in Utrecht. It was one of her loves and she continued with it in Australia. It was a love she shared with my father: a great appreciation for, and knowledge of, fabrics and articles of craft. They both had a particular appreciation and respect for Australian wool. "It is the best in the world", mum said, and Dad said she was right.

Gradually all of us adjusted to Australian life but Mum found it difficult to reconcile some of the differences. For instance, the Dutch way of relating to others was quite formal and stylised. By contrast, Australians were easy-going and relaxed, and sometimes tongue-in-cheek. In the early fifties, Mum's way of bringing up children was strict and formal, with a heavy emphasis on duty, discipline, morality, work and absolute obedience. Any disputes were settled with a quick smack on the bottom - the children were always in the wrong. This way of relating caused problems and much resentment. Australian children on the other hand, had more freedom and the emphasis on discipline and obedience was often absent. It was difficult for Mum to accept, at the time, that Australians saw things differently in that regard, and she coped with it by ignoring that part of the Australian lifestyle.

However, there were parts of my life in Australia that were glorious and satisfying to the extreme. After all, this was the land of milkshakes and plum puddings, of endless cups of tea (or coffee, if you preferred), and of the program 'World Famous Tenors' on Sunday nights. Mum listened with some interest to the Irish songs of tenors like John McCormack, but her face would grow sensitive and attentive each time Benjamino Gigli or Richard Tauber rendered arias from the continent. Those programs were her link with the life she left behind.

Mum did make some Australian friends. They came to her shop to talk and they stayed and told her their stories of how they coped - each of them in their own unique way. Mum often helped them and slipped them something extra when she could. Yet, she herself kept her own counsel. The only person who really understood much about her private life was her mother, left behind in Utrecht, to whom she wrote regularly - and of course also her husband.

Mum had the opportunity to buy the house, in which she lived, some years later. It was a time of reckoning in many ways. Returning to Holland was no longer a real option: the family was too well entrenched by now in the village at the bay to want to return to Utrecht. However, buying the place was still a real decision because with it came the real commitment to live here and to give life in Australia a real go. So the house was purchased and that choice was never regretted. In many ways Mum had many 'masculine' type qualities, which included a sound business sense and a good knowledge of local laws, banking requirements, including both investing and lending, and a good general know-how on what was available in the commercial world and on what conditions and price. She, more than Dad, acquired that special knowledge and to be able to do so she taught herself to read and write faultless English. For Mum there was no formal education in this regard, she just did it.

It was perhaps sixteen years later when Mum finally re-visited Holland. It was in many ways a visit to her mother but it was also to relive again some magic moments from the past: eating Dutch poffertjes, croquettes, and sauerkraut, sailing once more on the inland lakes, catching up with old friends and revisiting the old city of Utrecht. It was a beautiful trip, a marvellous holiday and yet there was not a doubt in her mind: "The Netherlands and Europe were beautiful places to visit but Australia was the country in which to live permanently." Over the years, she learned to reconcile some of her stricter ways and tempered her view so that it became more aligned to the Australian way of life. At age 84, she is still a strong and capable woman, who re-potted some 86 orchids so that: "the orchids could grow better that way."

September 2000

AU REVOIR PARIS

Trudy Peterse

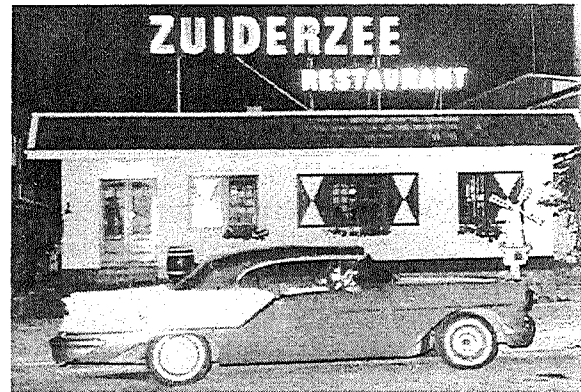
It was a sunny afternoon in 1952. We were in our office at the Dutch Consulate situated at Place des Invalides in Paris. There, over lunch, the three of us - Andre Plaat, Miss Eppy Pette and I - were discussing to spread our wings and see a lot more of the world. Mr Plaat wanted to go to Canada, Miss Pette to New Zealand and I, being the youngest, had no idea where to go exactly. I was an only child and shared an apartment with my mother. To her despair, I just wished to see as much of the world as possible. After giving the consul a month's notice, 'the three musketeers' went their own ways and we were never to meet again.

I opted for a beautiful cruise, said farewell to my mother and friends, left for London, stayed there for three weeks and then booked on the 'Orion' to sail to New Zealand. My Dutch girl friend from The Hague had migrated to that country and she was a singer there. I also loved to sing and traced her name through a publication of 'Tuny Tunes', but we did not meet. Passengers to New Zealand had to change ships in Sydney and I had to wait there for two weeks before sailing again. In the meantime I fell in love with that city and met my husband to be - John Maas - and cancelled the remainder of my trip to New Zealand.

After a few months of sightseeing in Sydney, I found a position as 'tailors model' in the showroom of a factory. I did not know what the job entailed. It meant that I had to model garments in various colours for buyers from boutiques and larger stores, such as David Jones and Mark Foyes. This I did for a couple of years. Then John and I found work together as managers of a retail radio-electrical store in Crows Nest and, in 1959, we bought a house at Lane Cove where our first son Robert was born. We subsequently sold our house and invested the funds in our first business, which was a continental delicatessen-shop. The hours were long and there was little time for our son, so we decided: 'out with the deli and into the restaurant business'. Without knowing it then, we were on our way to see a lot of Australia. We took over 'Uncle Peters' old Dutch restaurant at Cronulla, where we had a partnership with a Dutch chef. Alas, this did not work out and we opted to join up with Motels of Australia, starting as managers of the Travelodge in Nowra. Then to Canberra and finally to the Park Royal Travelodge in Melbourne.

We found the climate in Melbourne too much like Holland - too cold that is - resulting in the decision to try Sunny Queensland, eventually settling at Surfers Paradise, where we spent the best years of our lives. A few months after arriving at the Gold Coast, John and I bought a freehold restaurant, which had been closed due to poor management of the last tenants. A close friend - a Real Estate agent - informed us that it was once a famous Dutch restaurant called the 'Zuider Zee'. It was originally run by a Dutch couple, the Van Egmonts (two of their sons still reside on the Gold Coast, one of them a successful local musician) and we re-registered the restaurant under the original name 'Zuider Zee'. After extensive renovations we reopened on Friday 13th April 1962 (yes, I am superstitious). The main entertainment attraction was Dr Bernard Drukker who was quite a well-known organist in Holland. John and I sometimes sang a selection of European songs. Incidentally, our second son Edward was born in 1962 and because I used to sing Edith Piaf-songs, I called Eddie after one of her famous numbers: 'Milord'. The Gold Coast must have been ready for our style of restaurant, as it was successful from the opening night. We stayed there for about six years.

As far as entertainment was concerned, we were fortunate to have quite a number of local and overseas stars to sing and entertain at our restaurant when they were performing in the area. To name a few: 'The Dutch Swing College Band', 'The Inkspots', Kamahl, Digby Wolf and Queensland's 'own' Hans van der Drift, who absolutely loved to sing and entertain. Locals came to our restaurant to unwind after work and the place was full of fun and music. The menu included many continental dishes, with the accent on Dutch specialities.



The Zuider Zee restaurant at Surfers Paradise in the sixties

In 1965, we read in the 'Dutch Australian Weekly' that there were 70 full-size Dutch windmills for sale. We were very interested to import such a windmill with the idea to rebuild it, either on the same site as the restaurant or on acreage near what is now known as Broadbeach. However, the article in the newspaper proved to be unfounded and the Dutch authorities were not in favour, of course, to surrender their authentic windmills to Australia. We were rather disappointed but carried on with our restaurant until 1969. After selling the business we returned to Melbourne and started, in partnership, yet another restaurant with similar decor and entertainment. However, we craved for independence and after 18 months we moved to Olinda in the Dandenong Mountains. We purchased another freehold restaurant there and called it again 'Zuider Zee'. It was similar in style to the one we had at the Gold Coast - except the climate and our costumes. We also bought a house close to the restaurant.

Nearly three years later we decided, over a cup of coffee, to return to Europe. Our furniture and other belongings were put in storage and we travelled through England, then on to Belgium and settled in Antwerp where we leased a hotel from the brewers 'Stella Artois'. The locals in that city mostly stayed home at night until the programs on T.V. were finished and then they hit the pubs for drinks and to play billiards till approximately 4 am. We re-opened at 9 am, cleaned the place and the same pattern of early mornings to finish and start again had to be repeated. We handled this for a year; then surrendered the lease back to the brewery.

Our next venture in Belgium was a news agency in Brasschaat where we sold a variety of international newspapers and magazines. Both our boys went to a Flemish school in Antwerp, where they made a great effort to learn to read and write fluently in Dutch. In the early hours, before school started, they delivered newspapers and magazines. Just imagine those two Aussie-born Dutch kids in a strange country with fully loaded saddlebags on their cycles in that notorious European weather - hail, snow, rain or shine.

In hindsight, we have been fortunate with all of our enterprises. However, John wanted to return to Queensland to see whether that would be a better place for us to settle permanently. After exploring the opportunities there, he telephoned me a few months later to ask me to sell the business in Belgium, to have the furniture packed and have it sent to Queensland. I did this and took the boys to England, from where passage was booked for the three of us to return by ship to Brisbane. I am now retired, live on the Gold Coast and have seven grandchildren.

September 2000

CAPTIVES, COFFEE, CAKES AND CARPE DIEM

Jacobien & Anneke van Kammen

Anneke: So there we were on August 1995, marching, waving, catching streamers and celebrating the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. I'm not sure why I went; perhaps curiosity or perhaps I just wanted to make a point of being there to represent relatives and friends. That day Brisbane people turned up in force and it was a great celebration! Some of the old veterans did eye 'my' medals suspiciously – I was obviously too young. However, I wore my father's medals in memory of him, his brothers, his parents and all our friends who spent time in Japanese POW camps. Of course, Brisbane's Lord Mayor also gave us medal wearers free bus rides that day. I think I wore them on the wrong side too but, being a foster mum, I carried on my other side a baby possum tucked into a pouch. We live in the present.

The war of course, always was and still is an extremely integral part of our family life. So much so that there have been times I wanted to scream – “Take the darned thing off my shoulders!” At least I have been brought up on typical 'Dutch-Indies' story culture and long lasting 'rijst tafels' (*Dutch-Indonesian meals*) – precious memories, not shame and embarrassment as some would have us think! Many Australians consider me a representative of the Dutch Colonialists. (Guess that puts me in between the Nassi Goreng, the erwtensoep and the baked pumpkin.) Yet how silly it is to compartmentalise people; the truth is much more vague, much less 'black or white'. I grew up here and was educated by Australians; one tends to forget that. My sister, Kim, in contrast, always felt a bit left out of this 'special past' and adapted completely to the Australian way of life though not forgetting her Dutch roots.

My father's parents had lived for years in the then East Indies and dad, typically, had been sent to The Netherlands to further his education (accountancy). While at school in Bergen, Noord Holland, he met my mother's family. Later, he returned to Java where he took a position as trainee manager on a plantation. Mum followed him after finishing her nursing diploma and they were married in Bandjermasin, Borneo (*Kalimantan*) where his parents lived. In 1941 dad was called up to serve in the navy, fought in the 'Battle of the Java Sea', was captured and spent the rest of the war in Japan as a POW. Grandmother, my mother (Jacobien) and I became civilian POWs in Java. The war came as a shock and the aftermath even more so. Neither of my parents recovered fully, either physically or mentally but nobody mentioned psychological effects of a war – that type of knowledge came later.

Indonesia, post war, was a mess: The Americans came and discreetly left. The British took over and tried sending the Dutch away and many women and children, including my grand mother, finished up in Ceylon (*Sri Lanka*) in a British displaced person camp. The Dutch and Indonesians fought tooth and nail for possession of the country. The Japanese were told to protect themselves as well as the women and children still inside the prison camps. The British had their fingers burnt and left. In the midst of all this the Red Cross tried to find and return family members. Free transport was offered and we found my father in Balikpapan. Mum was very ill and dad, still being in the Dutch navy, requested and obtained a transfer to the Dutch-Indies Navy Headquarters in Australia.

We travelled in a DC-3 first to Darwin. There, to their horror, the men were billeted away from their wives in separate barracks. All was well; it was just that Australians were a bit conservative! We were given clean beds, towels, soap, and showers and told: “tea will be

ready in an hour.” This was disappointing, we had hoped for a bit more than a cup of tea! However, we were fed very well on meat and vegetables, which, unfortunately included pumpkin, a staple food in the POW camps and so the Dutch refused to eat that and the Australians cried, “shame!” not realising the effect it had on us. Next stop was Cloncurry in Queensland and here we were taught the famous ‘Australian salute’; the flies almost overwhelmed us! Finally we arrived in Brisbane where we were housed in the Dutch Army camp at Wacol. We lived here peacefully for several months until dad was transferred to the Royal Dutch Navy Headquarters in Melbourne. We were provided with a flat and tried to live a normal life. I went to kindergarten where I was spoiled rotten by the Australian teachers who were horrified by our POW experiences. Then dad was transferred to The Hague, in The Netherlands and we followed soon after. Australia had been a wonderful adventure.

