

DID WE DO THE RIGHT THING ?

Theo Sloots Jr

I remember walking through the snow one dark winter's afternoon in Amsterdam in 1956. My brother Fred and I were coming home from school, and we were looking forward to the warm fireplace and having a hot drink of chocolate. When we arrived home, my parents, Henny and Theo snr, had visitors, a man whom my father had worked with some time in the past and his wife. They were an interesting couple, who had gone to some land called Australia to live, and were back in the Netherlands for a holiday. They had lots of tales that were fascinating to two small boys of ten and seven years. From that moment, the topic of 'Australia' was discussed frequently in our family, and my parents' friends were regular visitors. At that time we lived in one of the post-war apartment blocks in Amsterdam West, in a second story flat, and were surrounded by friends in other apartments. Our favourite pastime was playing soccer in the street, as the nearest grass field was some considerable distance away. My father worked as a Manager of an automotive servicing department of one of the large garages in the city. However, for reasons incomprehensible to young boys, he was unhappy there and was quite obviously looking for other challenges. The idea of immigrating to Australia was attractive to him and enthusiastically encouraged by our new friends. My mother was supportive albeit somewhat ambivalent of the whole idea.

So, eventually the decision was made and the application for immigration was approved in 1957. Initially this made little impression on my brother and I but as the time for departure approached, the impact of what we were about to undertake became clear. I remember on my last day at school, the teacher put me in front of the class to say goodbye, his parting words were: "Children say goodbye to Theo, he is going to Australia because this country (The Netherlands) is not good enough anymore". Also, my mother finally came to the realisation that she was leaving her parents and brothers and sisters, maybe for good. She came from a large family whose members were always very close and the decision to leave became particularly difficult at the end. But leave we did, in October 1957 on the ship 'Sibajak'.

In 1957, travel to Australia by ship took four to six weeks, depending on which route was taken. We travelled via Southampton, Curacao, the Panama Canal, Tahiti and Wellington to Sydney taking six weeks, arriving in December. Fred and I saw it as a grand adventure and apart from a short bout of seasickness had a marvellous time. Good food served by waiters and lots of on-board activities and this, together with stops in fascinating and mysterious countries, was everything two young boys could ask for. Then, we had our first sight of the Australian coastline, high cliffs and the 'Heads' of Sydney Harbour, finally docking at the wharf in the shadows of the famous Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Twenty-four hours later, after a long tiring train journey, we arrived at the Migrant Reception Centre in Wacol. 'Het kamp' (*the camp*) as it became known, was the first of many culture shocks we were to experience. We were assigned to two rooms in a metal hut, which resembled a water tank cut in half, and shared the building with two other families. Imagine our horror, as we first entered the bedroom to make the beds and were confronted with hundreds of cockroaches scurrying away from under the mattress. In fact, cockroaches and other insects of large proportions became a prominent feature in those early days. Certainly, those were the difficult times. The food was foreign to our tastes (baked beans, vegemite), cramped living conditions in a strange environment, and temperatures that regularly soared to

the high 30's. We were homesick, and Christmas that year was very strange compared to previous years, most of us desperate for a cool place in the shade. However, adjustments were made, my father found a job as a mechanic, and we boys were off to Wacol camp school. Our teacher was from the Netherlands and this we felt gave us a distinct advantage. How wrong we were! The speaking of Dutch was at all times strictly forbidden and punished with 'the cane'. For us migrant children who could not speak a word of English this was a frightening and cruel approach. Be that as it may, the result was that most of us could speak reasonable English within three months or so, even though our first words were "you b....y b.....d".

We spent eight months in 'het kamp', after which Theo snr, in an attempt to provide better circumstances for the family, managed to secure a civilian job with the Australian Army in Wallangarra. Accommodation was found five kilometres away in a place called Lyra that was not shown on any maps. So off we set again, my parents on the motorbike, and my brother and I in the cabin of the semi-trailer that was transporting our belongings, including the large cast-iron heater we had brought with us from the Netherlands.

Our new home was a complete contrast to what we had in Amsterdam. The timber house was 'early' Australian with a verandah, located along a dirt road on a sheep property, with the nearest neighbour approximately three kilometres away. We had no electricity, no bathroom, only tank water, an outhouse and of course - no telephone. However it was cheap, only £1 per week, including a cow for milking. My mother quickly managed to make it 'gezellig' (*homely*), and my father's ingenuity provided a generator for electricity (12V) and a small petrol engine coupled to the Hoover for washing. It was, however, difficult to adjust to rising early every morning at 5 o'clock to milk the cow, a task that generally fell to my father.

