

Family celebrates 50 years in Canada

The Bruins made news upon their arrival in Oakville in 1953

By Wilma Blokhuis
BEAVER FOCUS EDITOR

It's been 50 years since the Bruin family stepped onto an aircraft in Amsterdam on their new life in Canada.

"We flew in a converted war plane," said Trudi Wenner, a retired banker in Chatham.

"It held only 50 people, and we were the biggest family with nine of us. We were given a box of humbugs. Mom always treasured that box."

She was the oldest of seven children accompanying Martin and Nelly Bruin who left the Netherlands on June 11, 1953.

"Mom and I sat together, and we could see the ocean," Trudi continued. "We held hands and prayed that we would arrive safe and sound."

"We landed in Iceland to refuel, and that was the first time we ever tasted Jello." It came as dessert with the meal the passengers were given in Iceland.

"We were served mashed potatoes with chicken, and it was more meat than we had even seen. We were used to one piece of meat divided among all us, not one piece each."

"But, we always ate a lot of vegetables," said Anne Murison, of Napanee and retired from the bulk food business. "Our whole family has always been healthy. All of us rode bikes. We also do a lot of walking. Our parents loved to walk to the lake."

"Our parents taught us a love for the outdoors," continued Mia Cairns who taught at St. James School for 25 years and currently teaches in Burlington.

"Every year our parents took us camping at Long Point Provincial Park, and each year, the four of us (sisters) go there for a week."

"Just the four of us – no husbands!" added Fran Ford who has worked at Canada Trust in Oakville for 30 years.

Once landed in Montreal, the family boarded a train for Oakville.

The family's arrival made news in 1953.

'Oakville's population recently soared by nine,' stated an article published in the Oakville Record-Star in September of that year, 'when Mr. and Mrs. Martin Bruin and their seven children flew by plane across the Atlantic, and settled at 46 Hawthorn Rd., off Kerr Street.'

'Nine seems to be the Bruin family's number, for Mr. Bruin's father had nine

brothers and sisters, his mother had the same number of brothers and sisters, and so has he.

'But the man who brought his seven children from Noordscharwoude to Oakville "because there was no future for them in Holland" thinks that maybe he'll settle for nine, including his wife and himself.'

Martin Bruin followed his brother, Gerard, who crossed the Atlantic three years ago, to Oakville. If you want to discuss nines with him, you'll find him driving one of Gilbrae Dairy's milk trucks. He thinks there a greater future in Oakville milk than in buying and selling vegetables in Holland.'

In addition to delivering milk door to door for Gilbrae Dairy and later Oakville Dairy, he also worked as a part time cleaner for the Bank of Montreal and furniture store. Before retiring, he read meters for Oakville Hydro.

Turns out the Bruins didn't remain a family of nine. Their youngest son, Don, was born at Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in 1960. "He was the only one of us born in a hospital," said Trudi. "The rest of us were born at home."

He joined his four sisters and three brothers, Dick, Adrié and Martin, for the family reunion in Oakville on June 11.

Dick, who resides in Oakville and Wasaga Beach, has been an Oakville firefighter for at least 25 years; Adrié owns The Willow Tree gift shop in Waterdown; Martin, also of Waterdown, works for CN Rail, and Don of Mississauga is in the medical supply business.

The celebration took them to the Oakville VIA Rail station, dinner at a local restaurant, and a visit to their parents' grave site at St. Jude's Cemetery. Their father died in 1998 at age 80 and their mother followed last year at age 86.

"Dad brought all of us to Canada," said Trudi. "Although his father's business was thriving – he exported and imported vegetables throughout Europe – he felt Canada would provide better opportunities for his children."

"Both of our parents came from a business background," added Mia. "Mom's family were painters and decorators."

"My uncle Gerard was already here and it was his dream to bring his whole family to Canada" continued Fran, "but he and my father were the only two who

came."

It was a celebration their parents would have endorsed.

"Our parents taught us the importance of family," concluded Trudi. "They celebrated everything, every grandchild and anniversary. I wish they were here, but I know they are here in spirit."

The family, including spouses, children and grandchildren numbers 68.

The Bruin family on June 11, 1953, as they board the aircraft in Amsterdam bound for Canada, front from left, Fran, 4; Adrié, 6, Dick, 7; second row from left, Mia, 7; Anne, 9; Trudi, 10; and at back, Nelly and Martin Bruin with Martin Jr., 2. Below, the Bruin family today at the Oakville VIA Rail station, front from left, Don Bruin, Fran Ford, Trudi Wenner, second row from left, Adrié Bruin, Anne Murison, and third row from left, Martin Bruin, Dick Bruin, and Mia Cairns. Don Bruin was born in 1960 after the family settled in Oakville, and Mia and Dick are twins.

Top photo courtesy of the Bruin family
Bottom photo by Barrie Erskine
• Oakville Beaver



focus on women

How to Cope with Stress

You're frazzled. Burned-out. Wasted.

You know the feeling, you think you can't go on. Don't despair, there is hope. You can get yourself out of the doldrums with a few simple, healthy strategies.

1. Talk to a friend. The old saying, a problem shared is a problem halved, still holds true. Confide in a trusted friend. Unload your burdens and frustrations. Hearing yourself express your fear, anger or anxiety is often very helpful. And getting positive feedback from others can help you look at your problems from a different perspective.
2. Get up and move a little. A brisk walk, they say, has overwhelming medicinal powers. Dress for the weather and take yourself out into the fresh air. If you don't like to walk, try swimming a few laps at the community pool, dancing in the living room or taking the bike out for a ride. Physical activity is a powerful antidote to stress and helps improve emotional outlook.
3. If you are burned out from too much pressure, work or responsibilities, call time out. You might think the people around you will not be able to cope, but you are wrong. They would cope less if you continue as you are and further imperil your health. Try delegating tasks and caring less about the things that don't really matter. Focus on your need for rest, relaxation and self-care. If you are thinking you can't cope any longer, put on the brakes and start taking care of yourself.



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