Jacobien: A year after the war we went back to the plantation but felt it was no longer safe to stay although we were told by our Indonesian neighbours not to be afraid and Anneke used to go horse riding all over the plantation. The Estate’s directors made all women and children go to the cities for safety and we stayed in a hotel in Surabaya but it was so hot and there was nothing to do, I was glad to go back to the plantation. Our second child, a daughter, was born in Djatiroto, a large sugar plantation with a small but well organised hospital. Later, because of the turmoil, we decided to leave but my husband Dan did not want to go back to The Netherlands – too cold, cramped and bigoted and what was he supposed to do there as planter? (In retrospect, the Dutch Government paid to have expatriates rehabilitated). In any case, Dan had information that there were coffee plantations in Australia, so he wanted to go there. The children and I first went back to Noord Holland (my father had just died) and Dan went ahead and migrated to Australia in 1951.

Anneke: Dad landed in Sydney heaving a sigh of relief, finally peace! He booked into a hotel and was woken up in the night by sounds of shooting and screaming! Instinctively he rolled under the bed for protection. Was this the peaceful country as advertised? It turned out to be the biggest bank robbery Australia had experienced. Just his luck!

Jacobien: Dan travelled to Queensland. What a disappointment that was! No plantations, no job and a Dutch migration officer who knew nothing and was no help at all. Dan did some wood chopping but hurt his back. With his last money he bought a truck carrier business, which looked good on paper at first. Then an Australian set up a similar business nearby and nobody wanted to take on a ‘foreigner’. Dan’s business failed. In the meantime he befriended four mechanics from Amsterdam who had started a car repair shop and sold petrol at the Caltex garage at the end of the Hornibrook toll bridge, in Clontarf. When he became very ill their families took care of him and in return he sorted out their business accounts.

As Dan had paid his own fare (and later ours) to come here, we were ineligible for the Wacol Migrant Centre so he had to find a house, which was very difficult in those days. Dan finally managed to rent a small fibro house in Margate, Redcliffe Peninsula. He now had proper housing for his family and obtained permission from the immigration authorities to bring his family into the country. After the usual check by the Australian authorities, health and skin colour – the children were after all born in Indonesia - we boarded the ‘Johan van Oldenbarnevelt’ in August 1952 and arrived in Sydney in September. The epic train journey from Sydney to Brisbane has been described quite well by other authors in this book.

While Dan helped at the Caltex garage, he met a customer, a sheep grazier from Quilpie, who was looking for a ‘sharefarmer’ to start a pineapple farm in Peachester, near Maleny.

Dan did not understand that 'share farming' really meant: cheap labour. He was just happy to be going back to work in the country. The land had to be cleared first and then the soil ploughed using a young draught horse. Finally the pineapple plants were planted by hand. Dan used a system of 'contour ploughing and planting', rather unusual for Australia but used regularly in Asia. When we came to the farm the house had only the roof, framework and a dunny; the rest had to be built after working hours by Dan and a carpenter. There was only one water tank but fortunately down the gully was a permanent spring with clear water, we just had to carry it up the hill, that's all! It was hard work for all of us, chopping wood, boiling the washing in a copper, cooking on a wood stove and working the farm.

Anneke: I went to the nearest school, Crohamhurst State School, a typical one-teacher bush school with only 16 pupils. The locality was made famous by Inigo Jones and later Lennox Walker, both long range weather forecasters. There were mainly boys at the school so it was a bit lonely. Things improved when we were allowed to join the seventh and eighth graders from Peachester school once a fortnight to go to Woodford State School, which had a large 'domestic science' and 'manual arts' section catering for all the surrounding bush schools. It was fun to learn to cook Australian cakes and dinners. Our schoolteacher arranged for my little sister to spend some mornings at school, a sort of pre-school period. She was worried as my sister could speak very little English. This was dad's fault; he refused to speak English at home because he felt he could express his emotions better in Dutch. Besides, he also felt that we could learn two languages at once without having to pay for it. He was right, it pays to be bilingual and helps to understand other languages.



1955 - the Crohamhurst State school and its pupils

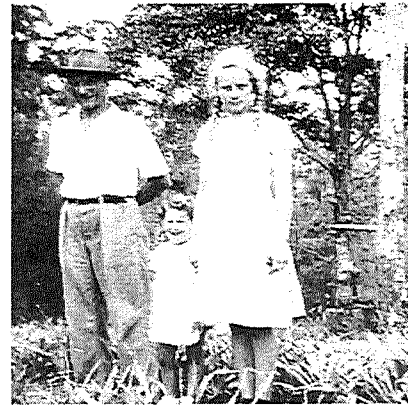
Jacobien: The Peachester community accepted us as 'those quaint Dutch people' and seemed fascinated by us. We were invited to join in community functions; Dan joined the bowling club (the RSL wouldn't have him as an *alien*), I became a member of the Country Women's Association and the children and myself went to church and Sunday school. In this way we seemed to be accepted as part of the scenery. Once, we were invited for tea by a kind family and arrived at 3.30 pm but felt not entirely welcome. At five we started to leave but 'no, no, we had been invited for *tea* – you silly Dutch people!' Apologies all round. Another kind neighbour gave Dan a chook for Christmas, "Dressed or undressed Dan?" Poor chook, undressed he supposed. One live chook was given; it did well in our back yard but started to change. Finally, we began to understand that it was a 'capon' - a doctored rooster. Dan killed it by holding on to its head and chopping of the body. The headless chook took off, down the road, down a gully and into a hollow log. It took hours to retrieve it.

The food of course was different. I tried to cook wholesome Dutch meals from the monotonous beans, cabbage, peas and carrots and only later learned to cook pumpkin pies and other Australian dishes. Luckily my relatives overseas sent us Indonesian spices. I tried very hard to learn to bake those beautiful cakes but never quite succeeded, especially my favourite - the sponge cake was a disaster! However, the neighbours came to us to drink coffee. We had taken with us a huge bag of roasted coffee beans, which lasted three years. After that we

asked the local shop to stock Nescafe for us which they reluctantly did. We must have started something; soon lots of people were buying these tins, to the relief of the shopkeeper.

One great piece of advice was given to me by the owner of the farm: “become a member of the ambulance,” which we did. Two years later I collapsed and was rushed to hospital in Maleny – for free! The doctor asked Dan would he please pay the anaesthetist. The rest of the treatment, surgery and hospital were free, didn’t he know? What a pleasant surprise. The second day after the operation, the sister said, “you can have a sponge.” Oh, yes a beautiful piece of cake, but it was only a wash, what a let down. The ladies of the Peachester CWA laughingly provided a real sponge cake.

We were in Peachester for three years when the owner decided to sell – but not to a ‘Dutchie’ with no money. So we moved to Beerwah to work for wages on another pineapple farm and lived amongst the Italians. We always hoped for our own farm and moved around SouthEast Queensland trying to find a place to settle. When we lived in Inala we bought a ’39 Dodge and one day, going on a Sunday drive, we found a small farm for sale in Runcorn. We bought it with a bank loan – our own farm. Even my youngest daughter was happy to move, as the school at Runcorn was much better than the one at Inala.



Dan, Kim and Anneke at pineapple farm

Dan had a fatal accident and our future seemed black. I wanted to return to The Netherlands but my daughters refused. I sold the farm, bought a lovely house in Annerly, close to transport, and lived there for 33 years. I went back to part-time nursing. Kim, my youngest daughter, became a nursing sister and married an army man. They had two children, moved all over Australia and Papua New Guinea and have now settled in Maleny. In 1967 I went back for the first time to The Netherlands with a Dutch Tourist Group. I thought it was wonderful to be with my relatives, old friends and Dan’s mother, it was ‘zo gezellig’ (*so cosy*). I returned to Australia reluctantly, overwhelmed with presents. I became more involved with the Dutch community by joining the bridge club and now seem to have more Dutch friends than Australian. If I had moved back to The Netherlands, I would have been allocated a high rise flat by the Government probably far away from relatives and friends. I think I am better off here, close to my daughters but sometimes I wish I were back in Noord Holland.

Anneke: When I left school we lived in Inala, yet I managed to find a ‘better class’ job in a medical laboratory. Perhaps my colonial background assisted in this or I was not classed as a ‘typical migrant’, whatever that meant. Eventually I put myself through a Bachelor of Science at the University of Queensland and later still a PhD at James Cook, Townsville. However, I was overwhelmed by health problems and could take only part-time work. Mum’s health also deteriorated and the best solution was for mum and myself to live together. We bought a house in Sunnybank so I could take care of both of us. This has put me back into the Dutch community with ethnic aged care problems to solve. The lives of this family have been rather eventful, which may or may not be due to Australian circumstances. However, we rise to the occasion to overcome our difficulties and shall continue to do so – *carpe diem*.

March 2001

FROM DUTCHIES TO AUSSIES

Ge (Jean) van Eyk

I used to talk to my children about their grandparents in Holland. Both John my husband and I came from a farming background. Opa, John's father, had been the eldest son of prosperous farmers; their old farm had been absorbed into the town of Halfweg, situated midway between Amsterdam and Haarlem. My grandparents had a farm near Aalsmeer. When the peat, then a popular heating fuel, was removed from their farm it became what now is Lake Aalsmeer. Opa did not want to be a farmer; his dream was to become a tradesman but this was never realised. However, his son John did, becoming a carpenter in 1929. It was a difficult time to get work during the Great Depression and John went around shipyards on his pushbike to look for work, while he went to evening classes to further his qualifications. When I became part of his life, he was building a huge mansion but World War II put an end to our sunny future. The factory he worked in as a carpenter was bombed and having lost his carpentry job, John joined the fire brigade. At this time our first son was born.

After the war the future looked dim and John said: "When my boys grow up they will need a degree before they can get a job as a bus driver! Let's go to another country." We decided on Australia. As a schoolchild, I had read Ethel Turner's 'Seven Little Australians', and had always wanted to visit that country. Now my wish came true and in August 1952, we left Holland on the 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' for a new life. We were very busy with our four children but the heartache of leaving everything, especially our parents, was far greater than we had expected. There was no way back, no house and no job, as we had burned our bridges behind us! After a six-week holiday on the ship, we arrived in Melbourne. I remember that waiting to disembark, I stood there and did not move, afraid of this big country. It dawned on me that we knew very little about it ... then I spotted a church - and was afraid no more.

In the migrant centre at Bonegilla, we were allocated a three-bedroom hut and we used one of them as a living room. Food was plentiful, even if it was not always well prepared. We sometimes wondered what the cook had done before he got his job. There was no work in the Bonegilla area and John decided with some other men to go to Queensland. On arrival John had to sit for a 'trades test', for which only two or three out of the 25 entrants passed. Luckily, John passed the test. He went to Colmslie Hostel near Brisbane, where nearby a powerhouse was under construction. Available carpenters would go to the construction site and the foreman would say, "Open your toolbox". They were accepted if their tools passed the test. As some of the migrant carpenters had difficulties with English, John would make them little sketches, which they could understand. Soon he was made 'leading hand'; we joined him at the Colmslie Hostel and found a high-stumped house to rent. The nights were very cold in winter. When the children were in bed, we would put the kerosene cooker in the bathroom. John would put his chair into the bathtub and I would sit quite comfortably in front of the bath reading 'A town Like Alice' by Neville Shute until it was time to go to bed. When the owner wanted to sell our home, it became time to get a place of our own. We got a loan and bought a block of land on the outskirts of Brisbane. We built a garage to live in and a living room, kitchen and bathroom which doubled as a laundry were added later. By this time, John had left the powerhouse to try working for himself but this did not work out because of lack of capital. John decided to 'go bush', where he lived like a hobo while I stayed behind with the kids. We did not like this at all.

While the State Government resumed our land to build a school, Dad had rented a house in Charleville and we decided to join him. Our furniture was loaded on our utility and the six of us with the dog and the cat started on our trek to the 'bush'. The two boys took it in turns on the back of the ute. Our 8-year-old was lying on the parcel-shelf behind us. I had the girl on my lap and the two animals at my feet. Arriving in Charleville, the Warrego River was in flood and the water was still too deep to drive through. A tractor pulled us to the other side. The streets were still muddy but luckily, we were able to reach our future home. Buying groceries, I met a young man covered to his knees in mud. He turned out to be the local church minister. We wondered what we got ourselves into but at least dad had work, we had a house and we were together as a family. No one was to know we would move four more times within four years.