We went to school, about four kilometres away on the trusty Dutch bikes we had brought with us. This was a one-teacher school with 23 other children, mainly from farms, with all classes held in the one room. Fred went into grade four and I should have gone to grade seven but alas, there was no grade seven so I was put into grade eight. As a result, to this day I have not completed grade seven. Life at school was interesting. We outperformed everyone in mathematics but English and Social Studies results were very poor. Also, the other children soon let it be known that only sissies played soccer and that real Australian boys played cricket and rugby. However, we adjusted and made friends, and soon applied ourselves as best as we could to the schoolwork.

After a year or so, there was great excitement, my uncle and aunt also had decided to emigrate and were going to join us. This was very important for all of us, because the one significant thing missing from our lives had been an extended family.

Life at Lyra settled into a routine and, on reflection, it was an important period in our lives. It provided the basis of our 'Australianisation', particularly for my brother and myself. We grew to love the open spaces, the horse riding, and developed a real appreciation of the Australian landscape. Also, my mother and aunt were integrated into the social activities of the community. On one such occasion, a card game, they were asked to 'bring a plate'. After considerable deliberation they decided that if the hostess was short of crockery, maybe they should bring some extra cups and saucers also. Which they did.

Of course, social events were rare and entertainment does not have a high priority in farming communities. There was plenty of excitement in our household however, when my father discovered a large brown snake on the seat of the motorbike, just before he hopped on.

And I still remember the panic on my mother's face when a one metre long goanna dropped from the tree brushing her shoulder. Then, during one of the typical tropical thunderstorms, a lightning flash pulverised one of the large gum trees next to the house, just as the whole family was standing on the verandah admiring the storm. It was also the time when unexpectedly, for me at least, our brother Michael was born. He was born in Stanthorpe approximately 14 kilometres from where we lived, after a dash to the hospital by my mother on the back of my father's motorbike.

Living in Lyra brought us together, and taught us about Australia and the Australian way of life. Regrettably, employment in the region was limited, and this, together with the lack of adequate schooling, provided the impetus for yet another move of the family (including our uncle and aunt), this time to Toowoomba.

Our stay in Toowoomba can be seen as a period of consolidation. The family fulfilled the Australian dream, bought land and built a house, and whilst Fred and I finished our schooling to senior level (year 12), Michael started primary school. Eventually, all three of us heeded the advice and encouragement of our parents and completed tertiary education. It was during this time that my parents realised an ambition they had held for many years, namely to own their own business, and leased two service stations. Like so many small business operators, they worked hard for long hours, but found reward in determining their own fate.

As happens in all families, children grow up and go their own ways. Fred and I married, both to daughters of English migrants, and left Toowoomba. Fred moved to Townsville and I to Brisbane. Michael, 14 years my junior, remained in Toowoomba, reaping the benefits of being the only sibling still at the parental home. Eventually, after many years of hard work my father retired, and my parents made their final move to the place where the Australian adventure had started, Brisbane.

Back in Brisbane, contacts with many of the friends from 'het kamp' were re-established and my father indulged in some of his life's passions, namely boxer dogs, and soccer (he was a staunch Hollandia/Lions follower). Michael married and left home and my mother and father settled into a quiet life together, marked with the occasional holiday away, and frequent visits to my uncle and aunt who retired to Hervey Bay.

