

Nederlof van Tiggelen
Dutch Immigrant
Volendam
February 22, 1951



Immigration is not something you get just up and do, you talk about it, think about it and talk about it again, you go to all kinds of bureaus for information. When it gets to be pretty serious you start praying a lot about it. The time comes that you only pray that God will show you the way; at least this is the way it was with us.

Under God's guidance and blessing we left Holland on February 13, 1951 from Rotterdam on the big ship Volendam, which had 1400 passengers and 500 crew members, to go to our new land Canada. The Atlantic Ocean can be pretty rough going in the winter so you can imagine a lot of seasickness for the passengers. We watched many a passenger running out of the dining room and heaving his meal overboard. One fellow lost his teeth. We were told, we could not take any money on board so all our Dutch money was given to Tanta Mina (Dad's oldest sister). It sure would have been nice to have money as we saw other people buying ice cream and other goodies.

We reached Halifax February 22, 1951 and went through customs that same day yet, we had to stay on board ship one more night. We walked around a bit and looked at different things. The crewmembers were already unloading the big boxes that contained all our earthly possessions. While we were watching, all of a sudden one of the boxes fell. We said to each other, whoever owns that box is not too lucky. The next day we found out that it was our box, it had the table legs sticking out and Dad had to find a carpenter to fix it, as the box could not go on the train in that condition.

On February 23, 1951, before entering the train, an official came to the train to welcome us and to give some information, but of course none of us could really understand him, as he spoke English.

The train left Halifax at about 12 noon and what a train it was! It looked like a coal train and of course everything was black, but we made it as comfortable as possible. At night the kids slept on top where the baggage was supposed to be. With us in the same compartment were Rie Brandt, Mr. & Mrs. A.N. deJonge, with Nancy, Arie and Janny. We made our own coffee, tea and meals.

When we arrived in Winnipeg our fieldman, Mr. Wieringa, entered the train and informed us that Red Deer was the nicest place in Alberta. On Sunday we did a lot of singing so that we all had a little feeling that it was Sunday. After arriving in Edmonton our fieldman, Mr. Wieringa, put us on the train to Red Deer. With us were the families deJonge and Mr. & Mrs. Harm Doorenbos (the Dorrenbos' had just gotten married and then left Holland, what a honeymoon that must have been as the men and women slept in separate parts of the ship). We all thought a couple more hours and we will all be at our destinations. It was not meant to be!

When we arrived at Camrose a conductor or someone like that, came and said that we had to get off the train because we were on the wrong train. (After our train had left Edmonton, Mr. Wieringa discovered that he had put us on a train that was going to Saskatchewan).

Harm Doorenbos was the only one among us who could talk a little English and he had to do a lot of talking, and finally fixed it that a passenger car would be attached on a freight train that was going to Mirror, Alberta. The passenger car looked like it has been used in the 17th Century, oil lamps hanging and we had to keep our own stove going with wood, we also had a barrel with water and the toilet was over the open rails. It was very cold every time you had to go.

By the time we arrived at Mirror our blood felt like karnemelk (buttermilk) from all the shaking and jostling around. At Mirror, Mr. Doorenbos again had to our spokesman. He phoned his family in (Woodynook) Lacombe to let them know where he and his wife were. He suggested that they stay in Mirror overnight but his family said no, they would come down right away to pick them up. Mr. Doorenbos phoned for the deJonge family to Rocky Mountain House and their family also agreed to come and get them. Mr. Doorenbos had to phone the Hansum's via the Provincial Training School (Michener Centre) as neither Mrs. Hansum nor Rev. vanLaaar had a phone at that time. Rev. vanLaar (Christian Reformed Home Missionary) came to pick us up and we arrived in Red Deer with the best meal we had had since leaving Holland awaiting us at Mrs. Pearl Hansum's (Mrs. Hansum's husband had died on the boat coming over the year before). And what a treat to finally have a bath!