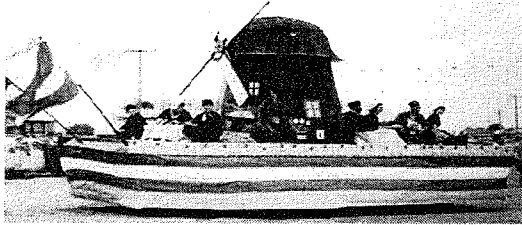
We had only been living a short time in our Charleville house, when the owner wanted it for his brother and we bought some land. Dad purchased a brick-making machine and with the help of the entire family we made enough bricks to build the first brick house in town. We moved in, although it had still only bare cement floors. It was our 18th wedding anniversary and I was reflecting upon our life, when John suddenly said: "I have wasted 18 years of my life". Fortunately, he went on to explain that due to the war he had been unable to complete his studies. "Had I done so it might have resulted in a better life for us", he thought aloud. All I said was: "At least we have a home". The next weekend John installed linoleum on the floor as the cement floor was difficult to sweep. Not only did I do the painting, I also sewed the curtains until room by room the house looked like a home. Dad's business was now going so well that he needed an office girl from 6 am to 10 pm. As you would have already guessed, 'Mum had nothing much to do' and I got the job. Having learned basic bookkeeping at high school, the financial side was soon under control. Typing business letters worried me however; I wondered whether people would laugh when they received my letters. Sometimes I had to make speeches and I could see by the faces of the audience when I said something 'funny' again. I would ask what I had said wrong and people answered: "keep making these little mistakes - it's so funny". When giving a talk about the Netherlands in Tambo, I was asked about the size and population of the Netherlands. I explained that the Netherlands, measured from West to East, was about the distance between Tambo and Blackall and the length about the distance between Tambo and Charleville, while the number of people living in Australia and the Netherlands were about the same.

Our 'birds' started leaving the nest. Son John had a Saturday job in an electrical store and accepted an apprenticeship there. Later he moved to Brisbane to do more studies. Gerry got a cadetship with an architect, Marijke worked in an office where she met her future husband and Keith was at boarding school. He really missed his friends, especially his brother Gerry, his 'partner in crime' when they came home on holidays.

While living in Blackall, a neighbour sang out one day: "The Barcoo River is up. You'll have trouble". Dad was on a job 100 km away but returned as fast as he could. All the furniture and carpets had already been stored at a neighbour's place. We built low barriers at the front and back door (*see photo*) I still remember the dog looking out over the water surrounding the house, while some church members kept me company. Suddenly the water gushed out of the toilet, spreading rapidly through the house, rising knee high. An old plugged up pink bathtub was used by the kids as a rowing boat in the



backyard. By the next day, the water had gone but it took weeks for the floor to dry out. Luckily, we were still able to live in the house. Around this time, son John came back with his family and they bought an electrical shop in town. His wife often helped in the shop, while I became the babysitter because 'Oma did not have anything much to do'.



The Shire of Blackall celebrated its centenary in the early 60s and the Dutch decorated a long truck with painted tulips. Dad made a windmill and three Dutch mothers made 'Volendam' costumes. Opa, who was staying with us at the time, won the first prize, which he took back to Holland.

When the situation in the building trade deteriorated, we left Blackall. We put our furniture in storage and made our first trip to Holland. While there, Dad tried to make some business contacts such as with a furniture exporter but he did not like the quality of the imported furniture and he gave up the idea when he found out that the exporter had gone bankrupt. After our trip to Europe, we settled at the inner Brisbane suburb of Red Hill. Son John also lived in Brisbane, where he managed the grocery stores owned by the four of us. We went 'bush' again when our son-in-law Michael, who was building bridges, needed dad's advice.

In 1972 we bought land in Paradise Point, East of Helensvale at the Gold Coast and in 1974 we moved into our new house, which was at a lovely spot with parkland across the road and near the harbour where son John moored his boat. We also had a speedboat, used our paddleboards and enjoyed swimming. Many visitors came to our house, some from overseas. By this time we had grandchildren and we did a lot of babysitting. We also found time to visit family in Melbourne and Townsville and went overseas every three to four years. During our time on the Gold Coast, we made many friends, including quite a few Dutch people. Our big house was suitable for parties. John's birthday fell on the 5th December, St. Nicholas, and in Australia we always celebrated that in style. In Holland, his birthday had tended to be neglected as it coincided with the St Nicholas celebrations. We were a close family; the sudden death of my husband John came as a great shock to us all and dad was greatly missed.

In 1990, I went to Holland to celebrate my brother's 50th Wedding Anniversary. It was difficult to make the trip without my husband but I did it just the same. Apart from the Netherlands, I visited Norway, Britain and Ireland. When returning to Brisbane there was an unpleasant surprise; my house had been burgled, the keys were stolen and I had to change the locks. I then considered moving into a retirement village for greater security but for various reasons this had to wait. I moved into a one-bedroom unit at the Prins Willem Alexander Village in 1994 and I have a comfortable little place there with Dutch-speaking people around.

As I look back over nearly half a century, I would like to say that we went to Australia for our children. Our eleven grand children are working; some went to University and all are doing well which is a source of great satisfaction to me.

I you need advice on carpentry, painting, wallpapering, dressmaking or baby sitting - *don't contact me, I am retired!*

September 2000

FROM WINDMILLS TO 'NEAT TOOL SHEDS'

Elsa Hansen - Schoneveld

Our migration story began when pa left Holland in 1952, just before he turned fifty, which was the acceptable age limit for migration to Australia. My father had a military and administrative background and he was fluent in seven languages. Between the two wars, he had been in Curacao (Dutch-West-Indies), working for Shell and in Indonesia as a plantation manager. The reasons my parents chose to come to Australia were free education for their children and a better life style in a more conducive climate. We were given no financial assistance as my pa was deemed by the Government to have too high a bank balance.

In those days, it took seven days to travel to Australia. He flew by QANTAS Airlines, stopping every night in a Hotel. By going ahead of the rest of the family, of which there were seven (their ages being 20,18,16,15,13,9 and 7 years), pa hoped to find suitable employment and housing in preparation for our arrival in 1953. Alternatively, if things didn't turn out as planned, he would return home. It was then that my parents decided that the oldest two sons would stay in Holland to complete their studies; they could join us later.

Before leaving the Netherlands, pa was informed that people with his qualifications would make an easy transition into similar career paths in Australia. On his arrival he was bitterly disappointed to be told his diplomas were not recognised here. Time and money were short so he immediately took a farm labourer's job in Dalby about 150 kilometers west of Brisbane. This work involved long hours and hard physical labour. In the meantime, Ma was making preparations for our departure. This involved arranging travel documents, health checks, deciding what to take and what to leave behind. The size of the crate was 12 cubic meters. We, as children, were allowed to take only a few favourite toys and books because of limited space in the crate. These choices caused many tears of frustration but I managed to bring my well-loved doll.

Our departure was held up for six weeks as my sister's health check showed a shadow on her lungs. Fortunately, it proved to be a double rib which was of no consequence. However, this delay caused great hardship for ma, as we had to vacate the house on the set date and we were virtually homeless at that time. Thankfully, relatives and friends came to our rescue.

The day of our departure was filled with mixed feelings. My most vivid memory was when our shoes were taken from us, cleaned and disinfected. We then had to walk onto the gangplank in our socks and I wondered whether I would get my shoes back. To my great relief we were handed our shoes back once on the ship. A minor media sensation was caused by the large number of friends and family who farewelled us from 'Hoek van Holland.' On board the ship the SS 'Sibajak,' stewards were busily showing everyone the facilities and, to our disappointment, we found ourselves in large men and women's dormitories with very little privacy. We received no favours even though we were self-funded passengers. There were rows upon rows of triple-decker bunks. I chose to sleep on the highest bunk but was soon relegated to the lowest one, after promptly falling out of it on the first night.

Ma was very worried about my brother Bert, who was nine years old, as he was a sleepwalker which he did when he felt the need to go to the toilet. The powers to be, said he was too old to sleep in the women's ward, so my older brother Jan was to take care of him

when necessary. Like most teenagers, Jan was a very sound sleeper and was oblivious to the fact that on the very first night Bert 'christened' the nearest unwary sleeper. From then on, Bert was immediately moved into the women's quarters in close proximity to Ma.

On those first days many people were seasick and it took several days to acclimatise to the ship's movement. We soon settled into a daily routine. There was a crèche available for children up to age twelve. My brother and I hated going there as it was truly boring. We often hid ourselves in all the ship's nooks and crannies, including the hospital. We soon made ourselves visible when our names were called out repeatedly over the public address system.

The selection of food reflected little thought, being traditional Dutch fare (heavy and fatty) even when we were travelling in the heat of the tropics. One occasion in the dining room was highlighted when the hairdresser above us, decided to sweep out while we were eating. Prevailing winds blew the hair all over our meals causing great outcries of disgust.

We were always peering at the horizon waiting for the excitement of 'land ahoy'. This occurred only when we reached America after sailing in the Atlantic for three long weeks. Passing through the locks of the Panama Canal was an unforgettable experience especially since we were able to stay up all night to watch the goings on. The scenery was spectacular, as most of us had not seen tropical rainforests before.

After all the excitement we settled back into the normal pattern of shipboard life again, only this time the ocean was the Pacific. For those going to New Zealand, Wellington couldn't come soon enough. The rest continued on to Sydney. Here Pa was waiting for us on the wharf. He had organised our train trip up to Brisbane. The train was the 'Puffing Billy' variety that people pay big money for these days, to be covered in soot. A big contrast to the Dutch trains as they were electric. On our journey I showed my doll her new environment and I somehow dropped the doll out of the window. I was so distressed that Ma pulled the emergency cord and brought the train to a grinding halt. Having rushed down the carriages to attend our 'emergency', the guard became very angry when we told him why his train had been halted in its tracks. He informed us that the train had taken a mile to stop, no one would be going back to look for the doll and so we continued on our journey. As we travelled along Ma observed that Australians must be very tidy people, with every garden having a neat little tool shed in the backyard. It didn't take long for us to find out that they were the outhouses so necessary to every day's ablutions.

Several times the train stopped for refreshments. In Grafton, we were met by the women of the Country Women Association (CWA) who had generously made time available to supply us with a full roast dinner, set out on trestles on the platform.

Brisbane at the time, like all other major Australian cities, was experiencing a housing shortage. Pa had organised that we stay in a boarding house, owned by a Mrs Anderson, in a two-horse town called Landsborough, which was 50 miles North of Brisbane. So we again transferred to another train that took us there. Mrs Anderson was a very warm-hearted person who welcomed us and taught us so much. The house was a typical Queenslander, surrounded by verandas. Once Pa had deposited us there, he immediately returned to Dalby, to go back to work. Not long after, our crate was transported to the Landsborough Railway Station. Much to the amusement of the town's people, there was no crane large enough to move it. So there it stood! Ma had the brilliant idea of emptying the crate and walking the contents to the

boarding house. The empty crate followed. We then repacked the crate and nailed it back up. There it remained for the duration of our stay in Landsborough.

We went to the three-teacher Landsborough State School. Here we were introduced to the 'English' language. We would sit on the back steps with another pupil chanting the prep-1 book like parrots. Ma began English correspondence lessons and with Mrs Anderson's help soon learnt basic English. My sister Tilly, aged 16, and too old to go school, secured a nurse's training position in the Dalby hospital, mainly to be company for Pa. She later qualified as a qualified nurse. Jan (John) started work in the Forestry Department as an apprentice, boarding elsewhere. After five years he became a forest ranger.

To see Pa, Ma hitchhiked all the way to Dalby every second weekend. Truck drivers used to give her lifts until one of them became a little too friendly. She soon had her shoe off and words didn't need to be spoken to get her meaning across. He threw the truck door open and she was left stranded on the highway waiting for another lift to her destination.

Following this incident, Pa decided to apply for a job in Brisbane and Ma was to find accommodation. Many days went by scouring the 'Courier Mail' advertisements until at last she found a promising advertisement. Little did she know that she had answered an advertisement in the Personal Column, which read V. M. at the end, meaning: view to marriage. Ignorant of this terminology, she applied for the house, it was dirty but otherwise quite suitable being three bedroom highset. Jack, the owner, was to live in the bedroom downstairs and would come up for meals. The cost was three guineas - £3.3.0 - and included telephone and electricity, very reasonable as the basic wage was £12. Jack was a grotty bachelor with a huge ship tattoo on his chest that he loved showing to everyone. Ma set some hard and fast rules, including wearing a shirt to the table. He succumbed by wearing a 'Jacky Howe' singlet, the blue variety. He also was unaware that Ma had a husband, and had his sights set on her with a view to marriage.

On the second weekend, Pa arrived on the scene. There was hell to pay. Who was this man? What was he doing here? After much argument and explanation, they sorted out the husband problem. Ma became 'Jack's Darling'. Actually her cooking was excellent and like the saying goes 'the way to a man's heart is through his stomach.'

Pa found a cleaner's job at 'Henry Berry', a firm in the city. One evening he was doing his normal cleaning chores when the accountant was having trouble balancing the books. Pa put his bucket and mop down, helped him find the error and continued with his cleaning. This act of kindness had Pa promoted to bookkeeper, no more money but better hours.

Three years later saw our family progress into a better financial position. With everyone contributing we were able to purchase a small-crops farm at Eight Mile Plains and generally became more assimilated into the Australian way of life.