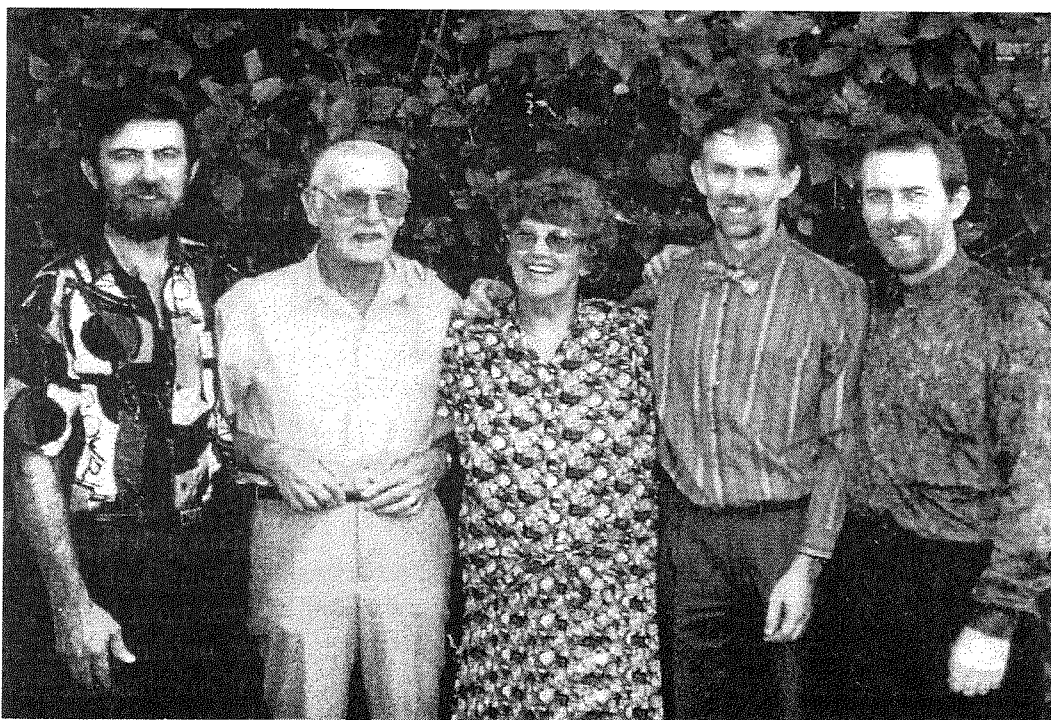
In 1995 Henny and Theo Sr were married for 50 years, an occasion for much celebration, and one that was the fulfilment of their years together and a triumph of their Dutch spirit over the adversity and hardships they had confronted over the years.

I often reflect on the life of our family and wonder what motivated my parents to leave their families and all that was dear to them, moving to a country with so many unknowns. I know that in the early years, times were very difficult and the option of going back (to The Netherlands) was often discussed but somehow never eventuated. As an adult I now realise that leaving one's family takes courage, something that is beyond many of us, yet my parents, and many others like them, did exactly that. During the years, conversations with my father made it abundantly clear that he was never sorry that he left The Netherlands and he grew to love Australia. As well, he recognised the value of a good education and felt that a new country like Australia provided the best opportunities for his sons. In this, he was certainly proven correct but the strong ties with the Netherlands remained, especially for my mother.

Frequent trips back to the 'old country' to see the family, and the use of many things Dutch in everyday living, including the speaking of Dutch, has retained a strong identity with the culture of their birth. Yet, by their own admission they would prefer to live in Australia, and could never go back. As for us, the younger generation, we of course consider Australia to be our home.

Finally then, ours is a story that is not so much different from that of thousands of other (Dutch) migrants. The reasons for leaving one's country are many and the hardships faced whilst attempting to establish a new life are countless. Somehow we survived and graduated from being a 'new Australian' to becoming a fully integrated and accepted member of the Australian society. However, the sense of belonging to the Dutch way of life remains strong in our parents, particularly as they grow older and understandably they ask the question: "Did we do the right thing?"

The answer to this is clear. Look at the achievements and lives of your children in Australia. We have grown to love this country and are free to express our opinions in a truly multicultural society. We strongly support Australia in everything it does – except, perhaps, if Australia meets The Netherlands in the next World Cup Final.



*1995 - The Sloots family at the 50th wedding anniversary of the author's parents,
from l to r Fred Sloots, Theo Sloots Sr, Henny Sloots, Theo Sloots Jr and Michael Sloots.*

Postscript: Sadly, Theo Sloots Sr passed away in September 1998. He was happy with his life in Australia and was immensely proud of the achievements of his sons. Henny now faces the final challenge, living alone, occasionally travelling to the Netherlands to visit her brothers and sisters, but always returning to Australia, her family, and her circle of friends who are predominantly Dutch.

September 2000

OUR PAST

Nel Bruyniks

Coming back from a Girl Guide meeting I thought: "Who am I that they chose me?" I had been a member of the Local Girl Guide Association (LA) for about six years, first as a mother, then as treasurer and now... the president. My thoughts went back a couple of years to the time we lived in a western suburb of Brisbane and how, one morning when everyone in our family had left for work and school, I was all-alone at home. 'Everyone' meant, a lovely hard working husband and four children. I felt very homesick at that time! Feeling sorry for myself, I sank into a chair and I sobbed! Why did everyone have a purpose in life and was I stuck with all the domestic duties? I wished I could swim home! Honestly, I hadn't felt like that before as I was always busy with all the things wives and mothers did in the sixties. Fathers worked outside the house and mothers did what ever had to be done at home.

