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Dutch Immigrant  
Beaverbrae  
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CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM  
**PIER 21**



It was the official beginning, January 26, 1950. It was a typical winter day with no sunshine and a sprinkling of snow on the ground. It was a profoundly special day. It was the wedding day for Jacobus Martinus Los, born January 1, 1923 in Jutphaas and for Hendrika Gerrigje deGier, born on July 2, 1926 in Lopik. There was the initial and compulsory brief ceremony at city hall.



Following this we went to our church to seek a blessing from the Lord.

The text that our minister used for his message came from Joshua 1, verse 9, 2nd part. "The Lord your God is with you where ever you go." In his sermon he pointed out that Joshua, along with the people of Israel, were assured of God's presence during their trek through the wilderness, their trek to the promised land. In our journey, whatever that future might hold, the Lord would never go back on His promise to never leave you alone in days of trouble. These difficult days occur in every one's life. We could not be sure of what to expect in our new life in Canada, but we could be assured of His promise. This promise was given to us by our baptism when a cross was formed on our foreheads. We were to keep our eyes on the cross of Golgatha,

where He died for our sins. If we remained focused on Him, then He could richly bless us and we did not need to worry in our new country. "The Lord is with you, you shall not be afraid. Who shall separate you from God's love in Jesus Christ. If God is on your side who can ever be against you. So go them knowing that you are carried in the arms of God, the Father, and of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who will keep you save

from now unto eternity; who says, I am with you where ever you go.  
Amen"

The rest of the day was spent with family and friends. A dinner was served at the home of the bride. The atmosphere was somewhat subdued, we were all cognitive of the fact that we might never see some of the guests again. It was particularly difficult for Jake's parents. Jake was their oldest son. He had two siblings, one brother and one sister. Jake's father had a brother who immigrated to the U.S.A. in 1911. They had never seen on another yet again. This fact made our immigration more difficult for Jake's parents.

For my parents it was somewhat different. Two of my four brothers had already immigrated to Canada and lived in Nova Scotia. However, I was one of nine daughters, and the first to go far away to a new country. The language would be unfamiliar. We knew it would not be easy, but we were young and filled with optimism. The Lord willing, we would stay healthy, and make a go of it.

Jake's dream was to become a farmer, which was almost impossible to do in those days in the Netherlands. His father was a florist and owned a number of greenhouses in Jutphaas. My family moved to a farm by Jutphaas in 1932. So Jake and I grew up in the same village of approximately 6000 people. We went to the same school, and we attended the same church. The village of Jutphaas was renamed Nieuwegein and presently has a population of around 65,000.

My dad had a large container made to hold all of our belongings. Everything required for our daily use, large items and small items, from a dining table and chairs, bed, blankets, dishes, clothespins to a box of matches was put in the container. Dad included a small crate filled with my favorite apples, golden rusettes. It was almost five years after WWII and there were still some items which you could not get without the required coupon.

February 13, 1950 was our departure date. The last few days prior to leaving were very difficult for both of us. Saying good-bye to family and friends was not easy. On Sunday, February 12, 1950, my eye glasses broke. Jake went to a neighboring town to have them repaired, but it was Sunday and the repair could not be done on a Sunday. Jake had to come back after 12 am (on Monday) for the repair. We had leave the house at 5:00 am, just a few hours later to take the bus to Utrecht. From there we boarded one of the 12 special buses going to Answer, Belgium. Here we boarded the Beaverbrae, a Polish Ship under a Canadian flag. It was approximately 4:30 p.m.. I was sick, so sick, so car sick, from the long bus ride. I had never participated in school

outings because I would get ill from the long bus ride. A welcome supper had been prepared for us, sauerkraut, but I had no appetite. I was sick.

There were already a number of "displaced persons" on board. These people had neither money nor belongings. The ship was not a luxury liner, nor was it a honeymoon cruise for Jake and I. It was a huge disappointment. You were not able to buy anything on board. But even more disheartening were the sleeping arrangements. Jake and I had separate sleeping quarters. Jake slept in the front of the ship and I slept in the middle of the ship. I slept in a large room with approximately 90 other women and children. What a honeymoon!

