

Ruth Van Lunteren

nee Muller

I was born in the Netherlands and was fourteen years old when my parents and their five children migrated to Australia.

Before we came out, we lived in an old moist, brick house on top of a small hill, (called a terp) to protect us from flooding. I shared my bed with two other siblings. Our house was very small. We lived in the northern part of Holland a province named "Groningen". I felt sad when we had to migrate as I was in my second year of high school.

The main reason we left was my parents had a rented house. Housing in the fifties was in short supply as Holland took in refugees from Hungary and people from the Dutch Indies. Also Dad had to work hard to sustain his family.

They decided to migrate to Australia. We went to Amsterdam for our health checks and passports. When everything was in order the family boarded the ship *The Waterman* in Rotterdam, and travelled through the Suez Canal to Fremantle.

The journey on the ship was rough. I remember Dad and I were sitting on deck, when a huge wave soaked us. Dad grabbed me as we could have fallen overboard. Mum and I were seasick a lot, walking up the stairs with a brown paper bag, as we felt nauseated. Also my one-and-a-half-year-old sister Dina was in a crib in the cabin, and the storm moved her from one side to the other.

Another time we were having dinner and the ship swayed from side to side. All the food, plates and cutlery were swept off the tables. We had good food; our cooks and other staff consisted of Dutch Indonesians. We were glad to arrive in Fremantle.

Our destination was to Melbourne, then Sydney, there we boarded the train to Brisbane. It was a long and exhausting journey, as there were no sleepers and we had to sit up all the way. My little sister slept in the luggage rack.

On arrival in Brisbane Mr Westra from the Reformed Church made us welcome, took us to the Wacol Hostel and we stayed there for three years.

WACOL REMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **1958**



A musical get-together with the family

Dad received his landing money, a hundred pounds. He used it for a deposit on a block of land he bought at Kelliher Street, close to the Wacol Army base. He paid five hundred pounds for eight acres.

Dad found work at the Darra brickworks and in his spare time cultivated grapes and started building a house made from second hand materials bought from a demolition yard called Schimmel at Redbank, also Dutch migrants.

The Hostel staff were made up of all nationalities. There was a tiny shop and a Post Office. Whenever we needed meals we had to stand in a row in the main kitchen where food was served. You could eat in the hall or lots of people took the dinner on a tray to their huts, where my dad fried the pumpkin and potatoes on a small stove to make it more edible. Some people complained about the food.

We bathed in a shower/toilet block; mum did her washing in the laundry block. Those days, forty-five years ago we had no modern conveniences, such as television, toilets inside, air conditioner. We were given some grey horse blankets to keep us warm. We slept on camping beds with a thin mattress and whenever we went to Brisbane we travelled by train. My dad did not possess a car for a long time.

Mum was homesick. She found it hard to adjust. My

brother, Peter, was born in 1960 at the Royal Brisbane Hospital. We all went to English classes at night.

I went to Primary school for four months in the Hostel. My teacher's name was Mr Boxtel. He taught us swimming and I got my certificate. After that, I did two years at Indooroopilly High School, the closest to Wacol camp and received my Junior Certificate at age seventeen. Then I got a live-in job at a Doctor's place in East Brisbane. After that a much better job came up. I moved to St. Leo's College at St. Lucia where I did cooking and waitressing for one hundred and twenty students.

My saddest memories were when I contracted Hepatitis and was sick for nearly two months. Another time I got badly sunburnt when having a day out at the beach.

My best memories were meeting my girlfriend in the Hostel and remaining friends ever since. Her name is Toos Eberhard, nee Janssens. Also my happiest time was when I met my boyfriend, Lammert, (now my husband) in 1961. He and his mates used to visit us in the Hostel and with his accordion and my brother Derk we sang

many songs and danced. We all went on outings to the beach and Lake Manchester, his car packed with girls and boys in his little Vauxhall.



Going to the beach