However, my pity-party did not last long. As I dried my tears, I tried to understand just what had happened and what I could do about it. Why did I feel this way?... because I was not myself. I used to be involved and busy with things that made me useful and happy. Now I was stuck... all alone and looking after everyone else. We were a happy family who had adapted to a new life and its many ups-and-downs. I felt that it was now my turn to go *up*.

If we had not migrated what would I be doing now? Oh, I sure had an answer for that! I would probably be working with young people somewhere but where could I do this here? In my mind I went back to Holland when, attending a training meeting for Girl Guide leaders and I could hear the leader say loud and clear: "Good morning ladies, the most important thing I want you all to remember is: *guiding is a world-wide movement.*" If that was true - and I knew it was - there would be Girl Guides in this suburb! I searched the telephone book and did not expect that this would lead to so many happy years in the future! The people in Girl Guides made me feel welcome and they had similar types of families and similar goals.

We integrated quickly and the opinion of other Dutch people around us was "Oh, Nell and Bill? They are so Australian!" On the other hand, coming into Australian circles... we were so 'Dutch'! I had a dilemma. I was not Australian and I was not Dutch! For a while, I was completely lost but then I made the decision: "Since we chose to come here, we might as well do our best to belong." That was a good choice because, after some more years, I became a district commissioner with a 'movement' of over 80 Brownies and Guides and a happy LA!

Why did we come to Australia? Perhaps we did for the following reasons:

1. We were certainly affected by the advertising of 'sun and possibilities,' with which the Australian Government used to coax us into a new future.
2. My husband had a good job but was often away the entire week and left me to do everything around the house.
3. We had already learnt English because we wanted to listen to the British radio. We learned by correspondence and made good progress. However, the course was not supported by audio-tapes, so we could not hear the teacher or ourselves.
4. Our eldest child was an asthmatic and the Queensland climate could possibly assist.
5. Bill worked in producing electric signals systems for closing automatic railway-gates and we were told that there would be enough work for him in Australia.

We decided to leave our homeland for the great unknown and we arrived in Australia on the 15th March 1958, and the next day we arrived in Brisbane. We knew we would be accommodated in a camp and were quite happy with those arrangements. We were good campers and therefore would fit in easily. Bill was keen to start work and went to see a railway foreman who informed him that there were plans to install automated boom-gates and signalling systems, but it would be at least seven years before those plans could be implemented. So, he started work with pick and shovel and took part in the building of a new railway station. He is still proud of it each time we pass.

Next, with the help of a friend, he got work on a training farm. We moved to the farm and our main job was to milk 60 cows. We retrieved all our belongings, which had been in storage for a year. What joy for the children to find their loved toys and bikes and even their red scooter. We had almost forgotten these things. After unpacking, we made a large table from the crate's timber. We were always optimistic, even when Bill called the children early one morning with the message, "Father Christmas has been" and when everyone was present, he took a big, dead rat out of his shoe. What fun we had!

Unfortunately, we had to leave the farm after the lambing season as the farmer could now manage by himself. We had no job and friends helped us to move. We had just enough money left to pay for the rent of a small house, which we soon made our home. The children went to a small school nearby and soon made friends again. We feel very privileged as, wherever we went, we always found friendly people who helped us in many ways. After a year, the owner of the house we lived in, wanted to sell it and asked us to move. We had learned from experience that the house owner could not evict us unless we had another place to go to. We continued to pay our rent and refused to leave until other accommodation was arranged.

In 1960, we settled in a suburb near Brisbane where we would live for 32 years. Our family was extended with two more daughters and we fought hard to keep our family a happy one. We lost our only boy in a car accident and went through a very difficult time. Much later, we thought, that the hard times in all those years had strengthened us. In the past, many children left school after finishing grade-8 but as we wanted to ensure a good future for our children, we felt that we wanted to make sacrifices to be able to afford them higher education. Once we made that decision, we followed it through. The budget was tight, we lived a healthy life and achieved our goals. Our girls finished High School and went on to tertiary education.

Two of our girls were now married, I worked as a teacher-aid at a special school and this enabled us in 1978, twenty years after arriving in Australia, to fulfil the impossible dream. My husband, our two teenage Aussies and I went to Holland on an overseas holiday. Our girls especially had a great time, as they had never experienced aunts or uncles! They enjoyed museums and art galleries but were a somewhat puzzled by all the water around the place.