The next day, I felt somewhat better and ventured on deck to breathe some fresh air. The ventilation was very poor below in the sleeping quarters. On Wednesday we were caught in a storm. There were 650 people aboard the ship. Six were able to come for dinner. Everyone was sick and vomiting. Many mothers and their children could not reach the washrooms. No one was there to mop up. It was horrible.

The rest of the trip I spent mostly in bed. I was so seasick that I could not stand on my legs. Jake was seasick for 1 and 1/2 days but gave me as much T.L.C. as possible. Added to motion sickness, was the fact that the ship's meals were very foreign; this made the situation more difficult. During the day we would go up on deck for some fresh air. But seeing the rise and fall of the ship with each wave would only make me seasick again. When evening came, the passengers and crew had a short meditation with thanks given to the Lord for our safe journey. On Sunday there were church services. The first service was for Roman Catholics, the second service was for Protestants. Eight days into the journey, February 21, and I am still seasick. I try to eat some porridge,



but my stomach rebels and refuses to hold down food. Only a few days are left. February 23 is our last night at sea. We packed our suitcases for the morning. Jake retires early to bed, he is not feeling well. Perhaps he has a touch of the flu he thinks. The next morning was February 24, 1950. The ship she laying still. We were in a harbor in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. A whole new life awaited us.

Our original destiny had been British Columbia. However 2 days before departure, and after the departure of our container, we received a letter. I am still thanking the Lord that it arrived before we left. Our initial sponsor had offered \$70.00 a month to be paid in food and clothing.

Well food we required, but clothes? We have never met Mr. Story. We did not go to British Columbia.

We were fortunate that my brother was working for Mr. Lewis, the director of the land settlement board of Nova Scotia. My brother was allowed to come aboard the ship to talk to us and help decide what we were going to do. We were in a new country and with NO WHERE TO GO. We went with my brother to his house in Upper Economy along the shore of the Bay of Fundy. We were in a bus for 3 1/2 hours and again I was so sick. My sister-in-law had baked a special chocolate cake, but I could not bear to even look at it, let alone eat a piece. Jake was feeling fine so I think he ate my part too. It was terrific however, to be with family, to talk with family. Mr. and Mrs. Lewis lived in a big house along the highway. They invited us to come and have a bath. This was really appreciated after a long journey. We gladly accepted. However, all we could get into the tub were a few inches of rusty water. We did not dare tell this to the Lewis's. We spoke very limited English and they probably would not have understood us. So this was our first bath in Canada.



We had adjustments to make. The weather was so cold, that I could not face the wind in the open country. A big wood stove in my brother's kitchen kept the whole house warm. I remember vividly one particular morning. The wood stove was burning too fast and the pipe which ran the full length of upstairs was glowing red hot. It was hanging by a piece of wire here and there. My sister-in-law and I brought most of our belongings outside. I went upstairs with a pail of water and put wet sheets around a cement block, where the pipe came through the ceiling. The sheets were sizzling. When the men returned from wood cutting in the bush, they wondered what was happening. In Canada, during February, with below zero weather, you don't usually do a major house cleaning, do you? I never really enjoyed burning wood after that incident.

We had to make a choice, whether to stay in Nova Scotia or go to British Columbia or go to Ontario. We stayed in Nova Scotia. It was our first big mistake. Jake went to work for a Mr. Dunlop. We moved to Lower Truro, to the house provided by Mr. Dunlop. It was 12 feet by 10 feet,

the entire one room house. In it was a big stove with a plate warmer, and a boiler right on the side. There was a filthy single bed for us to sleep on until the arrival of our container. We decided not to move in until our container had been picked up in Truro. After it arrived, and after a great deal of scrubbing, we moved in. Under the stairs was our cupboard. There was one small sink with a drain. The walls were



papered; what was the theme? Nautical! There were pictures of ships and wheels, all reminders of our seafaring voyage and my seasickness. We thought it was a big joke. A few yards behind the house was our toilet, an outhouse with three holes. We had never seen anything like that! Across the road was a pump for water. A small room upstairs just barely held our bed.