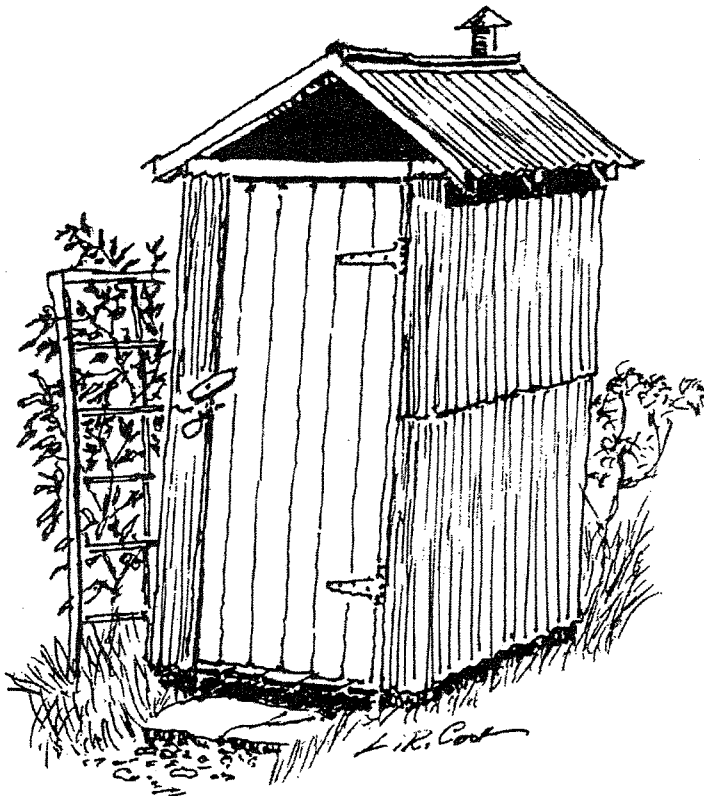
September 2000

A DIFFICULT DECISION TO RELOCATE

Aafke van Klaveren

My parents and I arrived in Brisbane on a warm October afternoon in 1954. We were met, at the Interstate railway station, by members of a Dutch family with whom we were to board.

The accommodation was stretched to the limits, and consisted of two bedrooms, a couple of partitioned off spaces underneath the house and an old caravan, to house 14 people including five children and two babies. My parents were given the front bedroom, which had a bay window with a window seat on which I had to sleep until our own beds arrived.



One of the most unpleasant things to live with was the back yard earth closet complete with the newspaper squares, saw dust, smells and flies. With so many people using the 'dunny', it was always on the point of overflowing despite the maximum two collections per week.

Our second shock of the day arrived in the evening when the light was switched on in the bedroom, the walls were a moving mass of cockroaches, they were on the dressing table and also on the beds, in short everywhere! My father tried killing them but there were too many of them to make any difference. My parents went out the next day and arrived back with a large bottle of Mortein, from then on the room was thoroughly sprayed before bedtime but to this day I still dread cockroaches.

We had arrived mid week so had a few days to settle in before my father commenced work at the Ford Motor Company and I started school. I did not speak English and so was put back a year. In those days there were no special teachers to teach students English. During the reading lesson in class, a Dutch girl of the same grade was assigned to me. I had to read the book aloud to her as best as I could and she would explain the meaning of the words to me. In the new school year the girl went up to the next class but I had to stay behind until I mastered the language. The principal moved me up three months later, but to a different class from the Dutch girl, as he wanted me to be independent.

While my father was at work and I was at school, my mother was left with the landlady and was expected to help her with the cleaning, cooking and the looking after the babies. The

landlady's young son taught my mother some English but when she practised some of her newly learned words, the shopkeeper was horrified to be asked for a "pound of bloody bastard sugar." [*a pound of soft brown sugar, called in Dutch 'basterd suiker'*]. We spent the long summer months with this family and learned how to keep reasonably cool. In February during the rainy season, the back yard was transformed into a muddy mess and horrible long worms appeared everywhere. They were so big that we thought they were snakes! With the house bursting at the seams and different age groups all under the one roof, there were many arguments.

After four months we moved into a cottage in the same area. The house was primitive, without hot running water and it had an earth closet. The doors couldn't be locked and the back door was permanently half open and whenever we went away, we padlocked the door at the bottom of the stairs at the back. The house was furnished including the standard ice chest. After problems with melting ice, causing minor spills, the decision was made to buy a refrigerator on hire purchase.

We had lovely Aussie neighbours who taught us a lot. One of them, Zena, still cooked on an old wood stove and she produced the most delicious roast meals and light sponge cakes. Bill, her husband, tried to explain the Aussie 'lingo' [*language*] to us and gave us an insight into the breeding and raising of 'chooks', which were his pride and joy. Unfortunately his neighbours did not enjoy Bill's hobby - they did not appreciate being woken up by his rooster.

When the six-month lease ended we had to vacate the property. As we were not able to find other affordable accommodation, our minister arranged for us to stay with a church member who let out rooms. It was hard to go back to this arrangement, but it worked out better than we thought. My parents had a bedroom, I slept on the verandah, we shared the kitchen and were given a nook in her dining room to put our fridge and kitchen setting. We had to share the downstairs bathroom with an Aboriginal woman who lived in the garage.

We lived there quite happily for ten months. During that time my father changed jobs and became a bus driver. This was entirely different from the management position he had held in The Netherlands but much better than working in a factory. My mother, who was a qualified dressmaker, tried to add to the income by taking in sewing and she also worked part-time washing dishes in a cafeteria.

We had applied for a Housing Commission house but to be eligible for a house we were required to live in ex-army huts, which were temporary housing on Gregory Terrace. We spent five horrific months there amongst alcoholics and the down and outs. Our 'flat' was the middle section of such a hut. It was partly partitioned off into three small rooms and a kitchen that contained a couple of rough planks underneath the sink and a one-burner hot plate. Communal bathrooms were located at the end of the huts and they were very primitive with a couple of cold showers, a rusty bath and flushing toilets that were always dirty. The laundry was also communal; each 'flat' had a designated day and time to use the tubs and copper. Many residents washed their clothes by hand at a time convenient to them. On our first night we found out that we had landed once again into cockroach territory. From that time onwards we left on the lights at all times. We also learned to our cost that anything not bolted down or locked up had a habit of disappearing, never to be seen again. Saturday nights were the worst nights for bashings at those living quarters. If possible we would get out of that place, usually going to the Carlton theatre which showed continuous news-reels and cartoons, or we would go for long walks in the Fortitude Valley.

After several months, we were offered a house in an outlying suburb without public transport. As much as we wanted to leave the camp, we were unable to accept this house. When my mother was at her lowest point another house came our way and we took it. This house was located next to the railway line and within walking distance to local shops. Our happiness was short lived as we found that we were again living among alcoholics. One neighbour had four children and when the man was drunk, he enjoyed bashing up his pregnant wife and children. They would then hop over the fence into our yard for protection. The Police were called in and advised my parents not to get involved in their dispute. Living conditions became so bad that we moved out fourteen months later.

When moving to the house along the railway, I had to switch to the local school. At the previous school I had not experienced any trouble and was stunned now by the verbal abuse, the tormenting and at times even physical attacks which I had to endure. I was told regularly: "bloody migrants are not welcome here - go back where you come from!" The teachers were no help either and I suspected, that some at least, shared these sentiments. I learned to live with all this abuse and tried hard not to let them get at me and I was certainly happy to leave that school at the completion of year eight! I enrolled at the local high school, and much to my relief, I was not the only migrant-student at that school and my days there were happy ones.

Our next house was an old farm-house situated in a paddock amongst patches of lettuce and cabbages. We made friends with the landlord and his family and through them with the surrounding neighbours. On Guy Fawkes night the entire street would make their way to the creek for a community barbeque, followed by a huge bonfire and fire works. I learned to ride a horse and became the owner of a gentle mare named Lady.

I completed my schooling and started work in a city office, I also changed my name from Aafke to Anne for the Australians, to avoid any possible repeats of my horrendous primary school days experiences.

As the years passed, things improved for my parents and they became the proud owners of a second hand Morris Oxford. This car replaced my father's motor bike, as he had been involved in two major accidents with that bike. We were just going along nicely when, after seven years, we were asked to vacate the house as the owner's son was getting married and wanted to live in the house. My parents wanted the security that owning a house would offer and with the help of a small legacy they were able to purchase a modest house.

Making the decision to immigrate to a strange country is not an easy one. Apart from leaving family, friends and most possessions behind, there is also the reality of homesickness to be dealt with, as well as a new language to learn and different customs to follow. I remember that the food we took for granted back in the old country was unavailable in the 50s, unlike today when almost anything can be purchased here. My parents made a difficult decision to relocate to Australia all those years ago and I am glad they made that decision.

September 2000

ABOUT FLOWERS, GOOD FRIENDS, DOGS AND ... Mr BB

Betty Deen (Vischer)

In 1956, my husband, Henk and I left Holland with our three children, looking for a better future. I had some knowledge of English and on the ship the 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt', I even gave basic English lessons to small groups of my fellow passengers.

On arrival in Brisbane, we were taken by bus to the Wacol Camp Hostel. Accommodation was basic; our family of five got one half of a 'Nissen hut'. The partition between our neighbours and us was a very flimsy affair - the children had to be kept from climbing onto chairs and peering over the top. Small groups of us went to the shops, in part to get used to the money like those funny three-pence bits and other coinage. I remember the mocking laughter that kept interrupting a group of us as we talked together. When we located the source, a kookaburra, we were the ones laughing! Meals in Wacol were not impressive - the scrambled egg left over in the morning would appear in the soup at night. There were complaints but no quick improvements. We all felt sick and therefore decided to leave the camp as quickly as possible, partly to get away from the food.

We quickly found a rental house in Coopers Plains next door to another Dutch family with two children, which went to the same school as ours. About two weeks later I became very ill and was admitted to the General Hospital (now Royal Brisbane Hospital). After my husband had boiled the washing, including a very blue baseball cap, our neighbour told him that she would do the washing for us. That neighbour's surname was 'Deen'; I am now married to Len Deen. The Deen's eventually went back to The Netherlands but after Mrs Deen passed away, Len returned to Australia where his children still lived. The first 'Dutchie' he met was his old(er) neighbour. We became friends again, married a few years later and are still happy.

At Coopers Plains, we met a Dutch friend who took my husband job hunting - on the back of his motorbike. My husband Henk had worked in Holland as a trainer with guide dogs and police dogs, so we thought we had done quite well when he found a job working in dog kennels south of Brisbane. Even better, we could build ourselves a 'flat' under the owner's house. It was a typical old-style Queensland home, closed in underneath with battens. Our 'living room' was the enclosed laundry and our beds stood on the earth floor. Fibro sheets were stacked against the wall providing some shelter for our beds. The first Queensland tropical downpour revealed a weakness in our 'bedroom' - our beds were half-submerged in water. Fortunately, we had our Dutch gum-boots and we waded around in these until the water subsided. My husband then dug a storm-water trench.

It was the end-of-year school holidays. We did not realise that this work was very seasonal and that the owner would not want us after the holidays. The holidays over, Henk started working on the 'flat', nailing the fibro sheets into place. The next step would be the floor. The kennel owners then decided that they had no more use for us and we were told to get out that very same day. When we protested the owner informed us that she was calling the police. An uniformed policeman came. He was pleasant enough, suggesting we go to 'friends' and he advised us to make no trouble. Apparently, a complaint had been made about us damaging the property - the stormwater drain - and also we were supposed to have smashed the windows. This would have been difficult as there were no windows. I assured the policeman that I had no desire to make 'trouble' but - could he tell me what to do? He had no solution. I

telephoned a 'migration officer' attached to the Dutch Consulate. They could/would not help. As migrants, we were completely on our own and without help from either Australian or Dutch authorities. I went to the bus stop, as I always did, to meet the children and I cried again. A lady sitting there looked at me and suddenly said: "Are you Mrs V...?" "Yes, that's me" - I said surprised to hear a Dutch voice and the fact that she knew my name. She remembered me from the Wacol camp and seeing my distress, asked if she could help me. I told her the sad tale. "Surely someone can help", she said. The bus came and we went our own ways.

We started packing, not knowing where we would sleep that night with our children, aged 12, 10 and 8. They were also very upset. Just before dark a truck drove up and out came the woman I met at the bus stop. Her husband was with her, they introduced themselves as Piet and Willemien and said: "we are here to take you to our place where we have a large shed and we can put you up for the night." Who would have expected this from total strangers?

The next day was 14th February 1957 - Valentine's Day and house hunting was our first priority. However, a surprise arrived as two gentlemen with flowers appeared. They were from the Good Neighbour Council and asked for me. The flowers were a Valentine's Day gift for me! Why? I had been writing about our experiences to our English teacher in Holland and he had forwarded these letters to the 'Wereldpost' (*a Dutch emigration paper*). This paper had published the letters, resulting in a lot of mail to me from people in Holland. I replied to them at first but had to stop as the postage was sending me broke! Apparently, the flowers were in appreciation of those letters. I burst into tears again - I did not even have a vase for the flowers. A photographer from Brisbane's 'The Telegraph' was also there, resulting in an article about us in this newspaper. However, the promised write-up in the Good Neighbour Magazine did not appear - apparently we were now 'bad news' - but they did send us the photos.

