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My husband, four children, my sister and I emigrated to Australia, leaving Holland on 28 September 1957. Gerard, my husband was thirty-six and I (Bep in Dutch or Beth in Australian) was thirty-two and my sister, Anne, was twenty-seven. My husband was a plumber working for a boss, and wanted to emigrate straight after we were married in 1949. His eldest brother was doing well in Canada, but I couldn't miss my mother. In Holland we were living in Den Haag (The Hague), where, if you wanted to start your own business, you had to have all the tools of the trade and money in the bank, which we did not have.

So, after eight years I agreed to go, but Canada was out of the question, with four children, Doreen (six), Jack and Jim (both five), and Gerard (three – he turned four on the ship), as there were no hostels in Canada. We were living in a second floor flat and if the kids wanted to play outside, it was in the street, unless I took them to the park or the beach, which was about a twenty minute walk for me but more for the children.

We went to a lecture given by an Australian gentleman, who advised us of all the pros and cons of emigrating to Australia. He told us that we would not be that much better off, but our children would be. Before we could go we had to have medical check-ups and a police record search.

We had to pay according to how much we earned, which was after tax, medical benefits (compulsory), eighty-nine guilders per week. I can't remember exactly how much we paid, but when we left the ship in Sydney, we received Landing Money, which was about the same as what we had paid. At 7.30pm on 3 November 1957 the train left for Brisbane. What a long Journey, sixteen and a half hours. We found the cows very skinny and the grass not so green. In Casino there were tables and benches, ready for us to have breakfast. Baked beans, we had never had that, like bacon and eggs for breakfast. We had porridge, cooked in water with milk to put on it. Anyhow, it was

WACOL REMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **3 November 1957**



different to at home. We arrived at noon in Brisbane, where a bus was waiting for us. There could have been more buses, as I remember there was one hundred and twenty-six people going to Wacol.

When we arrived in Wacol, what a difference with Holland. We had come from a wet country to the beautiful sunshine. So we were all full of hope for a better future. If you wanted to emigrate, the whole family had to go, so that there would be a house or flat available for someone else in Holland, as there was still a shortage of housing at that time, as a result of the bombing during World War II.

The journey by sea lasted about five and a half weeks. I did not enjoy it very much at all, as my children had to go to the Children's Deck, for safety. My kids were very quiet and got very tired from the screaming of the other kids. I often stayed in the cabin with them, or my husband would take them to the swimming pool. In The Hague, where we lived the children had to be quiet as there were neighbours, left, right, under and above us. The Wacol Hostel was paradise for the kids, where we had three rooms, without connecting doors, in Hut G8.

In the morning (before 7am) I would go to the camp kitchen to pick up my husband's cut lunch and breakfast. This was when my husband found work, after a three week search, and obtained his Driver's Licence. We preferred to eat in our Hut. After 7am, I went for my breakfast. At about 10am we would pick up half a pint of milk for children under six, and in the afternoon milk

for children under twelve. Butter, milk and bread were good. In Holland we had margarine as we could not afford butter. The dinner was cooked by whoever was available, the shoemaker, hairdresser etc, so it was not always fantastic. However, for £8/13/6 per week, for a family to live and eat, you could not complain.

The laundry facilities was a big sort of shed, open at the front, with wood fired wash coppers (boilers), and you had to bring a scrubbing brush and plank to clean your clothes. You had to keep watch on your copper, so that nobody else took your clothes out and put theirs in, or stole your soap powder. The toilets and showers were further away still, and were the source of water for us as there was no water connected to the huts. There was also a small church and hospital, where we went with our mosquito and sand-fly bites.

The day after we arrived the grown-ups had to go to George Street, in the city, to have x-rays taken to check on our health. We had a supervisor, I think his name was Barossi, if you needed something you had to see him. If you had a complaint, or if there was a complaint about you, he handled that also.

In Holland, the kids went to school at six years, so Doreen, Jack and Jim could all go to Grade One and Gerard Jnr to Kindergarten. In the Hostel, Doreen did Grade One and Two in one year, as she did not want to be in the same class as the boys.

We were in the Wacol Hostel for nine or ten months, after which we left for Sherwood, where we rented a house for £6 per week. That was tough as my husband's wages were £16. However we had running water and even a bathroom and plenty of space around the house to play. The electricity bills started coming too. The Child Endowment came as a bit of a shock and less than we were accustomed to, five shillings for the first child and ten shillings for the second and third.

After we moved to Sherwood and Gerard started school in 1959, I looked for work during school hours. We needed a lot of things as we left so much behind. We only had our bed, blankets, some cutlery and crockery. My husband bought a table for £1/10 shillings, and made two three-seater benches for my kids and me. There was one chair and an old lounge suite in the rented house. We turned a packing case upside down for a lounge table. We never bought anything on Hire Purchase. In 1959 we "bought" our first home, in Inala. We didn't have the full deposit, but we could pay it off. The payment to the Housing Commission was £14/13 shillings a month, so that was a relief. In 1960 after we had another son, Harry, my parents came also as immigrants here and stayed for eight years. My father loved it, my mother missed my brother and relatives and friends. I cannot remember when my husband became a maintenance plumber for the Wacol hostel, it was the early 1960s. In 1962 we had a baby girl, Maryanne, and I received my first car, a Morris Minor, from my father, as he had a utility.

In 1966 I expected my seventh baby and it was time to look for a bigger home, as we had only two bedrooms in Inala. My husband and I were sleeping in the lounge room, the four boys in one bedroom and the two girls in the