Jake earned \$75.00 per month, a quart of milk daily, and wood to keep us warm. We had to pay hydro ourselves. It was a good thing that we had some money. We did need to eat and Jake did not get paid for a month. Our location had some benefits. We were just outside Truro in a built-up area. We had neighbors across the road. A little further along the road was a country store and yet a little further a Baptist church. If only I could speak English. The first extravagance we allowed ourselves to buy a piece of linoleum to cover the floor of the house. It was well worth the \$13.00 we spent. Now we took our wooden shoes off to go inside. The mailman came everyday by horse and buggy. The butcher, baker, and milkman came a couple of times a week.

What I still needed were curtains for the windows. In Holland, when the curtains were down in a house, it meant that someone had passed away. I cried a lot in that house in Nova Scotia. Everything was so different. The weather was so cold. There was so much snow. I had no one to talk to in the day. I had no where to go. There was no radio, and no newspaper. The days were so long. No wonder many immigrants wanted to crawl home, if ONLY they could. For Jake it was somewhat different. He had to start work at 5 am and milk the cows. Then he came home for breakfast, and again went to work until lunch time. Lunch was from 12 to 1. He went back to work and returned for supper. But the work day was not over, again he left and had to milk the cows once more. Most things were new to him, but soon he was able to work on his own. His boss would come to see if all was well and to give him his quart of milk at the end of the day. Jake asked for a second quart of milk. He loved

custard pudding for dessert. The milk was denied, Mr. Dunlop could not afford to give it. "The milkman", he said, "comes by and you can buy all the milk you want from him." If only I could have given him a piece of my mind.

Around the 18th of March we got our first visitors. It was on a Sunday morning around 11:30. A Dutch couple had heard that we were working for Mr. Dunlop, and had decided to investigate. We were elated. We talked, talked and talked. It was wonderful to communicate in our own language to other country folk. They stayed until 1:00 o'clock. Then we went with them to their house. He drove his boss's truck. They were our first visitors, but word spread and soon we had visitors at least once on the week-end. It was delightful to share coffee and cookies over conversation.

By this time we were trying to recoup the money that had been paid in full for our trip to B.C. It sure would be a boost to our wallets. But it never materialized, instead the refund was sent back to Holland to Jake's father. I had started to bake my own bread. We had bought 100 pounds of flour, 100 pounds of sugar and some yeast. I was going into bread making. Now I chuckle at the idea; today if I bake my own bread it goes in a bread maker. Thanks to the Lord, Jake was always healthy and able to work. If you became ill, if you became unable to work there was no insurance of any kind to give you assistance. So your health played a vital role.

I was no longer seasick but I got morning sickness. I was pregnant. At first, I was not particularly excited about it, but I soon changed my mind. I would not be so alone during the long winter months ahead. I was quite busy. Between morning sickness, lots of things needed to be done. I wanted to make most of the baby things myself. Jake's mother had given me a sewing machine. It had to be turned by hand.

We had some transportation of our own. In the container, had been my almost new bike. Jake used it several times to attend the Baptist church down the road. By this time it was April. We were getting some newspapers and magazines from Holland. What a feast when they arrived. They were read from cover to cover. The weather was still cold in April but Jake was dreaming of making a little garden beside the house for our own use. I wanted to do some canning. Mr. Dunlop promised that we would get some vegetables from his garden during the summer. However, we had heard that he sold his extras in Truro, and that there probably would not be very much left for us.

One day, two men came by. They became very special friends to us; they were Neil Eeldman (an American) and Jaap van Oyen (Dutch). Their

trailer had a large sign across it saying: Welkom Immigranten, and underneath: Reformed Church of America. The trailer was located just outside of Truro. Neil and Jaap went to Halifax to greet new immigrants who belonged to the Reformed Church. They were there to assist them if there were any problems. In between ship arrivals, they would go into the country to help people who had difficulties with their employer. They



also arranged church services in different places. Neil had a folding organ which he always had with him. The advertisement on their trailer attracted American tourists. Usually they would bring them to our house for a visit. One Saturday evening, Neil came with an American couple and their two daughters. Jake was busy bathing himself, so they had to wait outside of our one room house until he was finished. They were not particularly impressed with our accommodations, especially since I was expecting a baby in November. The visitors could still speak Dutch so we had a delightful time singing Dutch songs. Neil accompanied us with the folding organ. She promised to talk to the ladies of their R.C.W. Several weeks later, Neil brought a parcel with all kinds of baby items. It was very nice. We were not accustomed to anything like that in Holland.