We did get some offers of help following the publication of our story in 'The Telegraph'. A Dutchman wanted to sell us land at double the price he had paid, someone else had land with a chicken shed which we could turn into a house ... on his land. We even got an offer of chickens rejected by the abattoir, at shop-price.

We spent three weeks with Piet and Willemien, who had seven children. In those three weeks there was never a cross word - not from them and not from the children. Often Willemien cooked 'too much' and asked us whether we could please help them eat it. There was no mention of money. Now, more than forty years later, I am the only one of those four adults still alive. Never will I forget those good friends who took in total strangers in what they saw as no more and no less than an act of Christian caring - yet they were no churchgoers.

Our next house was semi-inhabitable. It had no windows but at least the roof was waterproof. It was on a large property and once a week I paid rent to the owners in the big house. There was a shed that we could use for storage. However, it still had the possessions of a previous tenant scattered around inside it. I tidied them up to make room for our own things. A few days later I found a piece of fibro with something scribbled on it in large letters:

"LEAVE THINGS ALONE, YOU BLOODY BASTARD!"

When next I paid my rent, my landlady asked me whether I had managed to store my things. "Yes, but 'Mr Bastard' is not happy about us shifting his things", I said. She looked

quite shocked. "You shouldn't say things like that ..." "But he left a note signed B.B ... Oh Mrs. V!" Being a prim and proper, she told her husband, who duly delegated my husband to explain to me the enormity of my innocent mistake!

Nine months later my son said that he had seen a nice house close by and we walked over to have a look. It was empty and the property appeared very suitable for kennels. When we made enquiries, we found out that the rent would be £5 but our income was only £4.10.00. However, a young Dutch couple we had met was willing to share that house for the time being. We converted the chicken sheds into kennels and we stayed there for six years. I 'did' the kennels and my husband worked in a factory where he was soon sacked for not being in the Union. Well, he had never been asked to join. Next, he became a wards-man at the Princess Alexandra Hospital on the south side of Brisbane. Later Henk decided to try to utilise his previous experience in guide- and police dog work. The dog obedience classes went well and he started training a guide dog but no one wanted to buy it, so we ended up *giving* it to a blind person. "Police dogs might go better", Henk thought. However, the Australian community was then still very prejudiced against the European police dog of choice - the German Shepherd - known locally as 'Alsatians'. It was made clear to us that migrants introducing something new were not taken seriously. The venture failed. We had fallen behind in rent whilst we tried to set up the new business and the landlord agreed to wait and when he received a good offer for the property, he made a deal with us, that if we left immediately, he would waive the rent owing. We did, and quickly had to find another place large enough to take not only us but also our horse, cow, dogs, kangaroos etc. Fortunately, Henk found work as a handyman at the University of Queensland.

Some time later, I fell in love with an empty house on acreage. We climbed through the kitchen window to get a look. We were able to buy it without a deposit! Twelve years later, we received an offer for half the land and soon after an offer for the remainder. That took care of the leaking roof that we had been unable to repair through lack of funds! We went house hunting again and found a block of five acres with a nice house. The aged owners wanted to leave for something smaller and the council would permit dog-kennels. We worked seven days a week until I was 68. I loved the animals but we made only just enough money to live.

In 1984, we moved to Rochedale and I was looking forward to live close to people again. However, our neighbours were young, working, and I made no friends. We became more involved with the Dutch community such as the 'Dutch Over Fifties' group. I was on the committee that helped to set up the Dutch Retirement Village in Birkdale. I went through the entire the telephone book to pick out Dutch names to send out information leaflets.

Years passed and I married again. One day, when we both had the flu, we realised that there were no neighbours or anyone close, whom we could have asked for help. We looked at each other and said: "The Dutch Village!" In 1993 we moved to Birkdale and became part of this small Dutch community. It was a good move and we are still happy there.



Betty Dean in the 'Soos' of the village

July 2000

FULL CIRCLE: INTEGRATION AND FULFILMENT

Joseph - Jan Oudemans

It was February 1956 when our ship 'de Johan' (van Oldenbarnevelt) berthed in Melbourne on a very hot day (or so it seemed to us). I was a month off my 14th birthday, the oldest of five siblings, when our family first set foot on this great continent of Australia. We were welcomed by my father's brother and his family. They had a small house in Dandenong and for quite a few weeks they shared their home and provided us with hospitality; seven of us and six of them. I can't quite remember how we all managed. For us kids it was fun. For mum and dad it was very comforting and supportive to have and be family in this strange new land.

With a reference from the local parish priest, I was enrolled within two weeks of our arrival, as a boarder into St. Patrick's College, Ballarat. Dressed in my best Sunday suit (plus fours and chequered socks), I arrived at St. Pat's, a week after school had started. I did not have a school uniform and was made to feel, and felt very much a 'new Australian'. I remembered feeling very lonely, different, as a fish out of water (I am a Pisces) and I often had bouts of homesickness, of feeling being lost. *Everything* was so very different: from having showers in common, to the daily institutional Australian meals: from the emphasis on and importance of sport to the language spoken (among boys): from the strange vagaries of the Aussie culture and the extremes of the Ballarat climate.

One incident early in that first year stood out and in some way was indicative of my attitude and determination to succeed. I did not know the particular hymn the choirmaster asked us boys to sing, as he came to listen to each one in the classroom. He had come to discover 'new talent' for the school's choir. Of course I did not open my mouth and therefore was not asked to come for choir practice. That afternoon, after class, I approached the choirmaster in the middle of the College's footy oval, when there was a break in footy practice whether I could sing a Dutch song for him. The choir master-turned-footy coach looked at me strangely ... "please brother," I asked ... and I sang, surrounded by coach and players in footy shorts and guernsey: "In 't groene dal, in 't stille dal." "Yes," the choir master/footy coach said, "you may come to choir practice!" Obviously impatient, he blew the whistle to resume footy training but I felt good, you know.

That first year in school, I made every effort to fit in. I had a go at playing cricket, handball, Aussie Rules and did my share of running and swimming. I also had the leading (female!) role in an all boys' musical production of Gilbert and Sullivan's "Trial by Jury". My role in the story was that of the jilted bride Angelina. Of course, I did not as yet have a full command of English: I had to learn the words off by heart and to this day I remember them. By the end of the year I came second in the class and was often asked by the schools matriculation students (four years my senior) to help them in their Latin homework. It was obvious to me that the two years of high school education I had received in Holland was of a much higher standard, at least in the classics. I continued to be a boarder and was away from home until my final year. I always looked forward to the holidays, when I would go home to my parents and work on the farm. My father (starting at age 43) was respectively a farm hand on a sheep farm, a share farmer and finally a dairy farmer with his own farm and cattle. I am proud of what my parents have achieved. I greatly enjoyed their home life, the outdoors and the hands-on farm experience.

Ever since I was an altar server in my home parish and in a Capuchin friary in Breda (The Netherlands), I had been having thoughts and intentions to study for the priesthood and become a Capuchin Franciscan friar. So after my high school education, I entered the novitiate and began studying for seven years and as a Capuchin friar was ordained to the Catholic priesthood. The ordination took place in 1966, in a small country church of Iona (Gippsland, Victoria); but as a matter of course, early that morning I first helped my father with the milking of the cows and the cleaning up of the milk shed and cow yard. After ordination I did post-graduate studies overseas for a couple of years, taught theology in several tertiary institutes in Sydney (NSW), was involved in the formation process of our students and was asked to take on a leadership role in the Order for nine years. It was the end of 1996, when I finally completed those nine years. I was granted a sabbatical and for the first time, I was asked what I wanted to do next.

I opted for parish work in Wynnum SouthEast of Brisbane near the nursing home where my mother and father had been admitted since early 1991. After my father's death in 1994, Mum reversed more and more to her mother tongue, though she continued to think she was speaking English. The quality of her life was slowly diminishing and I felt the need, indeed an obligation, to be near her and visit her most days of the week. In 1997, a few months after I arrived in Brisbane, the Archbishop asked me whether I could still speak Dutch. He also asked whether I would have time to visit the elderly Dutch in the Archdiocese of Brisbane, ranging from Coolangatta to Hervey Bay. I had not expected this at all. However, aware of my mother's condition, I agreed. Presently, I am still very happily engaged in this work.

I am being assisted by a small but very faithful group of Dutch men and women who for many, many years (long before I arrived on the scene) had been part of an association, the CDMA (*see Epilogue*) to organise activities and offer assistance to Dutch migrants in need. They have done a Stirling job, much like my own late parents, through hospitality and outreach. Though now, as they are much older and in need themselves, the commitment is becoming too much. The moment has now arrived for the second generation to stand up and to offer themselves to be of service to the elderly Dutch amongst us. This out of appreciation for what their parents have done and sacrificed for their young families, in the early difficult years of Dutch migration: the 1950s and the '60s and this is happening in a cultural and sensitive way.

Now, nearly 60 years of age, I look at the way my own journey has turned full circle: from having Dutch parents and a Dutch way of life - to emigration and assimilation into the Australian way of life. From becoming an Aussie, to fulfilment and success in Australian Church ministry, followed by a gradual ministering to and caring for the elderly Dutch. This development in turn led to a 'rediscovery' of my own Dutch roots and character, giving me a deep experience of a more mature fulfilment of who I really am: An Australian, who is happy and indeed proud of his Dutch roots and character. My identity is rooted in *both* experiences. Out of appreciation for all my parents (and many others like them) have done for the family, I happily have the time to reach out and assist the elderly in their needs. Therefore, there is a sense that the circle is complete. It is a great way of 'rounding off' one's life. The uprooting has become a new rooting. A certain disintegration has turned into a new integration and like the many pieces of a jigsaw puzzle coming together to present a hitherto unknown picture, I have this sense of a unique marvellous mosaic, a sense of integration and of fulfilment.

September 2000

THINGS WERE NOT ALWAYS EASY

Annie Vierveyzer

In the mid-fifties, things were not so good in the Netherlands and many people decided to migrate. We had been married for a few years and had three children. My husband, Joop, worked for the Police, which did not pay well at the time. Joop was quite willing to migrate. Having talked things over, we decided to take the big step. There was a lot of organising to do but on the 3rd February 1956, we boarded the 'Waterman' to start our big adventure.

We arrived in Brisbane on the 9th March and were sent to the Wacol camp. At times, we wondered what we got ourselves into! At least we had a roof over our head and we had to make a go of things. The first priority was finding work. Joop found a job on the trams but that was not for long. Without our own transport, the distance was just too great to get to work. After three months in Wacol, we were able to rent a house in Yeronga. There was a good bus connection from our house to the City.

Next, Joop found a job at a wool-store. This also did not last long as the store closed down three months later. What to do next? He had to look for something else. There was a job available with a painting business, so Joop became a house painter! Unfortunately, it turned out that the boss could not pay him and you can't feed a family without money. What to do now? By trade Joop was a men's hairdresser and he found a job in that field. That went well and he decided to set up shop himself. He opened his own business in Yeronga on the 18th October 1957 and things went well.

After all the jobs that Joop had undertaken, we thought that we had finally made it. However, on the 4th November 1973 Brisbane was hit by a tornado. The Yeronga Shopping Centre was demolished. Everything that we had built up in those 16 years was gone. One sad aspect was that just at that time my parents were visiting us from Holland. This disaster was a terrible shock for those old people but life has to go on, although one sometimes felt like tossing in the towel. Joop got work as a security guard. He did this work until he retired ten years later.

This was our new life's beginning
Things were not always easy
But keep up your chin, keep on singing
This kept us going through the years.

A few years after we retired we felt the need for a smaller house with less work. We discussed our options and in 1990, we were amongst the early arrivals in the Prins Willem Alexander Retirement Village. We enjoyed being part of this community - and found that there still was plenty of work to be done! In 1997 Joop and I were able to celebrate our Golden Wedding Anniversary - a very happy occasion for us. Sadly, Joop passed away less than two months later.

August 2000

THE SINGING CARPENTER

As written by his daughter Martha Johanna Fuchshuber nee Van Lunteren

My family, consisting of my parents, Elbertus (40) and Martha van Lunteren (39) and their six children Lammert (16), Ria (13), Martha (12), Rien (9), Corrie (2) and Bertie (6 months), migrated to Australia in 1956. I am the third eldest child and the middle daughter. We lived in an old single-brick house in Hilversum, a town about 30 km SouthEast of Amsterdam. The house, though wet and cold, was situated in quite a nice street, not far from our school and the local shops. My eldest brother Lammert had completed a two-year fitter and turner course at Technical College and had subsequently worked for two years. My sister followed a home economics course at high school while my younger brother and I were still at primary school.

