

Hans Kowalski
Dutch Immigrant
Zuiderkruis
March 30, 1957



I came to Canada with my parents (Leo and Marie Kowalski) and my brother (Tony Kowalski) in March 30th, 1957. I was six years old and my brother was 10. We arrived at Pier 21 in Halifax on a cold and foggy day. We had left our small coal mining town of Eijgelshoven, Limburg, The Netherlands 10 days prior to arriving in Halifax. When my family and I left Rotterdam on March 20th, 1957 we boarded a Dutch ship named the SS Waterman. My mother shared a cabin with other ladies on board and my father, brother and I shared a cabin with some other men. Approximately 2 days into the voyage we were struck by a large German Freighter. It badly damaged the back end of our boat. We were already to get into the life boats when further investigation proved that we were safe to slowly go back to Europe.

The closest port was Brest, France. After arriving and all of my family still in shock, the SS Zuiderkruis arrived. It was the sister ship of the SS Waterman. We transferred onto this ship and again we headed out on the Atlantic Ocean. My mother was sea sick the rest of the voyage and did not enjoy the rough waters of the Atlantic. My brother and I had a great time exploring the large ship but we were treated as third class passengers. I remember having toast and marmalade for the first time and getting sick. When we arrived on that cold day at Pier 21 we were excited about arriving in a new country and yet afraid of the unknown. My parents knew a Dutch family that had immigrated to Calgary a year before, but my mother and father had no job waiting for them.

We were processed through Pier 21 in an orderly fashion, but I don't remember any friendly greeting from the staff. It was somewhat of a cattle round up. My parents were very nervous and this was a very stressful time. Once we left Pier 21, walked down a long incline walkway, we immediately boarded a CN Train bound for Montreal and eventually getting us to Calgary, Alberta. The train trip was a long ordeal, approximately four days. I remember going for a short walk in Montreal and then boarding a different train going to Toronto. We arrived in Edmonton and then boarded a small train called a Dayliner to Calgary. We arrived late at night at the old CN station in Calgary and we were greeted by friends. We were so happy to have finally arrived at our new home.