



Kitty Cillekins

In June 1961 after completing migration medicals, interviews and packing up all their belongings, Kitty Cillekens, her husband Guus (Gus) and three children, Doreen, Bas and Lex then aged six, five and two years old respectively, boarded the *MS Waterman* bound for an unknown future in Australia. Australia had been chosen as a peaceful environment for raising their children and also because its sugar mills could provide potential employment for Gus who had, during his studies in tropical agriculture, majored in sugar technology.

"My sea legs are nonexistent, and I was glad to finally have *terra firma* under my feet. We had changed our destination from Melbourne to Queensland and, after a long train ride from Sydney, we arrived at the Wacol Immigration Centre. Our youngest son Lex had pneumonia and was very sick. We were allocated half an army-hut. A family who had five young sons occupied the other half. Our little rooms had only wooden partitions and it was very noisy. One of the highlights of the Wacol Camp was the Thursday's arrival of Mr Holweg, from the Dutch shop. He had a shop under his house and went around Brisbane with a van full of Dutch "goodies" like: hagelslag, drop, rookvlees, kaas, beschuit (chocolate hail, liquorice, smoked meat, cheese, rusks), which helped to alleviate the homesickness somewhat.

Gus started looking for work straight away and he wrote to 33 sugar mills. Only seven replied, to advise him that he was over-qualified. What they needed were workmen. In desperation, I went to the Health Department and asked to speak to the director, who was very sympathetic with

WACOLREMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **July 1961**

my plight and rang all the public hospitals to get interviews for me. One day I came back to Wacol from the city and Gus was running towards me waving a letter and he called out: "The best birthday present for you," I asked hopefully: "You have a job?" Gus answered: "No, you have – at the General Hospital." So on 25 September, I started working and wondered how I would cope with imperial measurements. Luckily, they were using the metric system. It was unusual that I was accepted as a technician as, in those days, the Public Service did not employ married women. Married men could take holidays at Christmas time because they had "a family"; it was conveniently forgotten that I also had one.

We bought a block of land in the Gap as well as a car, a VW Beetle. Gus commenced work at the Colonial Sugar Research Institute. He started on "pick and shovel" work because the laboratory had not been built yet. We rented a house in Lutwyche and moved out of the Wacol camp! It was a sheer joy to finally have our luggage, which was in storage while we were in the camp. Unpacking our furniture, we found the children's toys and bikes, our linen and wall hangings. It was a wonderful feeling to have a whole house to ourselves!"

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