The Netherlands was over-crowded, housing was still in short supply and my parents were concerned about the economic outlook. My father and mother briefly considered migrating to Canada but my mother objected to the climate. They were looking for space and jobs for their children. My father's sister lived in Inala (Qld) and my mother's brother in Darra offered to sponsor us. He had found a job for my father and therefore we chose to go to Queensland. None of us spoke English and we all took lessons. My father was a carpenter by trade though he hadn't worked as such for some years. He had become a postman and was told that it could be difficult to get a carpenter's ticket in Australia but this proved not to be the case.

On 12th June 1956, we left from Rotterdam on the old ship 'Sibajak' which had neither stabilisers nor swimming pool. We went through the Suez Canal with a stopover in Port Said. Fortunately, we traversed the canal before it closed due to the Arab/Israeli war. In Aden, we took on supplies for the Indian Ocean crossing. Via a stop in Freemantle, we sailed for our next stop, Melbourne, where we enjoyed our first Australian ice cream. Finally, we arrived in Sydney on the 19th July 1956 and we were taken to the station to board a train. It was a long and exhausting trip. There were no sleeping cars and we had to sit up all the way. Arriving at the South-Brisbane station, we were happy to find my aunt, uncle and cousins waiting.



1956 – l to r, Ria, Martha, Martha Snr, Corrie, Elbertus, Rien and Lammert

We stayed with my uncle in Darra while my aunt and niece went on an overseas visit to Holland. The family lived in an old Queenslander and the cold westerlies were blowing through the unlined walls. There was no room for Lammert and he stayed with dad's sister and her family in Inala. My uncle, unprepared for the invasion, had to borrow beds from somewhere in a hurry. My mother was not very happy about the whole situation. On top of that, there was a drought and as it was winter, the countryside was brown and uninviting. I think my mother had second thoughts about coming here. My father's promised job fell through and after two weeks looking for work, he also became very concerned. We had received 'landing money' to see us through the first few weeks but my father was unaware

that we were also entitled to other kinds of social benefits. Fortunately, he found work with a builder with whom he would stay for six years. When my aunty returned from The Netherlands, my mother decided it was time for us to move on.

We had purchased a block of land in Darra and my father and Lammert started to build a house after work. Living temporarily in a big army tent, they soon finished the laundry, the framing of the kitchen and the main bedroom. Once electricity and water were connected, we moved in. My sister and I helped with the painting as far as we could reach. Our crate, made into a pantry cupboard, was put in the laundry. Mum had a couple of kerosene stoves for cooking and a copper to boil the water for washing. We slept in the tent and dad put up a temporary shelter under which we put a table and chairs. An ordinary 'dunny' stood in the backyard. We lived like that for some three months. Dad bought mum a little twin-tub washing machine; the first one she had ever owned. Mum became more cheerful when we lived on our own property, mainly because of the freedom from family pressures. After three months, we managed to rent a small house next door, while my father finished off the kitchen and bedroom. Once the garage was built, it was split into two bedrooms; one for Ria and me, one for Lammert and Rien, while Corrie and Bertie shared a bedroom with mum and dad.

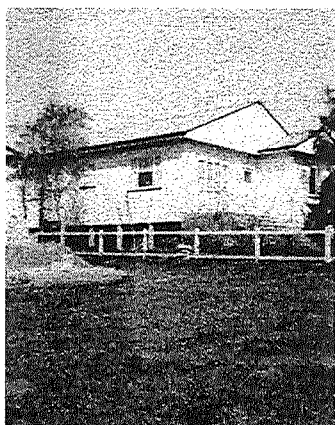
My father's English reading and writing skills were quite good but he pronounced words phonetically. Both my parents followed a correspondence course but found it difficult to speak English until television came to Brisbane in 1959 and we were able to buy a TV-set.

My brother Rien and I were not allowed to go to Darra State School and had to attend school at the Wacol Migrant Centre to improve our English and to learn the Imperial money and measuring system used in Australia at the time. This system would be replaced by the metric system in 1966. At the school in the migrant 'camp', we were taught in English, which was not easy at first and we learned songs including the National Anthem 'God save the Queen'. The anthem was also sung in picture theatres at the beginning of a movie and at other public functions. Everything was much more formal. Ladies used to go to town wearing their Sunday best including gloves, hats and stockings, even in midsummer. The make-up of the elderly women was particularly noticeable, may be to hide the ravages brought on by the sun.

There were many Dutch people in the camp and we made friends with quite a few of them. Going to school, we quickly discovered a walking track alongside the railway line leading to the back of the camp. Taking this track was almost as quick as to walk back to Darra station and waiting for the train to Wacol, which was only one stop away. One day I was sick and Rien had to go by himself. He came back unexpectedly, absolutely terrified, telling us that, on the lonely track meandering through the bush, he had come across a 'crocodile'. He absolutely refused to use that track again. Later we were told that it must have been a goanna and a big one at that. No doubt, it would have been scary for a 9-year old child that was not used to 'crocodiles'. The migrant camp is gone now and has been replaced by a prison.

When we left Holland, people in my home-town, Hilversum, were quite intolerant of anyone who was different in language or dress. I noticed that some local children in our street were teasing a couple of visiting foreign children, while pupils from Catholic schools and Protestant schools also pestered each other. At Darra, I found children from many different backgrounds and various religious affiliations but there seemed to be no obvious minorities and everyone appeared to be treated equally. Neither Australian nor migrant children ever teased me. They were mostly helpful and friendly.

After leaving Darra State School, I found employment with a dressmaker in Oxley and I had to negotiate the busy Ipswich Road on my bike to get to my job. I continued working there for about a year. When business slowed down and as Mum suffered from a bad back, I stayed home to help her look after Corrie and Bertie. I was also baby-sitting a little girl whose mother worked in a factory. Later at the Technical College in George Street, I learned to type for practical use and to draw because I enjoyed it, finishing in 1961. Aged 17, I got a job in the office of the Oxley brickworks at Darra, where I would work for five years. After that time I had a number of office jobs, including one on North Stradbroke Island. I really enjoyed living there but as my mother required an operation I returned after 11 months to look after the family so that my younger sister Corrie could study for her Junior High School Certificate.



The house of the 'singing carpenter'

In 1962, there was a slump in the building business and after working for six years with the same builder; father started out on his own. He had already done weekend jobs but now he extended that to full time carpentry and that is how he became a builder. My father was a hardworking and cheerful man, who liked to whistle and sing on the job and joke with his mates (*often referred to as 'the singing carpenter'*), always helping his family and friends. He built an extension to my house, helped Lammert to build his house next door to my parents' house and he also helped building Rene's house in Bellbird Park. Dad built a number of houses, some shops and a block of flats, but his specialty was renovation and alterations.

When we first came here we made many Dutch friends and we visited many people living in the Wacol camp. Lammert and Ria both met their spouses in the migrant camp, although we never lived there. Gradually, as our English improved we made more Australian friends. Someone we knew took us to dances and other occasions at the Dutch club. Its functions were then held at the German club building, located at Annerley. He would take us there in the back of his utility when there was something special on, such as St. Nicholas, Christmas, New years Eve, Queens birthday [*Koninginne-dag*].

When my father became a builder, he joined the Darra Returned Services League (RSL) and the Cementco Bowling Club thereby widening his circle of friends of both Australian and other ethnic backgrounds. He looked after the meat tray or chook raffles. As dad had a heavy accent the word chook came out 'shook', so dad was dubbed 'shookie' at the bowls club.

Rien did his carpenter's apprenticeship with dad. For a number of years dad was in partnership with Andy Szollosi, who lived in our street. Andy, who came from Yugoslavia, was a shrewd businessman and he acted in a very professional manner. Dad did very well during this partnership, which was eventually dissolved by mutual agreement and they remained good friends until dad died in 1998. There were many people in Darra from all over Europe. Some had come as refugees and others were ordinary migrants like we were. All the people were more or less in the same boat, having to start all over again, building modest houses and bringing up their families. We were all New Australians and left existing animosities behind us. Most people retained their language, food, and religious heritage, while also becoming Australianised. We felt accepted by the Australian community. Many of the original migrants are still living in and around Darra but they are getting older. The younger people coming into the area are now mostly from Vietnamese origins.

In 1970, I married my first husband and we lived in Camira. He came to Australia with his family in 1956 on a different ship, the Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. We had two children, aged six and three years, when he died in 1977 at the age of 33.

When dad was 62 he started to get bad arthritis in his hands and needed an operation, which was not successful, and he nearly died. He gave up smoking but was never the same again, as he remained very short of breath. However, he always retained his sense of humour and went back to work. Soon after that he had an accident, fell off a roof and broke his ankle quite badly. The doctors couldn't repair the joint and he walked with a limp, needing support. This did not stop dad from playing bowls. He widened the foot under his walking stick, so he would not damage the green and continued playing regularly whenever he could get away.

With the birth of Ria's first grandchild, my parents became great-grandparents and dad and mum loved to have us over with our children for visits. Unfortunately, none of my parents' grandchildren speak Dutch. My daughter had a learning disability and I did not want to confuse her by introducing another language while she was starting to talk. My son is not interested in learning Dutch. All my nieces, my nephews and my children regard themselves as Australians. My parents had a great gathering to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary and also when dad turned 80. I married again in 1980 - this time a migrant from Austria.

Five years later, my second husband and I were the first of my family to visit Europe. We visited my aunts and uncles in Hilversum and Muiderberg and then drove to Austria in a leased car to visit his family. I found Holland very changed, although the people seemed more prosperous and the country was so very green, everything also was smaller than I remembered it. The streets were narrower, the houses smaller and the parks I remembered as big, merely seemed to resemble the size of a handkerchief. The street where we last lived had been turned into a one-way street and the footpaths were made narrower to allow parking.

The last years of my parent's life became very difficult as my mother's health started to fail and she became increasingly confined to bed. Dad's health deteriorated and he had trouble walking and required two hip replacement operations. He also developed more back problems and was often in considerable pain but he always remained cheerful and optimistic, especially when his extended family came to visit. My parents had many friends who visited them regularly. Dad liked to entertain and played a harmonica and a recorder mum had given him when he came back from the war. He had also learned to play the bugle in the army and had one of his own on which he used to play 'the last post' for the R.S.L's. ANZAC day services. It became increasingly more difficult for dad to look after mum and I managed to get a carer's pension and moved in with them to help.

My mother died in October 1996 at the age of 80 years. Dad became homesick, especially when he got older and his memory deteriorated. I think that he was longing for his family rather than Holland. In 1997, my father, accompanied by my sister-in-law Sylvia, returned to Holland for a last visit to his surviving sister. My father did not remember much of the visit but he enjoyed it greatly at the time and my aunt was very glad that she had the opportunity to see him again. Sylvia had taken photographs of the reunion and I used to show him those photos to refresh his memory of the trip. I lived with dad until he went into a nursing home shortly before he died in October 1998 at the age of 83.

September 2000

A LIFE OF SERVICE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

Ben Dokter

I was born in 1925 in Chaam, North Brabant, one of the Southern provinces in the Netherlands. My Mother passed away when I was one year old and my father, who was a tailor did not remarry and brought up his three children single-handed.

During the latter part of the 2nd World War, I was deported to Germany. When I returned to the Netherlands in 1945, I was asked to join the 'Oud Strijders' (veterans Association). I decided however to become a Volunteer in the Dutch forces to fight the 'Merdeka' (*freedom*) insurgents in the then Dutch East Indies- We left early in 1946 for two months military training in Aldershot, Great Britain. In March/April 1946 we arrived in Batavia (Jakarta), later to be moved to Padang, Sumatra, to commence operational field duties.

In 1949 I returned to the Netherlands and married Margaret and in the period 1950-1956 four boys were born. We started chocolate shops in the 'John Franklin' and 'Kuiper' streets in Amsterdam. We also had a stand in the 'Dapperstraat' markets.

In 1956, I received a letter from the emigration service extolling the virtues of migration to the USA or Canada. This made me aware of the possibility of migration. We had our four boys to consider and the cold war with the communist alliance was in full swing. Expecting Western Europe to be the meat in the sandwich if World War III was to break out, we decided to migrate to a sub-tropical country which would be Queensland in Australia and the area around Brisbane in particular.

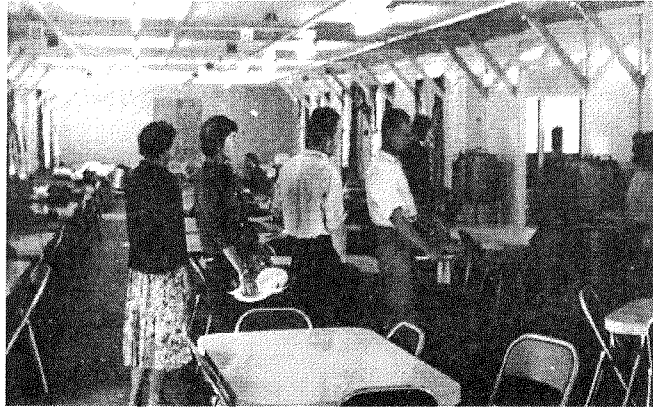
In August 1956, we boarded the Ms 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' to sail for Sydney but as we came to Port Said, we were disappointed, as the Suez Canal was closed due to the 'Yorn Kippur war' between Egypt and Israel and we were forced to make a detour via Capetown. Margaret, my wife became quite ill but we attributed that to seasickness. However, when we arrived in Sydney, she was diagnosed with acute gallbladder trouble, but we had to continue our travel to Brisbane, another 1,000 km. further north. The train trip from Sydney to Brisbane with a sick wife and four children, one only four-month-old was horrendous. The train was not air-conditioned and had only wooden benches. Food or drinks were not available.



