

Connie J. Douma
Dutch Immigrant
Waterman
April 16, 1958



After our 10-day journey on the s.s. Waterman of the Holland-America Line we arrived in Halifax around 7 o'clock in the evening of 16 April 1958, half a day before its planned arrival. Such excitement when we first saw land and then steamed into Halifax Harbour. Since I travelled alone with the children, I had to keep them with me all of the time. They would have loved to stay on deck to see how the ship was moored to the quay, but I could not leave them there by themselves while I was dealing with all the luggage.

There were hundreds of people on board, so it took some time to get onto the ramp and to finally set foot again on dry land. The dry land we first felt under our feet was called Pier 21. It was not a very fancy place. Just a huge hall with a number of counters where we had to line up to get our turn to talk to the immigration officer, to the ticket clerk from Canadian National for tickets for the train, to the baggage people, etc.

Lining up with my two children did not actually happen. I lined up and Marten, who was not quite two years old, relieved to be able to run around without holding his mom's hand, did so with great gusto. Barb, who was almost three, apparently aware that it was actually her bedtime, started to undress in the middle of the hall until I spoke to her and told her there was no bed in sight yet!

Quite unexpectedly a man called my name: "Is Mrs. Douma here?" I went up to him and said, somewhat anxiously, hoping there was not a last minute hitch with our immigration: "Yes, I am here, I am Mrs. Douma." He said: "Come quickly with me to the office here, your husband is on the phone for you." I couldn't believe my ears. I had expected to go by train to Moncton, where he had found work with Canadian National Railways. Our arrival would be after midnight, but I was sure he would be there, just as anxious to see us, as we were to see him. I put down my suitcase and ran after the man. I picked up the phone and there was the voice. We had not spoken in six weeks, because he had left Holland earlier by airplane in order to find work and a place for us to live.

We only had a short talk, but he told me he would meet us in Truro, about an hours travel away from Halifax. The company had given him

the time off to go and meet us in Halifax, but since our ship had arrived earlier than expected, our train would have already left before he was able to reach Halifax. So, he would get off the train in Truro and wait for the immigrant train.

After all the people were processed by the officials, we were led through a sort of tunnel which led to the station platform and train. We were shown our seats and after a while the train started to move. We didn't see much of Halifax, since it was already dark, but we didn't mind it much. All we wanted was for the train to bring us to Truro to see Dad again. Barb and Marten were very tired by that time and snuggled up against me and fell asleep in no time.

After a long time the train stopped. I had been wondering all the time how my husband would find us on this very long train. But no, before we pulled out of Truro, there he was! Someone at the Truro station had been able to tell him in which compartment we were travelling. Everything seemed so well organized, and everybody had been so patient and friendly. What a lovely entry into Canada it was.

So as not to wake the children up, he gave them a couple of careful kisses, but Marten woke up and snuggled immediately into his arms. The train left Truro and on we went for well over 3 hours. Three hours!!! In Holland we could have travelled from North to South in three hours, but this was Canada. It would take days to travel across the country, all the way to the West coast.

Fortunately the hotel, which my husband had reserved, was right across from the Moncton station. We each carried a child and some luggage in the middle of the night and finally got to our hotel room. Oh, bliss, beds for all of us!

After six long weeks of separation we were together again.

