

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**Date of Arrival in Australia: **1970**

Carel Vogelsang

The Suez Canal was closed at the time and we travelled from Southampton via Italy and Capetown on the *Achille Lauro*, formerly the *Willem Ruys*. Via Bonegilla hostel we arrived at Brisbane's Wacol camp. By coincidence, I met a staff member there who, after hearing that I spoke several languages, suggested I see Mr Cassidy at the Bank of New South Wales (now the Westpac Bank). He visited migrants regularly at the camp and was looking for an interpreter who spoke French and Spanish. After much delay – it was Christmas holiday time – I was interviewed and flown to Sydney. There I had a test in five foreign languages at the Berlitz School and an interview with the head of "The Wales" migrant services. The next day – the day was 21 January 1971 – I was taken on by the bank in Brisbane as Migrant Advisory Officer, later to be promoted to Migrant Counsellor and Relieving Manager.

In those days, the government did not have any facilities for non-English speaking migrants such as the telephone interpreter service now. Migrants with language problems, or those needing their professional certificates to be translated into English, had to turn to the banks – Commonwealth Bank, ANZ Bank or Bank of NSW (Westpac), which employed linguists to specifically cater for their needs.

Looking back at the 13 years I worked for Westpac, I could have written another story as well as this one. Apart from the day-to-day services such as translations, assistance with employment, accommodation or medical help, I was occasionally confronted with personal problems, such as Spanish women (and sometimes men) suffering homesickness, or the husband or wife getting too much attention from the opposite sex. I was involved with such cases. However, most of the time it was interesting and rewarding work.

I also taught Swedish and Spanish – and occasionally Dutch – at the Institute of Modern Languages of the University of Queensland, which organised evening classes for adults.

Kristina had qualified as a Registered Nurse in 1971 and worked full time, first at the "Seven Oaks Spastics Centre" and later for the Blue Nurses.

From the early 1980s the government (rightly, I think) began to take over migrant services. Although the banks provided their assistance free of charge, the object was, naturally, to entice the migrant to put his or her savings into an account of the bank that assisted them. In the late 1970s large amounts were often deposited by Vietnamese and European migrants, the latter mainly Germans fearing aggression from the East. Around 1983, when I was 55, the banks wound up their migrant services and I opted for retirement.

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