The Nissen huts in the Wacol Migrant Centre, often called "Wacol Camp".

When we arrived in Brisbane on the 1st November 1956, my wife was immediately transferred to hospital for an operation, while our four children and I were transferred to the Wacol Migrant Camp. For the first time in my life, I felt miserable; what had I done to my family? Here we were in a hot climate, living in a camp, wife in hospital, and no special accommodation for the children.

I wished that I could go back to Holland and undo all the things, which I had done. Luckily after three to four weeks, everything became more normal. I started working as a tram conductor, Margaret became well again and the children went to school. The sun started to shine again! In 1958, we were blessed with a daughter to complete the family.



Queuing-up in the dining hall of the Wacol camp for lunch.

Arthur Caldwell, who was Minister of Immigration at that time, visited Wacol and I spoke to him for about an hour about the conditions in the camp. He asked Jim Keeffe, later Senator Keeffe to take care of me. I was introduced to Senator Mac Poulter and Professor Hughes who educated me for a year at the Labor College of the ins and outs of politics. Bill Hayden was a fellow student at that course.

I was requested to apply for the position of organiser within the Australian Labor Party (ALP) in 1962. Thirty-six persons were allowed to vote. One vote was cast on me - my own. However, according to the other 35 electors, they all gave me that one vote. I learned quickly the difference between 'political' friends and 'normal' friends. Unfortunately, most of these 'normal friends' turned away from me during the Vietnam War because I spoke out in public about my opposition to the war and consequently I was considered a traitor.

In 1963 I became the first migrant Justice of the Peace and stood for the state seat of Kurilpa as a labor candidate. During my campaign, I was continually harassed by police officers. It seems unbelievable that in one week I could be booked 17 times for incorrect driving. Luckily for me, the bookings were withdrawn soon after. The Brisbane City Council Credit Union was established in 1970 and I became the General Manager in 1985 until my retirement at 74 year of age.

My life in Australia had its difficulties, Margaret and I separated amicably as Margaret was unable to keep up with my hectic life and was always referred to as 'Mrs Ben Dokter' and never by her name - Margaret. In 1978, I remarried an Italian woman who is able to accept my ambitious life.

Prejudice was difficult to swallow and it was rife in the western suburbs of Brisbane. For example, when I joined the Freemasons in 1963, I still remember the words of the secretary who interviewed me: "I suppose it has to come that we have to accept migrants in our organisation". Since that time, I am a very active member in Freemasonry. Last year for instance, I attended 226 meetings. I have made many fine friends and enjoy my life. All our children are doing well and we have 21 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren.

We came to Australia to give our children a better life and I believe that has been accomplished. The future is now in their hands.

December 2000

ANOTHER WINNER!

Jeanette Jillissen

Like quite a few Dutch people of my generation, I was born in the Dutch-East Indies (now known as Indonesia) and I grew up over there. After the Second World War, we realised there was no longer a future for us in that country. In 1947, I was repatriated with my mother and sisters to the Netherlands, where I married and settled for the next ten years. During that time, I decided that I would like to move to a warmer climate! My husband, Dries, was not keen on emigrating but being a loving husband, he gave in to his wife's adventurous nature and we moved to Queensland. Our son, Peter, was too young to have input in the matter. After living 43 years in Queensland, we never regretted this move.

In February 1957, we boarded the 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' after a tearful farewell from our mothers and other relatives. The voyage was quite exciting because of a storm in the Gulf of Biscay and I was in bed for three days, being as sick as a dog. The Canary Islands were fascinating; we did a round-trip in an old taxi. Then we arrived in Cape Town where we spent a full day and we used the opportunity to make a bus trip along the coast. That area of South Africa is beautiful, as there are many vineyards and wineries. Table Mountain dominates the whole scene. The Dutch influence is very noticeable in the style of the buildings.

After Capetown, we crossed the Indian Ocean and stopped over in Fremantle near Perth where we walked around for a while; then on to Melbourne and finally to Sydney. Migrants for Queensland were put on the train, travelling all night, with a stopover in Casino for breakfast, which was organised by the Good Neighbour Council. Long tables were set up on the platform where we served cornflakes, bacon, sausages and a lovely cup of tea.

My husband's sister and her family met us in Brisbane and took us to Capalaba, where the family had a 'migrant dwelling' and a garage where we could stay. We had to make do and be careful with water, as there was no town water yet. There was only a huge tank to catch the rainwater from the roof ... In the dry season, they had to buy water which was not cheap. There was no sewerage connected nor a septic system installed; only the little house in the backyard and that was not very pleasant! Lack of adequate transport was another problem. There was only one bus into the City at 8 am and the bus returned at 3 pm. At other times, you had to hitchhike from Belmont back to Capalaba as the tramline from the centre of Brisbane stopped at Belmont. We needed to hitchhike at times, which luckily was safe in those days.

When Dries found a job in Milton, we had to move to a suburb handy to the tram. We were very grateful to my sister-in-law and her family for inviting us to stay with them, despite the hardships they were experiencing. When my own sister and her family, who were living in Holland Park at that time, offered us a room in their house we accepted that offer, until we could find somewhere else to live.

Fortunately, my husband had a small pension from his service in the Dutch Navy, and with that money added to what we could save, we soon had a deposit together for a block of land in Manly-West and we bought that block. In the meantime, my sister-in-law and family had moved from Capalaba to Wynnum, which was not that far from our block of land and we found two rooms in that place where we could live. Dries and his brother in law decided to

build our home themselves. We chose an L-shaped home plan so that we could build the house in two stages. When the first stage was built we moved in. The lounge room was our bedroom, the dining room was our living area and the bathroom was our son's room! We had our baths in a little outside house. Every night, we would take a bucket of warm water and a torch to that place and have our bath!

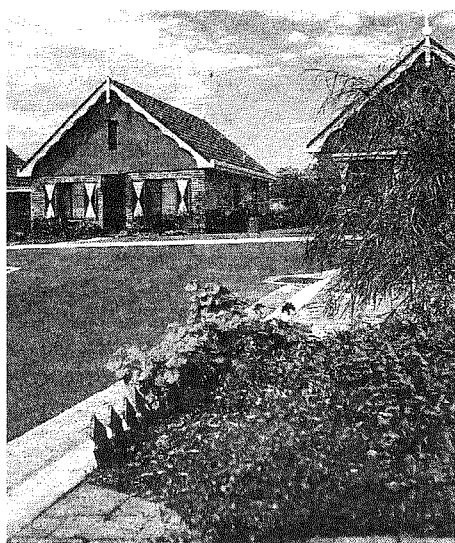


1959 - The L-shaped house, which Dries and his brother-in-law built at Manly-West.

Every time that our monthly pension came in from overseas, more material was ordered. We did not yet have windows and fibro-sheets were used temporarily. Realising that it would take too long to finish the house this way, we obtained a loan from the bank. When we were ready for our first set of windows, our neighbour, a lovely elderly gentleman, took me to a joinery to see what was available. When I gave him the measurement for one window, he said: "Have you got only one window in your house?" I explained that there would be more than one but that I could only afford to pay for one at the time. "Lady, go back home, get the measurements for all the windows and you can pay me £1 per week. Is that O.K with you." Nothing on paper, just a mutual agreement, and I kept my word. We became friends and he got the order for the next lot of doors and windows!

We really didn't have any problems with the people; in shops, on the street, neighbours or officials. The earlier migrants had already paved the way for later arrivals like us. Even my husband never complained about his work-mates, although his English wasn't up to scratch. Nor did he have difficulties with the boss as he worked for 23 years for the same boss!

The first time that we could afford to go for an overseas holiday was 19 years after we came. Believe it or not, when we returned to Australia I was homesick, not for the warm country of my childhood, the Dutch-East Indies, but for the Netherlands where I had only lived ten years of my life. However, after my second holiday there, my home-sickness was cured. I knew that we definitely had made the right move and felt that Australia was *now* my home. No doubt, settling into Australia was made easier by having relatives here.



A view of the PWA retirement village at Birkdale

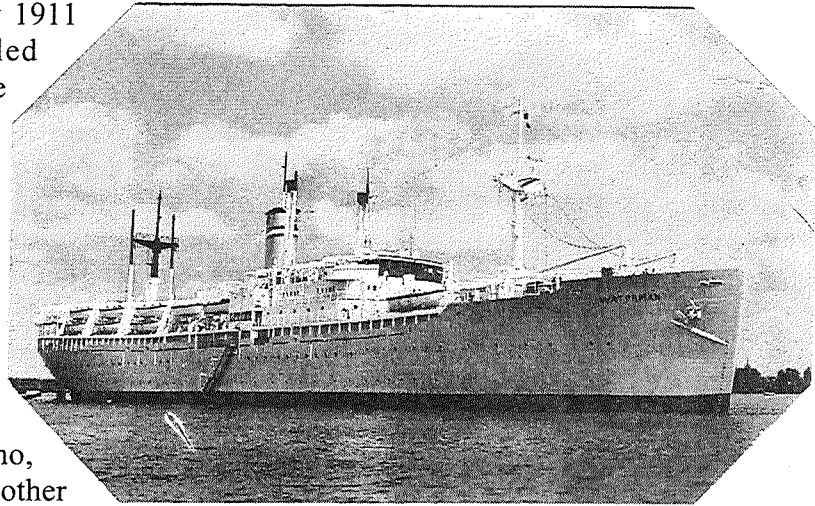
I now live in the Prins Willem Alexander Village, a retirement village at Birkdale, operated by the Dutch community and am very happy here.

August 2000

JOY, HARDSHIP AND BLESSINGS

Harmina Dijk nee Pesman

I was born on 8 February 1911 in a small village called 'Surhuisterveen', in the Dutch province of Friesland. We came on the 'Waterman' and arrived in Sydney on 28 March 1957.



Back home my family spoke the Frisian language. I really enjoyed singing and trained from age 16 at the Conservatorium as a soprano, later performing at concerts, other functions (such as for prisoners in a rehabilitation-unit) and also sang for the radio. I married my husband Wouter in 1936 (he came from another part of Friesland but did not speak the Frisian language) and we inherited his father's flourishing textile business. At the same time, I continued my singing career. Our first daughter was born in 1937 and the second daughter in 1938. Life could not be better - a loving marriage, two wonderful children and many friends.

The war with Germany (1940-45) brought ruin to the country and to the people. Despite previous rumblings that there could be war, we were shocked when it actually started and when the enemy dropped bombs on cities and airports. We lost our freedom for five years! There were some very scary moments but nothing really terrible happened to *us* compared with others who lost their loved ones. One day, we were surprised to find German soldiers in the back garden, getting water from our well to wash themselves. These young looking boys used the window as a mirror and our daughter, having breakfast in her high-chair, waved to them with a big smile on her face, being too young to understand anything about wars and enemies. In contrast to so many other people, we fortunately always had enough to eat. During the war-years, a daughter was born in 1940 and another one in 1942. Two more girls were born post-war, which completed our family with a total of six daughters.

After the war, high taxes were levied to rebuild the country and there was insufficient merchandise to stock the business. Though we had done our utmost to build up the business again we could not save it from going under. After trying for ten years, we had to give up, selling everything. Looking for something else to do was far from easy. My husband went to work for his brother in The Hague and the children and I followed two years later. Eventually, we decided to migrate and move to sunny Queensland in Australia mainly for health reasons as both my husband and the youngest child needed sunshine largely lacking in The Netherlands. At first I was not very impressed with my husband's decision to migrate, as my dear mother was still alive, our eldest daughter had a good job in The Hague and the younger children were still at school. I tried to change his mind but he believed that it would be impossible to start another business. Once the entire family was behind the plan we agreed to

leave only after the Reformed Church in Brisbane had offered to be our sponsors: to find housing for our family and ensuring there would be work for my husband.



1957 - Three daughters leaving the 'Waterman'.

The farewell at Rotterdam-harbour was very sad of course. The sea-voyage gave us time to relax after the busy final preparations and during the journey, we were able to prepare ourselves for the changes ahead. There were not only Dutch migrants on board but also a large group of refugees from Hungary, because of the Revolution there in 1956. As the Suez Canal was closed, we travelled via the Canary Islands, Capetown and as we arrived in Western Australia, we had a short stop in Fremantle. We enjoyed the activities on board and became friends with a young married couple from Amsterdam. The six girls also made new friends and were having a good time generally. Two of the girls were seasick during a heavy storm in the Australian Bight, so we were glad to reach Sydney. From there, we travelled by train to Brisbane - an experience in itself! At the station in Brisbane, the Minister of the Reformed Church, Rev Westera, welcomed us.

