



Annelies Zeissink

Annelies was a student-nurse in Zutphen, when, newly married, she and her husband decided to migrate to Australia. As assisted passengers, they had a sea-voyage of five weeks on the *Groote Beer*. When they reached Fremantle the immigration officials advised them to disembark there but Annelies and her husband convinced them, with great difficulty, that Brisbane was their desired destination because of further study plans.

“After spending a day in Sydney, bus transport was organised to take us to the wooden night-train for Brisbane; then by taxi to the migrant-centre in Wacol. The accommodation was quite basic with one small room and minimal furniture but we appreciated the opportunity of having an inexpensive start. Meals were served cafeteria-style and I remember the daily portions of pumpkin. Although then not particularly impressed with that unknown vegetable, it has become one of my favourites now.

Taking the train to the centre of Brisbane to look for work, I noticed the small square buildings in the backyards, which seemed quite strange at first. I thought they were cute little garden sheds until explained their real function of outside toilets (not water-closets either!). On one of my train trips, some men were telling each other jokes in Dutch, probably believing nobody could understand them. At my destination, I thanked them for the entertainment and they seemed quite embarrassed, as the contents of the jokes had been rather “naughty”. That warned us that speaking Dutch in public did not mean that others could not understand you.

Compared with Dutch prices, bananas were very cheap here, leading to some overindulgence, which in turn resulted in an ongoing dislike for that fruit. While staying at Wacol, we accepted the kind invitation from our Dutch greengrocer to watch TV at his home. The only program that evening was ... a boxing match!!! By 1962, television was already well established in The Netherlands, but obviously still some kind of novelty in Australia. Another



WACOL REMEMBERED

Country of Birth: **The Netherlands**

Date of Arrival in Australia: **1962**

comparison: articles in the shops seemed quite old-fashioned here and the choice in merchandise rather limited. As I recall, for example, the cheese was either “mild” or “tasty”; no other choices. We arrived in late November and there were thunderstorms with heavy rain every evening for the first week. Would this unfamiliar weather-pattern ever stop?

Amongst the people at the migrant centre, there was a middle-aged non-English-speaking Dutch couple from “Friesland”, mainly using the Frisian language. Before leaving The Netherlands and with incorrect paperwork as “evidence”, they were promised a non-existing job in Brisbane. With our basic knowledge of English, we assisted them to complete further forms to overcome the obvious problem. Their two young children learned to speak English surprisingly quickly and they could soon do the interpreting. It must have been difficult for many parents to be so totally dependent on their children’s language skills.

To get the jobs we were aiming for, official translation of our certificates was needed and the Netherlands Consulate in Brisbane provided information about an accredited translator. We declined the recommendations volunteered by the Immigration officials to work on a farm out west (my husband had a diploma from the Tropical Agricultural College in Deventer) and/or at the nearby psychiatric hospital because of my nursing background.

However, after approximately two weeks in Wacol, we both found employment of our own choice and moved subsequently to a rented apartment in Taringa (near the university).”

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