In the meantime, I acquired a job baby-sitting in the morning and can recall that over some period of time I had earned \$20.00. One day, I was very ill again. Jake went to Mr. Dunlop to ask if they would phone a doctor. Mrs. Dunlop came to see me. I was lying in our bed. Mrs. Dunlop stared with amazement at our belongings, our beautiful blankets, dining room chairs, our good clothes, all our NEW things. I wounded what she was thinking when she walked back home. This was the only time that she ever came.

With my birthday, July 2nd, we had a house full of friends all coming to share a dinner. One friend had to bring extra plates and cutlery. We had a wonderful day. One of the most treasured gifts then was an electric iron. What an improvement over the iron which you had to heat on the stove. We also bought a hot plate to do most of the cooking for

the two of us on. It was often so hot outside, too hot for a stove. I had just started to do some canning. Jake was tending our garden in his free time, but it was not doing so well.

One Saturday evening, Neil and Jaap came with three other men, and we all sang as Neil accompanied us on the organ. Sunday morning, we had seven Dutch visitors, four of whom stayed for dinner. In the afternoon there was a church service in Truro. We had visitors again in the evening. It was a very full small house, "gezellig". Those days bring warm memories. Neil had to return to Michigan again as his mother was ill. Jaap took us to Prince Edward Island to Charlottetown for a church



service. This was Jake's first and only time off, and my brother was doing his milking for him. The church service was broadcast by radio. We spent the night with another Dutch family. We missed the first ferry back to the mainland. Jake was very concerned that this might cost him his job. We got the next ferry to Nova Scotia, and to continued employment.

It was now August and I was canning, canning, and canning. In the evening we would go and pick blueberries. I made blueberry jam. Neil and Jaap

were planning to go to Ontario when Neil returned from Michigan. We knew that we would miss them both a great deal. Neil promised to look for a job for Jake in Ontario. We hoped that he would be successful. Jake had talked to Mr. Dunlop about our little house and with the arrival of the baby we could not stay. Mr. Dunlop had grumbled and said that it was very warm in a small house during the cold winter. Some time after that Neil wrote us a letter saying that we should come to Ontario. If there was no work immediately, then we could stay with Rev. Zegerius or with Mr. and Mrs. Dunnick until work was obtained. Neil wrote that he had sixty people in his Burford congregation. Jake told Mr. Dunlop that we would be leaving on September 25. A couple of weeks later, we received another letter from Neil. He had found work for Jake on a dairy farm located five miles outside of Hamilton. The wages are \$25.00 a week and the housing consists of a four room house with indoor plumbing which means running water and inside toilet facilities. It sounds like a castle. It sounds too good to be true.

There was a lot to do. We had to repack our container. My brother came and helped us. We could sleep the last two nights at the Dunlops. I went to the doctor for the last time. He told me that my kidneys were not working as well as they should and I had toxemia. He felt it was a good decision to go to Ontario. On Sunday morning we went to say good-bye to my sister-in-law. She was in the Truro hospital, a new mother. When the hospital staff saw me they assumed I was a patient coming to deliver.

On Monday morning, September 25, at 9:30 am the train left Truro for Hamilton. The autumn scenery was magnificent. Tuesday morning at 7:00 am we arrived at Montreal. After a two hour lay-over, we continued on our way to Hamilton. We arrived at 7:15 p.m. Neil was waiting for us to bring us to Rev. and Mrs. Zegerius. Well a 34 hour train ride does not leave you very clean, especially when the train burns coal; you get covered in soot. I was looking forward to a bath or at least a good sponge bath. Unfortunately, there was a plumbing problem with the water and we could wash our face and hands but a bath was out of the question for the time being. Was history repeating itself? After a meal and some talking we went to bed. We were sleeping in the attic of the house. It was full with immigrants; immigrants with problems of all sorts. We were both very tired and soon fell asleep.