We arrived at the Wacol Migrant Centre, where we stayed for six weeks in a cabin with creaking iron beds, newspaper as wallpaper, uneven wooden floors and broken steps. It was a real disappointment that we had to go to the 'migrant-camp', despite the fact that employment and a house had been promised. Our daughter cried her heart out with disappointment at our 'new beginning' and I could not blame her. However, many people were in a similar or worse situations and I thought, "If I give up as a mother, the whole family will collapse". We had to be brave, as there was no way back. We had chosen to go and nobody had forced us to leave The Netherlands. The food in the camp was reasonable, including milk and porridge for breakfast. We made the cabin as cosy as possible and put curtains in front of the windows. As a family we were making the best of a bad situation and with God's help we made it!

We were fortunate that we had church contacts. After church on Sundays we were often asked out for lunch. That was really appreciated, in particular, as there were eight of us. On the first Sunday, the Westera family invited us for lunch but I could not go because I had sprained my ankle on the broken steps. However, my family had a great time and other occasions followed. The Westeras have become very good friends and they still are. We were so thankful for the love and friendship shown to us by the people of the Reformed Church.

Without a trade (while experienced in selling textile), it was very difficult for my husband to find a job and the emigration-officer, Mr Moor, tried very hard to help him. We were grateful for that and became good friends with him. We had learned English before coming to Australia but were reluctant to speak it as we were afraid of making mistakes. My husband found employment in the textile-department at the Myer store in the Valley. It was manual work and the job was only for a short time. He then worked as a labourer until we finally bought a cleaning business and that went very well. He had reached his goal to be his own boss and he also helped some of his part-time employees to start their own businesses.

With the cleaning-business came a small brown car with broken mica windows, but fortunately, there were no problems with the engine. That car allowed us to explore many

places. One day, while we had parked the awful looking car in a side-street close to our church, a lady called out to her sons: "Boys come quickly, here is the most ugly car with the most beautiful girls inside." Later, we became very friendly with that family and laughed with them about that story. The people at church thought we were very brave to drive such an ugly car and everybody was pleased for us when, much later, we bought a brand-new Holden.

We bought a nice block of land in Indooroopilly and, with finance from the Dutch Australian Housing Society, we built a lovely four-bedroom house looking out over a paddock. We lived there happily for 40 years and that paddock later became a wonderful park. We became more involved with the church and after church-service on Sundays, people came to our house for 'appeltaart' (*apple-pie*) and 'gember-koek' (*ginger-cake*). We talked about matters of the week gone by and there was always singing of hymns and some other beautiful songs around the piano. That was a really joyful time and those years leave me with very precious memories, despite the difficulties we had to overcome.

The two eldest children found good jobs and two of our daughters became nurses. The three youngest children went to the local primary school and they later enjoyed going to Brisbane State High School, which was regarded as one of the best secondary schools in Brisbane. As promised before coming to Australia, our older children helped us financially to get us through the hard times. They all were a great blessing to us. They married and gave us 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Their offspring also showed their love to 'Opa en Oma'. Loving and serving the Lord, our children have worked overseas in different fields of mission. Upon their return, and in line with their parents' ideas, they and their husbands became actively involved with missions and churches in Australia.

On 25 June 1986, Wouter and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary by inviting family and friends to an 'Open House' for that occasion. Wouter continued to work until aged 73 when, after a massive heart attack, he suddenly passed away. He was such a loving husband and father. He was also loved by many, many, other people and dearly missed by all.

I have always stayed in close contact with our family and friends in The Netherlands and exchanging letters with them has helped me overcome some difficult times over the past 43 years. Our Australian neighbours have always been very supportive and I find Australian people in general very helpful and friendly. When living at 40 Aragon Street, Indooroopilly and having children around the same ages, we became good friends with our (Australian) neighbours. My family simply loves Australia and the Australian people. One daughter is presently living in the Netherlands, but loves both countries.



Looking back, I am pleased with my husband's decision to make a new beginning in Australia - I could not imagine living anywhere else - God has certainly blessed us here. I am content with my life in Australia and am happy to be living in sunny Queensland.

1958 - our Indooroopilly house at 40 Aragon street, where we lived for 41 years, till 1999.

October 2000

MEMORIES OF A MIGRANT

Betsy Meulenbroek - Broers

The year was 1957. One year earlier there had been a short war in Egypt resulting in the closure of the Suez Canal. In Hungary the failed revolution resulted in thousands of Hungarians living as refugees in neighbouring countries. Both these events had a bearing on the way our family, determined to make a new life in Australia, made the journey to their new home. Our family consisted of Jacobus (Koos) Meulenbroek, my husband, I, Elisabeth (Betsy) Meulenbroek-Broers and three-year old twin boys named Peter and Paul. We both worked at the then Ministry of War, now Ministry of Defence, at The Hague. Koos had lived there all his life but I was born and grew up in Brunssum, Limburg.

In post-war Holland from the 1950s onward, migration was much on people's minds. Europe was so depressing; countless ruined cities, the millions who had died, shortages of all kinds, especially housing. To many, including us, it looked like a marvellous opportunity to leave it all behind and make a fresh start in a young country. So we registered as applicants for migration to Australia.

The first thing that hit us: leaving it all behind includes many things dear to your heart, your family, your friends and work-mates, familiar places and not knowing what to expect at the other end. We went to information (read propaganda) evenings, organised by the Australian Department of Emigration, who were very keen (we found out later) to keep their migrants on the right side of the colour- and race barrier. In other words, if you were blond, blue-eyed, and reasonably healthy you were more than halfway there. They painted us a very rosy picture: warm weather, people frolicking on beaches and modern cities. Having been accepted, we went to work: packing what we could take, leaving what we could not and saying good-bye. We told ourselves and our parents that in about five years we would surely be back for a visit but, as it worked out, it was to be twenty years before we saw The Netherlands again and in that time both my husband's and my own father had died.

The journey of six weeks starting from Rotterdam in April 1957, sailing to Melbourne, was one of mixed emotions. The war in the Middle East influenced our trip considerably. As the Suez Canal was closed, we had to go the long way through the Panama Canal. We passed the white cliffs of Dover and then heaved about on the Atlantic for two weeks in miserable weather. In fact we did not see the sun until we were heading for Willemstad in the West Indies and scores of passengers gratefully stretched themselves on the deck chairs to sunbathe, not realising, that in the meantime we had arrived in tropical waters. The result was large scale blistering. In the sickbay, patients were treated by painting them with gentian violet and the sight was enough to take your appetite away!

Apart from the Dutch migrants, we had on board several hundred Hungarian refugees and this made conditions somewhat cramped. The Hungarians were going to New Zealand. There were some troublemakers among them, which did not help the atmosphere on board of the old 'Sibajak', which was on its last legs and was destined for the scrap-yard. However, it delivered us safely to Melbourne and I shall always be grateful that the four of us were allotted a cabin to ourselves. It made a lot of difference.

Our route went via Willemstad, the Panama Canal, across the Pacific to Tahiti to Wellington. Here the Hungarian refugees as well as some of the Dutch migrants departed, which left some extra room on board. We had a break for a day and took the children to the Zoo. Wellington harbour at night is a magnificent sight. The town is spread around the harbour looking like a half erect fan. Next stop Sydney. We had time to take a quick look around, including a walk over the Harbour Bridge after going up inside the pylons. Rather scary that. A lift goes up part of the way but the rest must be climbed by stairs. Finally, at the top, standing on the bridge, you realise there was no need for winter clothes that morning.

Next: our destination, Melbourne. The main reason we wanted to go there was that a younger sister and her husband, the first migrants in our family, had offered advice, encouragement and a place to live. The accommodation consisted of two sleep-outs in the back yard of a Mr and Mrs Waghorn at Eltham, right at the outer edge of Melbourne. We had no idea what sleep-outs were but we did know that with an address to go to, we were not going to be put on the train to Bonegilla. Those migrant-camps were necessary of course but we were not keen to go there and experience them for ourselves..

Since our relatives had been advised that our ship would arrive the following day, we searched the quay in vain for a familiar face. We hired a young man wanting to make an extra 'quid' by transporting migrants when a ship came in. "Eltham," he said, "Yes, alright - that'll be £1/10." We agreed to that price. He went to get his car and would you believe it, that his car was a Mini-Minor?! Into this car had to go two huge suitcases, hand luggage, a guitar and a family of four. Once we were on our way, he increased the price by five shillings, as he found out how far it was to Eltham. Without a mishap, he delivered us at the right address.

Our relatives were very surprised when we showed up. After a most cordial welcome we were taken to Mrs Waghorn's sleep-outs, two room size sheds quite separate but connected by a wooden walkway. One was the bedroom, the other kitchen-lounge - and children's bedroom combined. It was primitive but liveable and I started to set up house. The children had trouble adjusting to all the changes, first the long sea-journey and then a strange environment where they could not understand a word of the language. In that respect, we grown-ups had very little trouble. My English was good and Koos picked it up smartly. As for that name Koos - we expected that it was going to be pronounced to rhyme with 'goose' so we changed it to Jack, quite wrongly as it turned out. Jacobus is James in English but Jack it remained.

In Melbourne, we moved from the sleep-outs to a small house, a converted army hut that we first rented and then bought with a £1,000 loan. So we owned our first bit of Australian soil, also an outdoors dunny and a wood stove. I had to learn to chop wood with a big axe and became quite good at it. When our daughter Linda was born in 1958, it became too crowded and we moved to a place in Montmorcency on a glorious block of land, part of a former orchard, fruit-trees all over but the house was rather a shambles. He worked at the Australian Paper Manufacturers (A.P.M), a job he found after only a few weeks in the country and had kept it until the credit squeeze in 1960 when he lost his job.

We then made a bold decision. We would let our house and go to Darwin. The chance of finding work in Melbourne was close to zero while in Darwin we might be poor but certainly not cold. Jack went ahead, crossing the entire continent hitching rides. He found work but no place for us to live yet. I was pregnant, the baby was due within weeks, and I was keen to have the shift behind us before the baby arrived. Soon I was able to pack up, ship our belongings, book a plane for the four of us and let the house. I felt rather bushed on arrival.

I found we shared the house with the owner Archie Morrison, an old gentleman in a wheelchair, who was an independent character and we got on marvellously. Three weeks later, when our Nora was born, the family had grown to six. There was to be one more addition, our Marc, who was born in 1963 and we applied for a Housing Commission house.

A Dutch friend named Jaap, who also lived in Darwin, offered to share his house with us while his wife was in Holland visiting her parents. I was somewhat apprehensive, as they had no children, how he would cope with four underfoot? The answer was - splendidly. When his wife returned, we were at last eligible for a Housing Commission house and went to live in a newly developed suburb named Rapid Creek. The house and the yard were totally bare and initially there were not even insect screens, which led to much moaning and prolific burning of mosquito coils. By the time the house and yard were presentable, which took a few years, we became eligible for a flight to Melbourne for the whole family and we did not return to Darwin. We found that our house in Montmorency had been badly neglected and we put it on the market, but that placed us in a bind; if sold quickly we could go back to Darwin, if not, Jack would lose his job. He lost his job but that did not worry us. The house was sold eventually and having lived at the 'top-end' and 'bottom-end' of the continent, we decided to settle halfway. The fact that A.P.M. had a modern paper mill at Petrie where Jack could get work was of course a strong consideration. That is how we ended up on the coast of Queensland, on the Redcliffe Peninsula and built a house at Scarborough, a village of prawn fishermen and many Catholic schools. The area has been extended by a large and expensive canal development called Newport. It was a good move. We still live there and bless our lucky stars that we found such a pleasant place to bring up our family, welcome our grandchildren (nine of them now) and even two great-grandchildren.

In 1977, twenty years after migrating, we finally saw our way clear to visit our 'roots'. Taking the two youngest children Nora and Marc, we visited relatives and friends, found jobs in Holland and a place to live. We left Scarborough with the understanding that our visit to Holland would be longer than a six-week stay. We settled back so comfortably and with so much help from everyone that we kept putting off our return to Australia. It was never my intention to re-settle permanently in The Netherlands. It would break up the family for one thing and I liked the life in Australia. After nearly two years, Marc and I went back, Jack followed later. Nora had returned earlier as she wanted to finish her senior (year 12) at Redcliffe High School. I found a job as a nursing aide at 'Eventide', an aged care facility in Brighton, and stayed there for eight years. Jack, on his return, could not find work at first, but then landed a job with Telecom where he stayed until his retirement.

We are now both aged 73 and thankfully still active, mobile and generally healthy. We did not regret our decision to migrate. We had to make adjustments but then, so did the people of Australia with all these foreigners fanning out over the country, asking for weird things like yoghurt and rye bread. When forty years ago I asked for coffee in the grocery shop, I was handed a bottle containing a black liquid. When I went to the butcher I was confronted with a man in a striped apron, a large knife in his hand and a couple of beef and mutton carcasses hanging on hooks, asking, "Well, what do you want?" The changes have been enormous.

We are proud to have been part of the opening up of this country. It was rather insular back then. It took five years to be able to apply for citizenship, which we did and we have been faithful citizens now for 37 years of *our* country, Australia.

May 2000