As we had come to Red Deer on our own without a sponsor, Dad had to go out and look for work. After a lot of disappointments he finally got a job with the CPR between Red Deer and Penhold (Tuttle) at \$65.00 every two weeks. So with a bike borrowed from John Entrop, Dad pedaled to work every day starting April 1, 1951. Dad would pick up beer and pop

bottles that were lying on the side of the road, which were cashed in to augment the income.

The first couple of Sunday's we had Church in Mrs. Hansum's living room with John Entrop doing the sermon reading. We also had several reading services in Rev. vanLaar's basement but the group soon became too large and we had to rent something bigger.

The second story of the Orange Hall (48th Avenue & 53rd Street) was rented and in the morning we had reading service and in the evening Rev. vanLaar preached. In the morning Rev. vanLaar would preach in Rocky Mountain House.

On April 7, 1951 we rented a house in Westpark, right in between the Indians (we did not know that at the time). They turned out to be good neighbors, completely different culture then what we were used to. It was quite a sight to see old women smoking pipes! We rented the house for \$35.00 per month in the winter and \$40.00 in summer because we had such a large garden with it. Pier Maseru, our Dutch neighbor, helped us put in the garden and everything grew very well and we all had visions of vegetables we would be eating next winter. At the end of July we had a hailstorm and all that was left in the garden were 3 beans and a lot of red beets. After the hailstorm there was no way that the beets could be cooked so that we could eat them. We also had lots of endive so that there would still be something to eat come winter.

We went to town and bought a lot of second hand canning jars and started canning endive. When winter came and we were going to eat some of that lovely endive, there was no way the jar would open. Finally Dad broke one open with a hammer and the smell that came out of that jar was unbelievable and of course we could not eat it. It seems that there was too much manure on the garden, which made the soil too rich. We ended up throwing all the endive out, complete with jars. What a sad feeling to see all that hard work goes to waste. We had to get our water from across the street and also carry all those jars home from downtown, as we did not have a car.

In September on a Monday morning Rev. vanLaar came to ask if he and his wife could come for coffee that evening, which of course was okay. When they arrived that evening, Mrs. VanLaar said we have been to the States and brought back a few things for your family, if you would have it. She said earlier in the summer we received three boxes with clothing from the States but there was nothing in it for the Nederlof family and we (Rev. & Mrs. VanLaar) felt so bad for you as we think you must be the poorest family here, (Dad was the only one in our family that was working to support a family of six). We laughed because we sure did not

feel poor (there was still \$50.00 left when Dad came home with his first pay cheque)

While visiting in the States, Mrs. VanLaar said to a friend, we have family back in Red Deer who is the same size as you and we have not been able to give them any clothes. This lady cleaned out her closets and also went to town to buy clothes for all of us. God was surely looking after us!

In 1952 we were able to purchase a house on Spruce Drive for the pricey sum of \$4,000.00 from Mr. & Mrs. George Gross; Payments of \$40.00 per month. This house had no basement and no water, and only a wood burning stove and outdoor privy. We got our water at the bottom of the hill (Rotary Park). We would go with two 5-gallon pails to get our water. We somehow acquired a set of yokes (I think Opa Zee gave them to us) and the pails would hang from your shoulders. Dragging yourself up the hill was no mean feat. Mom saved her money well and she soon had money to buy a washing machine with a motor (how proud she was of that machine) she also saved enough that her mother was able to come to Canada to visit us for just about a year in 1953.

Dad spent all his free time digging under the house to make a basement. This was done by filling another 5-gallon pail with dirt and bringing it outside one pail at a time. The day arrived that he had dug deep enough and had laid enough bricks so that the house had to be moved in order for him to finish the basement. Mr. Sandy Gerke came with two white workhorses and move our house and for six weeks our house was on blocks. Basement being finished the house was moved back onto it's original spot. Our house size doubled! We never did have a pump for water; we waited until the City of Red Deer put in the water and sewer lines years later.

Many more things and events happened in those first few years. We do feel that God was very close to us during this time. We are still thankful for His guidance and protection. I'm sure other people had more exciting things happen to them. This is part of our story. I don't know if you can use it or not.

I also have friends who came on the same boat as us and have a unique story to tell. As one of their children ended up sick in Halifax and in the hospital there.