All my daughters are married and enjoy the life, which we thought was meant to be *our* future. Of course, it really is! Our 13 grandchildren are all doing well and that pleases us more than anything else. My daughters have asked us repeatedly: "how on earth did you manage to achieve everything you did." That was a bonus! Their offspring have finished their education and we are very pleased about that. We have regular family days where all the children have aunts, uncles and many cousins! We are now happy Dutch born Aussies.

August 2000

A LIFE BEYOND OUR EXPECTATIONS

Han Spykerboer

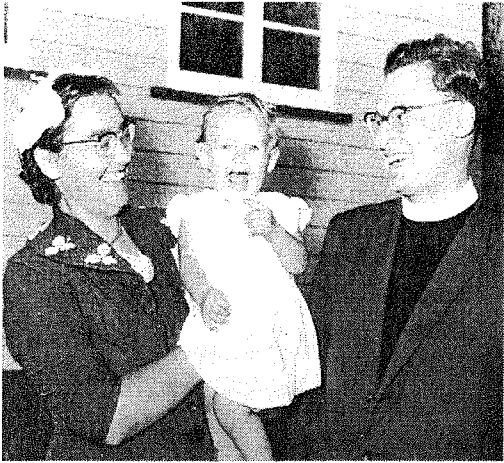
Human existence is unpredictable and full of surprises. That at least has been my experience and that of my wife Hanna and I assume of others too. Many new settlers in Australia would never have dreamed that they would find themselves in their present situation down under. Who could have imagined on the day of our birth that we would end up closer to the Antarctic than to the North Pole? I was born at Gaast just behind the 'Zuiderzee' dyke in 1928 and nobody could have guessed that one day I would live in a country where black and white Frisian cows feed on grass in a dry land rather than on green pastures. As a young schoolboy I might have been rebuked by my teachers for speaking Frisian in the Dutch lessons. Many years later, speaking Dutch would be regarded by some Australians as quite inappropriate.

Life is full of contrasts. Our migration has made me more aware of that. Until I was 25 years old, I had no plans to leave the country of my birth. My maths teacher had wanted me to study mathematics and I had almost followed his advice. However, the critical shortage of ministers in the late forties caused me to follow in the footsteps of my father, my two grandfathers, two great-grandfathers, etc, etc. This could have led to a very traditional minister's life: 'met een lief Marietje in een mooi pastorietje' (*with a dear little Mary in a nice little manse*). However, predictions and expectations are not decisive. The reality has been very different.

When we became engaged, Hanna outgoing, I introvert, some of our friends were surprised. However, there were more serious problems to contend with. We planned a student marriage, living on my government post-graduate scholarship and on Hanna's salary as a fulltime employed university post-graduate. It was said - this was in 1955! - that a student marriage was inappropriate. Another problem arose when some close relatives suggested that we should change our plans for the future and that I should choose a career with better financial prospects. These personal experiences at the time of our marriage were by itself not the reason for our emigration but they caused us to look further beyond our horizon than we otherwise might have done.

We knew what we were doing. Right from the beginning, we had talked about living and working in an immigration country to minister to new settlers. In the years preceding our emigration I had been keen to accept preaching engagements in the Noord-Oost Polder (*land reclaimed from the former Zuiderzee*), an area with very interesting social features, typical for new settlers. We felt increasingly challenged by the call of the church to young ministers' couples to identify with migrating members of the church. The rather poor response to this call was a very important consideration in our decision. Another factor was my original decision to go into the ministry to meet the challenge occasioned by a shortage of ministers. Some of our friends disapproved of our emigration plans: "it is a shame and a betrayal of your upbringing and university studies," but that did not deter us. Thus, we migrated to Australia in April 1958. I was fortunate to be the only one of seven migrating young ministers to whom the in-laws did not say: "if you loved my daughter, you would not go." In our case, Hanna's parents organised a festive family farewell dinner on the eve of our departure.

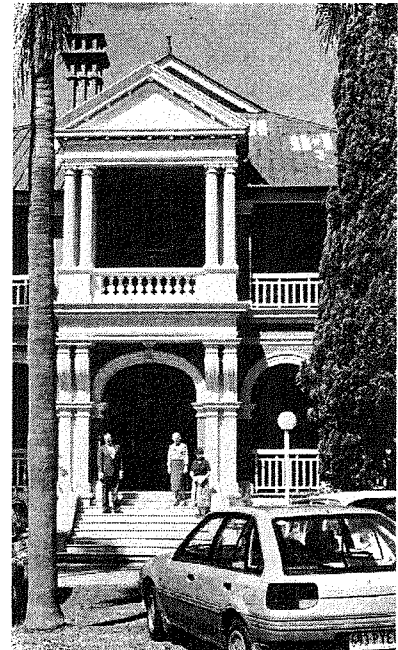
Our life in our new country has far exceeded our expectations.



