

Sonja Mullenberg

nee Vandenberg

It was early 1956 when my father came home one day and said "How would you like to go to Australia?"

My brother Remi and I were very enthusiastic. Mum had to think about it. But in May, we went for our entire check-ups etc in The Haag and in September we left Holland on the *Sibajak* for Australia.

We lived in a small village Boskoop in Zuid-Holland. I couldn't leave Holland quick enough. I always felt restricted there.

I was still at high school and only had one more year to go. My brother was nine years old. I was fifteen.

My parents are Cor and Rick Vandenberg. They live in Trinder Park, Woodridge in a retirement village and are both in their eighties.

Once we knew we were going to Australia we had to sell a lot of things, like furniture, but we took all our beds, cooking things, mattresses and personal items, clothing, toys and books. I got some new dresses for the warmer climate as we went to Brisbane, said goodbye to all our family and friends. I think the grandparents had the most trouble, coming to terms with us leaving. I thought it was a great adventure. I had my parents and did not have to worry about anything.

It took us six weeks by sea, as we had to go over the Canary Islands, Las Palmas, Capetown, South Africa and the Suez Canal was closed. I had never experienced anything like this. It was awesome. Good food, met some nice people and did not have a care in the world.

Once we arrived in Australia I went through customs, we took the train from Sydney to Brisbane. It was a long and hot trip. I just had my fifteenth birthday on the boat on 17 October and we arrived around the last week in October.

I could not get over the landscape, all the gumtrees and so much bushland, with kangaroos and timber coloured houses and outhouses (toilets). It was very effective. I will never forget it. It was very hot when we arrived in Brisbane, South Brisbane interstate Station. From there

WACOL REMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **October 1956**



In front of our hut – 1957

we went straight away on the bus to Wacol Migration Camp.

We were allocated two rooms. The food was something we had to get used to, but most of it was ok. The cold lemon tea was very refreshing. Polish immigrants who had been here for a while ran the kitchen and most of the administration.

For several weeks I went to school in the Camp, but got a job later in town at Penny's in Queen Street, packing meat. It was very hard at first with our English but it got better every month.

It took a while for my father to get a job as the travelling was not so easy. Poor transport connections. So he got a car very soon after.

I travelled by train from Wacol to Central Station. They were very dusty inside.

Met some nice people in the Camp. The most outstanding was a German family with four boys my age. They were Karley (seventeen), Will (sixteen) and two younger ones. Their last name was Ring. I wonder what became of them. There was also a German girl, can't remember her name. She was very helpful as she spoke several languages, and very popular.

A lot of Dutch girls hated coming here, as they left boyfriends behind. My brother went to school in one of the suburbs, Corinda School. In August 1957 we went to live in Browns Plains. My parents bought twenty acres on Johnson Road. I have always loved the bush and still live in Greenbank on acreage.

Soon after I changed jobs and started working for the BCC, a grocery shop in Moorooka. I worked there until Woolworths took over in 1961-1962 and worked in town for several months.

In 1962 I got married to Guss Mullenberg. I loved living in Johnson Road. It was a brand new house, built by a Dutchman, but we had no electricity and had tank water. Just pump lamps and cooking on a wood stove under the water tank. We had a very good laundry with three concrete tubs. A nice kitchen, bathroom, two bedrooms and two big rooms at the front and a verandah.

I have always been in this district. I had a pig farm with Guss in Greenbank, three children, Leo, Carla and Richard. I am always glad I came here. They were good pioneering years.



Sonia collecting meals