

Gooitske 'Grace'
VanHalteren nee
Stegenga
Dutch Immigrant
Zuiderkruis
March 13, 1952



John and Maartje Stegenga and Family:
Hiltje, Benjamin, Hendrikus, Gooitske, Hendrikje

Our memories of the move from Holland to Canada, by Hillie 12 yrs. And Grace 6 yrs. (Gooitske). Our parents and five children, from 10 months to 12 years.

I remember having to go for checkups and needles to the doctor, before the journey. And getting new clothes for the journey. That was very special, because they had a hard time making ends meet. We boarded a bus at 4am in Heeremveen and arrived in Rotterdam, and boarded the ship the Zuiderkruis in the evening. The first thing I (Grace) did was get lost, I remember being overwhelmed by the busyness and crowds. They soon put my name on the P.A. system and my dad came to claim me.

Mother was really seasick and was put in a cabin with baby Henny, and another lady. This left the two of us alone in the ladies sleeping hall. Later we were allowed to join mom in her cabin as there was a spare cot. Dad and the boys were in the men's hall.

The storm was really bad, with huge waves, the chairs and tables were tied together, tea was spilling down the halls, etc. We all had to hold onto a pot of food plus our own plates on the table as we ate.

Lots of people got sea sick, the good thing about it was we all got our own package of baby cookies in bed in the morning to settle our stomachs.

I also loved walking on the deck with my dad, he was very worried about the trip, but also what the future would bring.

It was fun for us because we also got to go to the children's daycare and get chocolate milk and cookies.

We arrived in Halifax on the 13th of March 1952. When we disembarked our parents were questioned about a fifth child, (Hennie) she was 10 months, she was not on the passengers list, because that had applied for immigration before she was born.

Our first step on Canadian soil was at Pier 21, Halifax. Mother recalled standing on the pier, and dad said "you better pretend the boat is burned because we'll never be able to afford to go back". Meanwhile, we tried to sleep on benches. After a long wait we boarded a train, the snow was really dirty and it was cold.

Dad bought us bread and luncheon meat (bologna) so we had something to eat.

Two nights and two days got us to Kingston late in the evening, we again lay on the benches in the station and waited for dad's new boss.

Later after several years of hard work, the Lord blessed them with resources to be able to go back several times. Also us children have been able to visit our homeland many times to reunite with our extended families, as they also have come to Canada many times.

We know it must have been very hard for our parents to give up their business and leave their parents and families. But they did it because they wanted us to have a better future; for this we will always be grateful and thankful to Grace.