1960 - Hanna, eldest daughter Marica (1 year old) and Han

After two months as chaplain at Wacol Migrant Centre, I became the minister of the Presbyterian parish of Norman Park, Brisbane. My training in English during the war years had been rather poor. Strangely enough, I have found my main employment in speaking and writing English, which did not come easily! As a young minister, I had a special advantage: I had to visit people in their homes and I talked with them about day to day living. Thus, I had special chances to familiarise myself with the Australian way of life. The people in my first parish were most helpful and considerate. Without their assistance and care, I would not have been able to succeed.

After ministering to two parishes, Norman Park and Dalby, the Presbyterian Church persuaded me to teach in its theological college in the field of Old Testament. Thus, the church gave me a unique chance in 1966 to take on one of the key functions in the church. In the process, it changed me from a pastor into a teacher. Later I became involved in national committees and served for six years in the chair of the important and often controversial Uniting Church Commission on Social Responsibility and Justice. After my retirement I served for two years as president of 'Queensland Churches Together', the state ecumenical council. I humbly recognise my great debt to the Australian church for the privilege of ministering in such significant areas. It says a great deal about Australian fairness, generosity and hospitality. I regard it as a sign of great openness towards migrants. I feel that I was accepted for what I was, in some ways very different with my Dutch background, my bluntness and direct approaches, and yet valuable and acceptable because of that. I was different but often that seemed to be a plus. At the same time I was regarded as equal.



'Trinity Theological College' at Milton.

Hanna's fortunes were just as diverse. She had graduated in law in Holland but took up a new university study because her degree was of little value in her new country. She worked hard with very good results. In 1970 she graduated as a high school teacher (B.A., Dip.Ed.) and taught for over 15 years at three high schools. From 1987, she was a tutor for seven years in German at the Queensland Conservatorium of Music. In addition, she taught Dutch for many years at the University of Queensland Institute of Modern Languages.

We both feel that Australia has been very good to us. This applies to our family too. Our three daughters have all had great opportunities to build a good future for themselves, even though they have followed their parents in their migration moves: one lives now in England and another one in New Zealand. They attended a school in the Netherlands in 1976, which has helped them to speak Dutch as well as German and French. They are proud of their Dutch roots but their mother tongue and fatherland are Australian. They have given us five

grandsons, a beautiful cluster, between six and three years old. We often stand in awe of the unexpected blessings in life.

When we sailed from Amsterdam on the MS 'Johan van Oldenbarnevelt' in 1958, we thought that we might never see The Netherlands again. In stead, we have been back more than a dozen times, the first time after nine years. Air fares for a return ticket Brisbane-Amsterdam, which were in 1958 more than my whole year's salary, have become much cheaper in comparison. The church and college supported my participation in conferences overseas. We had sabbatical leave three times, one year in The Netherlands in 1976 when I obtained my doctor's degree. Once I was invited to accept an attractive teaching position in Brussels. We thought hard about it but our family situation with three teenagers made it impossible. When we had turned the offer down it took us six months to get over it. After that, we no longer regretted our decision and now are thankful that we stayed. The move of our children overseas has been a great incentive to travel in recent years. Our migration and our travel have given us an international orientation. We continue to speak with a Dutch accent but feel now more at home in Australia. In all honesty, we have to say we feel comfortably at home anywhere and we feel nowhere really at home.

Finally, we have been able to do what we felt called to do when we came to Australia. While the church changed my life as a pastor into that of an academic, the church also appointed me as minister of the Dutch Congregation in Brisbane in 1968. In that capacity, I did pastoral work in addition to my full-time teaching for more than thirty years. The combination of practical and academic work proved to be an extra advantage in both areas. It has been a special privilege for us to return to my first love and to do parish work in a very special community with very wonderful people.



Nowhere have we as a married couple worked together so much as in this area. At times it has been difficult for the Dutch congregation to remain up to date because migrants - we discovered - cling to the past when they want to honour their roots. We had to move with later developments in The Netherlands, using new Dutch Bible translations and singing from a more recent ecumenical hymnbook. We don't want to become a curiosity to new arrivals and the occasional visitors!

