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Groote Beer
September 30, 1952

CANADA'S IMMIGRATION MUSEUM
PIER 21



Our Journey to Canada

(The following are my recollections, whether that be original or from hearing stories from my parents, about the trip from the Netherlands to Burdett, Alberta.)

Housing in the Netherlands was terrible. My parents and three children (I was the youngest at that time) lived in a two bedroom apartment, which they shared with another young family. Their hope for the future existed with the dreams of going to Canada!

This dream became a reality in the summer of 1952. We left the Netherlands, Mom, Dad my brother, my sister and myself with a grand total of \$100.00. This was to allow us to begin a new life in a new land. We left Rotterdam that summer and entered Halifax harbour on September 30, 1952. Being only three, my memory of the trip is sketchy. I remember being at the back of the boat with Dad, watching fish in the water. (I don't know if they were dolphins, porpoises, or whales.) I also remember that we were in a cabin with mom. (understand that men were separated from the women and children.)

In order to stop us from wetting the bed, Mom had removed all the drinking glasses from the bunks. My older brother and sister wanted a drink and they dared me to go up to the top bunk to get the glasses. I did so but was afraid to come back down. My crying brought a woman, and later my mother, to rescue me from those dreadful heights.

From Halifax, we took the train to Medicine Hat, Alberta. In order for immigrants to come to Canada they had to be sponsored by relatives.. My dad's sister and her husband were living on a farm in Burdett, Alberta. They sponsored us which meant that we lived with them for the first year. The train ride to Alberta took us across most of Canada. The trains were dirty and very short on all of the amenities for daily life. When I entered Grade 1, the class was asked to draw a picture of a train. I did so and coloured the whole train black. The teacher spanked me for not using other colours, and for not taking a realistic view of trains. My mother later explained to her what my experiences of trains had been.

We lived in Burdett for most of our lives. My parents are now retired and living in Lethbridge. My brother moved back to the Netherlands. My sister lives in Bow Island, next to Burdett. I taught school in northern Alberta for 15 years. On July 1, 1996, I entered Nova Scotia for the second time in my life to work as a minister in the Orangeade area.