



## WACOL REMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **July 1954**

# Michael Strik

My name is Michael Strik. I was twenty years old, an invoice-clerk for a large General-Motors car dealer and service company in Holland when I left that country on 1 June 1954 on the ship *Sibajak* with nine hundred other passengers.

We were a family of five, my mother and father and two brothers. We arrived at the Wacol Migrant Hostel in early July after a five week sea journey. We travelled through the Mediterranean Sea to Port Said, the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, Colombo, Aden, the Indian Ocean to Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and by train to Brisbane. Life aboard ship was very good, we played daily deck tennis, and table-tennis competitions, card games, keno, dances and variety shows and the food was of five star hotel quality.

Aboard ship we had a small daily newsletter with the latest news update from around the world (usually about a week old!). With daily stopovers at the various seaports we did a lot of sightseeing. At sea we used to see more ocean-liners and lots of whales, dolphins and flying fish.

As we didn't know what to expect in Australia, we were very surprised at the first sight of the wharves, buildings, houses on stumps, cars, traffic (on the left side), shops, advertising signs (in English of course). Everything completely different than Holland! When we arrived in Brisbane, the tallest building was the "City Hall".

We spent about two weeks at the Hostel and within a couple of days we started work (as casuals) for a week at the Northgate Cannery. We travelled by steam-train from Wacol, about 5.30am and didn't get home till after 6.00pm.

After about two weeks we rented a house at Eagle Farm for £10 a week (nearly a week's wages then). Because of thousands of migrants coming to Australia there was an acute shortage of houses.

We all got a job straight away, I started at the Ford Motor Company at Eagle Farm as a storeman and worked there for six years.

My wife Laurence (Neger, her maiden name) arrived in Brisbane in 1956 on the ship *Johan van Olden Carnevelt*

with her parents and three brothers and two sisters. They spent three months at the Wacol Hostel and then got a little house at Wacol. Her parents and one brother and sister have since died. I met my wife Laurence through the Dutch Soccer Club "Hollandia", we started here in 1957, now called "Queensland Lions" at Richlands, I played soccer with them (fifth division to first division for four years) till 1961.

We married in 1961 and have two children, both married, a daughter Yolanda and a son Mark.

My mother Annie and brother Theo have since died. Theo was a bank-manager and also a president for many years of the NSW Rotary Club and not long before he died was awarded the "Paul Harris Fellow" award. He is survived by his wife Elsie who lives now in Lithgow (NSW) and one daughter and two sons, all married.

My father is ninety-three years old and lives with his wife Rie in Nerang.

My brother Hans lives in a town-house in Kangaroo Point and still has a holiday unit at Surfers Paradise. He used to own several car yards and is still involved in real estate. He has two daughters. He travels overseas many times and has been back in Holland a dozen times. He also owned several successful race horses (Dutch Boy and Hans Twice).

I'm retired now since 1998 and my wife and I went back to Holland for the first time in forty-four years for a holiday and to see a lot of relatives there.

We have lived in Durack since 1979. Our family life has always been great. Regular birthday parties, barbeques, Christmas and New Year celebrations. We also competed weekly in card and billiard competitions around the different Dutch Clubs in Brisbane. We all still visit the yearly "Dutch Carnivals" at Birkdale and Richlands. I still write sport articles from Australia for a Dutch Soccer and Cricket Club, (called "Quick Nymegen"). For many years I also used to write ten pin bowling results for the *Sunday Mail*.