1998 - Jubilee of 40 years ordained ministry of Rev Spykerboer Hanna and Han celebrate with the people of the Dutch congregation in Brisbane.

It has given us great satisfaction to do the work in the Dutch community for which we left The Netherlands, though this has been only the smaller part of our total involvement in Australia. It has also been very rewarding to meet the many other challenges that ministry in our adopted country has presented to us.

We have lived a very happy life. It has been a life beyond our expectations.

December 2000

C'MON SON ...WE'RE RUNNING LATE FOR THE MEDICAL ...

Rolf Bierman

A long corridor, no, not this room, please follow me folks. Around the corner, then the man in white coaxed us into a surgery pungent with the clinical smell of a hospital.

“What are we doing here Mum?” I asked in awe, confusion and fright. “Medical, son” she replied impatiently. “But we are not sick...why are we all here?” Mum sighed. Dad bowed down to me placing his hand gently on my shoulder. “Rolf, we need to pass a medical check so that Immigration may allow us to go to Australia.”... “Australia?” I gasped. As an eight-year-old, Australia in my world might as well have been somewhere near Atlantis in Dimbo. The feeling that day of surprise, trepidation, shock and a tinge of excitement of the complete unknown sticks in my gut as if it were yesterday.

The Australian Embassy in The Hague must have passed us all as, shortly after, Mum and Dad started packing. My teenage sister Nina had a boyfriend. It was soon to be a heartthrob farewell. My older sister Annemarie was doing well at school and was ready to continue her learning in a new frontier. Dad was a Taxation Executive Officer with the Groningen branch of ‘Klijnveld’. He had a safe and sound job with a reasonable income. Mum was and always remained an excellent home manager.

Me? I was a curly haired blond boy, Dutch through and through and still am. School was where my friends were, as well as in the street and on the balconies in the back. I had been happy in our humble ground floor apartment where we had a small back yard and a tiny shed.



1956 - Rolf and his sister Annemarie, are playing marbles on the streets of Groningen, the Netherlands.

Then, suddenly: telephone calls. Visitors. Oma. Suitcases. A party. A truck took the furniture. Someone took us to the airport. Goodbye. Tears. Hugs. KLM awaited us. So did Australia. Three days later, on the 30th September 1958, Sydney Harbour Bridge appeared on the horizon. The Brisbane Limited Express train was our overnight accommodation. South Brisbane Station platform was crowded with welcomers, among them Mum's brother Jacques Kreuning, his wife, Els and only daughter Yvonne. Yvonne gave each of us a long thin packet of columbine toffees. Uncle Jacques had served in the Navy during World War II and visited Brisbane with fellow troops at the end of the war. He had marched through the city streets. He was so impressed with what he saw that he and his family migrated in 1952.

They took us to their home, an old Queenslander in Eagle Junction where chooks in the back yard scattered as we clambered out of the car with our goods and chattels. The stumps stumped us, the high ceilings dwarfed us, the stained coloured windows cast a hew of shadows on our sweating bodies, the timber creaking floors replied to our footsteps and the wide verandahs beckoned us in search for that cool breeze. After a few days, we moved into the Wacol Migration Centre. Isolation, homesickness and unemployment set in. Dad's English was school English. His chance of an office job was now a far cry from what he had in Holland. But he was a fighter, a quality that, as a child and as an adult, I always deeply cherished in Dad - his sense of responsibility, determination, willpower, braveness and sheer guts. Not once did he give up. He was always on the go. As a child, I could not possibly have come anywhere near understanding what he must have gone through.

Yes, both Mum and Dad suffered from homesickness big time. Nina pined and moaned for Barold, her boyfriend in Holland. A tiny temporary building on stilts at Wacol served as our school. I was unsettled within myself.



1958 - Lining up for school at the Wacol Migrant centre

On one occasion the teacher tore strips off me over something but, what ever she said, English was still foreign to me. Dad wanted me to play soccer at the Camp but I disliked it so much, that in a match between the Dutch and Italian under nines, I ran after the ball, then off the field and kept running. I remember those terrible bushfires all around us (Blunder Road was on fire), the awful food, the pounding heat, flies, and that beat up Austin-55, our first car, which never really worked.

