

Lina Douwasma
Dutch Immigrant
Zuiderkruis
January 22, 1952

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



After a tearful good-bye to friends and neighbors in our

little hometown of Ens in the Netherlands, our family, consisting of Dad and Mom and four children, ranging in age from three to ten years old, on the morning of January 22, 1952, piled into a rented car which would bring us to Rotterdam. There we were to board the ship that would take us to our new country - Canada. In the years after the Second World War, that meant the land of our liberators; the land of promise and plenty. Even young children knew that!



But to a ten year old who had never traveled much, the first leg of the trip, driving across the Netherlands, already seemed long. In reality, the Netherlands is a small country and we arrived on the docks in Rotterdam sometime that morning. We were told that, because of a clerical error, my little brother Fred was missing from the passenger list

and we would not be allowed to board right away. When the problem was finally cleared, we were hurried along, quickly our picture was taken (see enclosed photograph) and walked the gangplank onto what seemed to me to be a huge ship, the Zuiderkruis.

The first few days on board were a lot of fun! We ran up and down the stairs, played hide and seek in the nooks and crannies with the children of other immigrants, and made new friends. We were amazed to see the tables laden with all kinds of delicious foods, especially fruit like oranges and bananas. In the years after the war, the Netherlands was still rebuilding and food was expensive and ration stamps were still used for a number of years to buy food and other necessities. My sister and I wore hand-knitted dresses and my brothers wore knitted shorts and sweaters

as well. Mom's hands were never idle! On the enclosed picture, the younger children are all wearing jackets and clothes made from worn adults' outerwear. I felt very proud as I had a new store-bought coat. I was getting too big to have a re-modeled one!

We loved to see a movie in the theatre on the ship and on Sunday, we had a church service there as well. However, as we processed further into the Atlantic, the trip didn't so seem enjoyable anymore. A fierce gale blew and most of us were sea-sick. Those who weren't helped the stewards who had their hands full looking after the young children whose mothers were ill. I decided I would not get sea-sick, but one day I couldn't bear the thought of food and didn't go to the dining room for breakfast. One of the Moluccan stewards who often talked to me, asked Dad, "Where's Lina?" Dad told him I was sick and he was very sympathetic and gave Dad an egg from the table for me. I remember thinking that it was very nice of him, but the last thing I wanted to eat was an egg!

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Holland-Amerika Lijn
3 C-1220 VRAGENLIJST CANADA
 GELIEVE IN BLOKLETTERS IN TE VULLEN

Naam agent Stad Naam van het schip *Zuiderkruis* KLASSE
 Biljet No. Datum van vertrek *12 Januari 1952*
 Accommodatie Van *Rotterdam*

VRAGEN TE BEANTWOORDEN DOOR **BEZOEKERS EN EMIGRANTEN**

1		2		3	
Naam	Voornamen	Datum van geboorte	Land van geboorte	Plaats van geboorte	Ras
1	<i>Douwma</i>	<i>Bonne</i>	<i>12-7-14</i>	<i>Ned. Oudeveer</i>	<i>blank</i>
2					
3					
4					
5					

3	4			5	6	7
Moedertal	Paspoort-bijzonderheden:			Went U ooit in Canada gevestigd of geliquoreerd?	Hoe lang denkt U in Canada te blijven?	Indien vergezeld door familieleden geef verwantschap tot U
	Nummer	Plaats van afgifte	Datum van afgifte			
1	<i>Ned.</i>			<i>neen</i>	<i>levenlang</i>	<i>echtgenote met vier kinderen.</i>
2						
3						
4						
5						

8		9	10	11			12
Adres in Canada		Hoeveel geld hebt U bij aankomst in Canada?	Geef naam en adres van naaste bloedverwant in land van herkomst	Waart U of een der leden Uwer familie oot:			Indien U naar het binnenland reist, geef naam van de afvoerweg m.j.
Indien naar familie, vriend of werkgever, vermeld relatie, naam en adres. Indien niet, vermeld eigen toekomstig adres in Canada				Geestelijk abnormaal	Lichamelijk gebrekkig	Lidend aan tuberculose	
1 <i>Toronto, Ontario, Station Windsor</i>			<i>W. Douwma, Hoornsezijl</i>	<i>neen</i>	<i>neen</i>	<i>neen</i>	<i>onbekend</i>
2							
3							
4							
5							

13	14	15	16	17	18	
Geslacht	Godsdienst	Opgehoofd, Getrouwd, Weduwnaar, Weesweduwe of Gescheiden	Wat is Uw normaal beroep?	Wat is Uw toekomstig beroep in Canada?	Door wie werd Uw passage betaald?	Laatste woonplaats
1	<i>M.</i>	<i>Geraristi gehuwd.</i>	<i>landarbeider</i>	<i>landarb.</i>	<i>N.O. Polier</i>	<i>Ned. Overheid, zijns wagens</i>
2						
3						

We were in the first cabin right in the front of the ship. One day I was looking through the only porthole and I saw a huge green mountain. "What is that mountain doing there?" I thought. Then, I panicked because I was sure we were going to crash! Suddenly that mountain moved and I realized it was a huge wave! I turned around quickly and walked into the lounge where there were no portholes. The problem was solved!

historical building. There, the kind ladies of the Imperial Daughters of the Empire generously gave us a glass of milk and as many cookies as we could eat! Eventually, we were picked-up by Dutch people, total strangers who had come to Canada previously. They found us a place to stay with other recent immigrants until work for Dad and a home, a three-room cottage, could be found in Burlington, Ontario. Yes, the first years were difficult. We weren't used to the cold, the language or the customs of our new country. There were days of hard work under the burning sun in the summer, days of unemployment in the winter and days of anxiety when Mom needed a serious operation just after the first anniversary of our arrival. But we made it! Thanks to our parents' hard work, their resourcefulness, perseverance and faith in God, we did not feel deprived. Thanks to the kindness of our Canadian neighbors, who helped us through the first hard years. We felt we belonged here.

We became familiar with the language and customs and, in due time, Mom and Dad bought their first home in 1955. Then, in 1974, they bought a newer retirement home where Dad could garden to his heart's content. Mom passed away just before Christmas in 1982 from cancer. Two years later, Dad remarried: his new bride was from his hometown in the Netherlands. She also immigrated, but in the modern way. She came by airplane.

Our family grew from six persons to twenty-two, as you can see in the enclosed photograph taken on Dad's 82nd birthday in 1995. It as one of the few times we were able to all get together for a family reunion as my

brothers through the years lived in different provinces of this huge land. Missing from the picture are our two youngest grandchildren, Joel Vanderlaan, who is now three and a half and Hannah Alkema, who is six months. Shortly after Joel's birth in January 1997, we remembered the fact that h had arrived in Halifax 45



years earlier. Dad, who was 82 and already in poor health said: "Yes, I have seen my children's children in this land!" A month later he passes away from heart failure, but content he had made the right decision of his family.

We, immigrant children, are a unique generation. For us, there is a link between the country of our birth and that of our children. Soon, my husband and I will travel to "the old country" and we will be sure to enjoy our visit with relatives and old friends, but we will also be glad to return, for Canada is home.

