

Warm and stable: Sandra Faase

I had never reflected much on my parents' decision to move to Australia until I prepared a presentation and eulogy for my father's funeral.

He had been a keen photographer and thankfully had digitally scanned his photos from the late 1950s onwards.

There were three choices. Canada: too cold according to my father, a carpenter who often worked outdoors. South Africa: language similar, but politically volatile. And Australia: farthest of them all, but warm and politically stable.

All my sister and I knew about Australia was from the Skippy TV series. We had high expectations of being choppered into a world of kangaroos that could communicate with humans and endless bushland.

There was a photo of us waving family goodbye at the airport. Then on the KLM DC8. Then a bus on the tarmac somewhere in the Middle East, where I recall flowing white robes and burning my bum on the vinyl seat, never having experienced such heat.

We landed in Australia, tired but excited. First to Bunnerong migrant hostel with its white naval buildings where we encountered, to our horror, an axle grease-like substance - Vegemite. (Later we got our own back with Dutch liquorice). We moved to a condemned semi in Bondi where we baked ourselves a senseless brown and sipped icy lemonade as we plodded happily home from the beach. My school insisted I attend scripture. My best friend was Jewish and next thing I'm encountering Hebrew not yet knowing basic English.

We were provided a government-sponsored unit in Eastlakes. There were official photos of our family to promote the scheme: my mother stylish in her floral mini dress, teased short hair and knee-high boots, enjoying the Formica kitchen and L-shaped lounge-dining room with her spotless children in home-sewn outfits.

Then the zenith of the migrant dream – a quarter-acre block in Merrylands. Photos abound of my father industriously modifying house and garden, of us kids splashing in our above-ground pool and enjoying backyard birthday parties.

My oma (grandmother) came to visit. There was a strike at Sydney airport and her flight was diverted to Melbourne. She phoned: "Otto, can you come and get me?" My father explained to drive to Melbourne was the same distance as The Hague to

Switzerland! To this day we relish reminding relatives their country is a third the size of Tassie.