

John A. Van Beers
Dutch Immigrant
Waterman
April 1, 1953



I was born in Best, Noord Brabant, NL. The second youngest in a family of ten. I was fifteen years old, when I immigrated with my parents, one brother and four sisters to Canada in 1953. Three brothers and a married sister had immigrated earlier. We left Best, by bus in the morning of March 24/1953 for the port of Rotterdam. We boarded the ss Waterman, and departed about 4pm. that day. The journey was rather pleasant. We experienced only one storm in the mid Atlantic. Some passengers got seasick, and a few donated their false teeth to the fish in the process. We arrived in Halifax at Pier 21 on April 1/1953. We left the boat and stepped on Canadian soil about 3pm that day. After walking around Halifax for a few hours, we boarded the train for a two day journey to Chatham Ont. The train ride through Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, in early April, with the snow, dead trees, a few old shacks and a model T next to it, was depressing to say the least.

I still remember my mother whispering, my God what did we get in to. But the good part was, we had seen the worst and things got better. The train with its small wooden benches, would have been alright to sleep on, if the Engineer had not hit the brakes so hard to stop at some stupid little shack every half hour. We changed trains in Toronto, and the coffee and cookies, compliments of Phillips was great. We arrived at Chatham Ont about 7 pm and were taken to a warm house, lots a food, and a real bed to sleep in. The next morning all the neighbourhood kids came over to meet us. Even with my limited knowledge of the English language, we got along great. There was lots of work waiting, and lots of nice people, never a dull day. In 1961, I married Judy, a nice Canadian girl from Windsor Ont. We raised four sons. Canada and its people have been good to me. I have always been involved in my community because I like to give something back. For me its also a way of remembering the man and women that gave their live for me on Dutch soil. I feel its an honour to live here. I have no regrets, it's the best place in the world.

With Thanks,
John A. Van Beers

