

Corry and Alex  
Steenkist Dutch  
Immigrants  
Groote Beer  
April 1953



OH Canada the land we emigrated to.

At the pleading of a friend of my husband he met after the war we decided to take this big step. We had a little 2 year old and was dearly loved by the grandparents( if we knew then how much this hurt his parents we would not have left) We still see the waving of the family when the Groote Beer left Rotterdam in April 1953. Our little boy waved his little blanket he always carried and the strong wind blew it in the haven.

That was the beginning of a terrible journey, with a crying boy asking for his blanket, Mother and Father seperated (Man and women could not share the same cabin) we still don't know WHY? As soon as we lentered the big sea I was seasick my boy developed a bad case of Bronchites and most of my trip was spending time with the docter and nurse. The Docter told me as soon as we are in Canada your son will be alright. The nurse supplied me with pills for my seasicknes, nothing helped I dragged myself on deck and diningroom nothing helped I could't keep any food in my stomach The nurse gave me a pill in silverpaper and told me if this doesn't help you are pregnant. I took the pill and was violently sick, when the nurse came back and looked at me again being sick she said this pill should have done it. I said it taste terrible. She looked at me and said this pill should have been placed in your rectum. There was nothing in my stomach but with that statement you know what happened next.

When we landed in Halifax after spending 8 days at a stormy sea the Nurse said to me let me know when the baby is born, I said it is impossible I am not sick any more. The Red Cross greeted us and we received some food for the train trip. We showed our papers and we watched how many were greeted by Church groups or fieldman. My husband's friend was waiting in Toronto. There was a store and I noticed a jelly roll and since I had nothing to eat for a long time we took the roll on our long traintrip. It was cold and the moment the train moved I was sick and spend the whole trip on the floor on a coat. No help on the train the water was terrible I could't clean myself.

My poor husband who enjoyed the trip on the ship so much didn't know what to do. When we arrived in Toronto our friend brought us to his car

and while traveling to Burlington I was sick again His wife greeted us with food and cake but I wanted to get in bed, as long as I lay flat I was alright I spend two weeks in bed .The Docter gave me needles I lost 18lbs I felt so bad for her we were boarding and I had to look after her child while she was working.My husband started right away in the fields for a Nursery. Our boarding money was \$25.00, his salary was \$32.00. We paid the docter \$5.00 and yes I was pregnant. We where not prepared for this. No insurance you have to wait 9 months before you are covered. To proud to tell our problems back home, we said A and you can not turn your back.

With the \$80.00 we arrived with, we found a apartment for \$75.00 and a hotplate in the livingroom and the bathroom we shared with the owners.I don't want to go on but it was tough. My husband found work in his field and increased his salary to \$40.00. We had to pay the docter a little more. Groceries were not to expensive and hooray for garage sales. I found a basket for the baby and with a colourfull sheet I found for 25 cent I made a nice Baby crib. Our parents sent baby clothes so I was all set. We found a add in the paper A Hungarian Man lost his wife on cancer and was looking for a housekeeper, we went to see him - he lived in Hamilton beside the traintracks. He had three children I felt so sorry for them and took the job. We had one Bedroom. We had to pay@1 0.00 a week for food. It was hard work with no vacuum cleaner and every Friday I carried the heavy rugs and hung them over the railroad fence and pounded them with a stick.

On Dec 9 th our little girl was born after spending three days in Labour without a husband beside me (that was not allowed). On the 3th day I left the hospital - we could not afford the money and the family needed me. When I came home I had a big wash waiting for me, four children and a man who worked in the railway yard and my husband who was now a plumber at 32c a hour. We stayed 3 year with the family ( my husband's brother arrived from Holland and slept in the basement( more work) he stayed for a month and found a place elsewhere. The children liked me (not the first day). They would be home for lunch they ranged from 6 to 11. The father showed me the food closet it contained all canfood.

The first day I made toast and openen a can I still remembered the faces when they started eating. The 11 year old boy asked wath it this I showed him the can, they screamed and said that is dogmeat. (I forgot to mention they had a dog in a shed). We moved to a Dutch Farm. The Owner sold the property to a big cement company but kept some land and the House .It had 3 apartments, no hot water, outdoor toilets but a big yard for the kids, lovely Dutch neighbours who helped each other.

They were former farmers but worked at the Ford Company. They were the best times of our life, us City dwellers still struggling no car the road was

5 miles from the highway were my husband had to take the bus to work. We were given 1 acre to plant our own food. I planted potatoes all vegetables and much more and bought a small freezer and I was pregnant again and our 2nd little girl was born and was loved by all the other children on the farm.

In 1959 we moved to Hamilton my husband found a good paying job we found a nice apartment and beside us lived another Dutch family. We moved in on May and October my husband was laid off it was only seasonal work.

Another baby on the way and things were going backwards. I was a competitive swimmer in Holland and worked at a pool in Holland. We lived close to the Y.W.C.A. and I checked if I could do any work there. I took courses at Mac Master University and did all courses needed including swimming courses, Lifeguard and Instructors courses and started parttime for 32c a hr. Dad found a job with the steel company shifts and we took turns looking after the children. I took the children to work they enjoyed all the programs offered and later on in life became lifeguards while in high school. My husband retired in 1989 and I became Aquatic Director in 1963 and retired in 1986. We have now 5 children all healthy, 3 grandchildren and are now volunteers for a Wish Foundation as Wish granters. On Tuesday we volunteer at the hospital children's ward Oncology Department. From 1989- 2001 we volunteered in Florida for 12 winters and worked with terminal ill children from all over the world.

We worked as Airport greeters, translators, office work and what more. Due to the U.S dollar and the high insurance cost had to give this up, but enjoy the work we do now. We had 7 lean years but with hard work and determination we made it and will never look back. What happened over all the years have taught us; when there is a will there is a way.

Sincerely Corry and Alex Steenkist.

