

## **MORE MIGRATION STORIES - WOMEN**

### **Anonymous**

I followed my husband to Australia in 1937. With me went our 9 year old son. My husband left before he was born and had not seen his son yet. We traveled with ship Roma. I was very sick. There was not one Slovenian on the whole ship. The co-travelers, I have never seen before, paid for the doctor, for I had no money. My husband waited for me in Perth and we left for the bush, to live under tents. My son went to school 200 miles away and we could visit him for special holidays only. After 3 years we came to Victoria.

I missed most the mass in Slovenian language.

### **Mira B.**

We left in 1945, to trek over the mountains to Klagenfurt. Near Lienz we stayed at a farm, then we were sent to Forli in Italy. Many Slovenians were also in Ricione and Senegalia. We were given a chance to study at the University at Bologne. I met my husband there and we married in 1946. I had to stop the studies, because the education support was for one person in a family only. We were then sent by train via Schwarzwald, through the English and the French Military Zones. We made it in 1949 on a ship Fairsea to Australia, than to camp in Bonegilla.

Later in Gippsland I met many kind and friendly Australians and I could learn English quite fast. I was interpreting at courts when we moved to Melbourne. I love the Slovenian language, read books, keep Slovenian traditions and enjoy crafts.

### **Marcela B.**

We arrived as a family on a ship Toscana in 1955.

I found work as a seamstress. The owner showed me a place in the corner of his workshop, the completed dress, and two dresses, cut out, to complete.

I worked hard all day and all happy showed the boss at night both dresses completed. The owner said, O.K., but you have to complete 10 like this every day. I nearly fainted. It took me many days to catch on to other workers.

I earned 9 Shillings, for the rent we paid 5 Shillings.

I remember, how my daughter, a young girl, took the wrong tram and ended on the other side of town. She was telling people, where she lived, but no one could understand her. With a stone she wrote on a road the place name and they could direct her home.

**Magda P.**

Life was not easy for my parents as they decided to migrate to the unknown with only a couple of suitcases of belongings and two small children. What courage, spirit, dreams and hopes! In December 1956, at the age of nearly eight years, and my brother three years, we boarded a Scandinavian plane, which was to pick up athletes performing at the Olympic Games in Melbourne.

I remember the plane being huge with its giant propellers. I became ill on the plane. In Singapore a doctor came aboard to see me, and my parents used dictionaries to find the appropriate words in order to express themselves. At Albury I was taken by taxi to hospital, where my parents have to leave me, while they were taken to the barracks at Bonegilla. I became very proficient at sign language and it was here that I first time eat Weeties, toast, poached eggs and vegemite.

At the age of 8 years, I was in grade 1, in a State school in Melbourne.

I had salami for my lunch and the verbal remarks by other student were quite extraordinary. When wearing tights to school on a winter's day I was sent home by the teacher to change and told to wear socks. It was very upsetting and embarrassing. To be told by the teacher in the front of the class that you are dumb because you cannot spell words correctly was indeed humiliating.

Life's scars are left and they made me even more determined to succeed, to make a difference without being different.

**Anonymous**

In year 1957 we left for Austria and stayed at Salzburg. I was alone with my small child and we slept at night at Caritas, during the day we walked. When raining, we went to church. My child said to me: Mummy, we have no home. This (meaning church) is our only home." We knew no other Slovenians.

In Australia a Slovenian priest helped us from Bonegilla camp to Melbourne. At night we learned English.

I remember, how I wanted to buy breadcrumbs. I asked for 'dry bread'. The two ladies in the Milk bar brought all sort of spreads to the table, (they thought I wished to spread on dry bread) but could not understand, what I wanted. The ladies were patient and kind. I could never forget the English word for breadcrumbs.

**Anonymous**

As a 19 year old girl I left with 5 other girls from the village. We walked for 65-70km. For two days we had no food or water. We arrived safely: dirty, with thorn clothes, and very hungry. But we were not caught. The Italian police questioned us for reasons of escape.

We traveled to Australia with the ship Aurelia in 1957. The priest had given me 5 Liras.

In Melbourne, Pater Basil came to the Port asking us in Slovenian. Instead of the

camp, we were sent to the St Francis Church, an Office. We were left there like at the market. The wealthy ladies came to select us for the domestic work. I was selected by the family with 5 children. I stayed with the family for three months, and then went to work in hospital as a ward assistant.

I learned English from books.

I remember how I was buying at the shop. I asked for 1 litre of 'kis' (Slovenian word for vinegar). I repeated many times: "Please, 1 litre of kis". The man looked at me, I was looking at him. I want to make him believe I had money, so I put 2 Pounds on the table. He wanted to embrace me, to show me, what 'kis' (kiss) is. I was all embarrassed and ran out, leaving the money there and never returned to that Milk bar again.

### **Anonymous**

To my children, I talk of my childhood of poverty; of my school days, when I had no pencil or paper to take to class. I was given a brown bag to write on and a pencil so small, I could hardly hold it.

I was 19 when I left with my brother, then 17, on the road to the border. We traveled at night and had 1 piece of bread and some cheese between four of us. We crossed safely and came to Trieste. I became ill. The Italians have questioned us and fed us. In camp at Udine there was many Slovenians. I remember the bread roll, which we received with lunch every Sunday and that was for my special dinner. We were transferred to Averso-Caserta, near Napoli. We flew to Australia with Tiger Flying Line. Years later, when I received the Australian citizenship, nobody knew or heard of such airline.

In Melbourne I started work in a hotel. An Italian lady interpreted for me, so I could do my duty.

I learned the English language by reading the captions under the photographs. I stayed Slovenian at heart, with the love of Slovenian language, foods, songs and Slovenian friends.

***Compiled by Draga Gelt***