At five am I awoke. My side of the bed was wet! I got very upset and did not know what to do. Jake wanted to get Mrs. Zegerius, but I did not want him to. Once I realized that labour had started, Jake went to wake up Mrs. Zegerius. She called Mrs. Dunnink in Watertown, for the name of a doctor who had looked after more Dutch women. This doctor told us to go to Henderson Hospital in Hamilton. He thought it was probably false labour. Neil rushed us to the hospital. We got there at 7:15 a.m. False Labour? I had no time to write down my name. I was wheeled directly to the delivery room where our daughter was born at 7:45 a.m. She was supposed to be a boy; due date was November 10, but 'he' was supposed to wait until November 13 which was my dad's birthday. We were however, very thankful, that our 5 pound daughter was healthy. On Sunday, I was allowed to go home, that is to Mr. and Mrs. Dunnink's. I was very happy to be able to look after our baby, but there was a problem. All of my articles were in the container. Our container was standing on a train station platform in Hamilton waiting to go to our new home. A new home was something we did not have. Someone had changed their mind, did not move, and therefore we again had NO PLACE TO GO. it had sounded too good to be true, remember?

In the front of the house lived Mr. and Mrs. Devos. He was a field man for the Reformed Church. They had a baby girl, so Mrs. Devos shared some of her baby clothes with me. Jake was helping on the Dunnink

farm, filling the silo with corn and learning to do the milking machine, and cleaning the milking machine afterwards. This was all new to Jake.

On October 12, we moved to Paris to the farm of Mr. Jim Weatherston. The farm was located not far out of Paris. We lived in their home, in three of the bedrooms. Jake was to be responsible for caring for 26 cows and about 60 pigs. He was soon left to be on his own. This kept him very busy. Mr. Weatherston did custom work for other farmers. Every other Sunday morning, Jake was free after the morning chores. This left us free to go to church, when someone came to pick us up. There was a mix up in the arrangements and unfortunately, when we were ready and waiting to go no one came. This happened several times and was very disappointing for us. We were somewhat lonely as we lived in the country, and had no transportation of our own, only my bike. We missed our friends Neil and Jaap, their companionship and visits and visitors that they brought. Because of our change of address, it took a long time for mail to arrive from Holland. Mrs. Weatherston asked me once to come along to Paris with her to do grocery shopping. If we did not take our baby along, Jake would check on her from time to time.

December 10, was a very special day. Reverend Zegerius picked us up to go to his church on Park Rd. in Hamilton. Our daughter, Reindina Geertruida was baptized that morning. Jake held her in his arms, she smiled at Reverend Zegerius as he baptized her. The sermon was taken from Psalm 73. We sang Psalm 25, verses 2 and 4, and also Psalm 89 verses 1 and 8. We sang two English hymns; one was 'Nearer My God To Thee'. it was very emotional for us that day. We very much missed and felt the absence of our parents.

Mrs. Weatherston and I got along well. She would help me with my English and with my pronunciation, correcting my speech when I mispronounced words. This helped my language skills and confidence to grow. Mr. Oostveen, from Air, picked us



up for Burford Church in his panel truck. With his family and our family of three. As we climbed up the hills, and rolled down hills, and the air became smoke laden, I would often feel nauseous. How we longed for our own transportation.

However, all of our savings had been spent on our trip to Ontario. Personal transportation would just have to wait. Slowly we were establishing new friendships. Jake was very busy in the barn. I was just as busy with our baby. I also enjoyed answering letters. We had received 115 letters that year.

Life went on, Christmas came and went. Jake's birthday on January 1, came and went. We celebrated these days in our own special way. The church had been a lighted pillar for us; we had been able to turn there for help at any time when it was needed. When our first year in Canada was at an end, we were very grateful that the Lord had kept us safe and healthy. We were sure of His guidance on the way ahead, and we did not need to fear the future.

Eventually we had one more daughter, and a son. In the November of 1954, we bought a 127 acre mixed farm in York, Ontario. We lived and worked on it for 18 years. We built a new home on the corner lot of our land when we sold the farm. Our son was not interested in farming. We had been attending the Ebenezer Reformed Church in Stoney Creek during all those years. In 1983 we moved to Ancaster where we still live. Now we attend the First Reformed Church in Hamilton. We are retired and like to travel a little and enjoy life to its fullest.