Dad tried everything. In desperation, his career during the first two years in Australia spun far and wide. He sold flour for Simpson's Flour Mill, did time as a brickie's labourer at the Kratzmann's Flats at Hill End, worked as a wardsman at Princess Alexandra Hospital. He did shifts as a night watchman. He never stopped! One year later we moved into a small rented house in Guthrie Street, Paddington. Six Guineas a week was a lot of money for a sole breadwinner. This would have been a third of what Dad was earning then. A family friend knew someone, who knew someone at G James Glass, Fortitude Valley, at that stage still a humble corrugated structure at Bridge Street, which served as the only site and headquarters.

Dad got the job as administrator and later as accountant there. That saved the day, as we were a whisker from returning to Holland. Dad worked there until 1978 when he retired at 65 but not before the great Australian dream had struck. Mum and Dad bought a block of land at Everton Park in 1960 and four years later built a house. This remains our family home.

In 1961 Annemarie died of a brain tumour. The Bierman family will always be indebted to the Reverend van de Meenen, the De Vos family and others for getting us through that crisis. For, had it not been for them, it would have been a speedy return to Holland this time - So we stayed on.

Dad's inner peace derived from sketching, painting, sculpturing and piano. He had been the Office sketch artist in Holland and would spend hours on his own under the house pottering around and developing his work. After a series of minor strokes, he died of a heart attack at Prince Charles Hospital in 1990.



1960, Annemarie, the year before she died.

Nina married Jean Jacques and her children, Trent and Inga have flown the nest already. Mum had a stroke and resided in a Nursing Home in Brisbane for some years, until she died in March 2001.

You know, I asked Mum sometimes why we had come to Australia? "Well son, we chased the sun. The prospect of World War III scared us away and your Dad wanted to try something else," she would say. Whatever that something else was, I shall never be sure whether he was ever happy here. At best, Mum and Dad resigned themselves to their new lives in Australia. They settled reluctantly and made a life here. They vowed never to return to Holland after visits there in 1979 and 1985. "Too much has changed," they would say.

Me, you ask? I must say that there are moments that I regret not having grown up in Holland. Or maybe I am carrying some amount of unresolved curiosity as to whether I would have become fulfilled in an environment which was truly my own. I might have reached my potential there. Who knows?

Currently my wife Lucia and boys, Wesley and Mitchel are living in Brazil for six months and will return next year. If they were to ask me to live there (who knows?), I guess I would really have to do a great deal of soul searching. I know what Dad went through. I have reached his age now and the boys are the age I was at the time we came through to Australia. Life seems like a full cycle. I asked myself "do I really want to go through all this again?" I have been led once. I want the family to be together and we will be, wherever.

But... "C'mon dad, you're running late for.... Come to Brazil..."

November 2000 (updated in March 2001)

THE ROAD AHEAD - A MIGRANT'S TALE

Toos and Harry Vullers

In the beginning of August 1958, I, Toos, had a telephone call from my girlfriend that she and her husband were going to Australia. We had known each other since kindergarten. They had kept quiet about their travels until they had been accepted. My boyfriend Harry and I tried to talk them out of it, but instead they talked us into it! The next morning we were at the emigration office.

We were young and had nothing to lose. We were both from big families; Harry was one of 11 and I one of seven children. We decided we would try migration for two years, work and save hard and then go back. Two weeks later we went for the health check-up in The Hague. There were no problems except that my friend was pregnant and we would have had to leave before the end of September or wait until their baby was born. The end of September was too soon, so they decided to wait. Harry and I got married in October and started to learn English. In January, we went ahead to Australia and our friends followed in May 1959.

Before we could depart, many things had to be done. People were allowed into Australia only with a 'clean sheet', the tax department had to check that all taxes had been paid and the police checked that emigrants had no criminal record. We heard about an allowance through the Government Council of Migrant Assistance. There was some reluctance to pay, but after promising not to tell anyone, we received 400 guilders! We were allowed to take a crate of 2 cubic meters and we filled it with a bed, a mattress and bedding, towels, a dinner set, a tea set, cutlery. We also took lots of tools for Harry, including a special saw to cut trees and a steel mould to make our own bricks, as we planned to build our own house, possibly in the bush.



On the 8th December, we boarded 'De Waterman' - our fare was 100 guilders, which we had to refund if we left within two years. We had decided to go to Brisbane, which meant that we had no more winter for at least two years. The trip was very enjoyable. Harry shared a cabin with seven men and I had one on the other side of the ship with six ladies. We got along very well and are still in contact with some of them. After Port Said and the Suez Canal, we passed Aden and then steamed for Fremantle. We arrived there on the 7th January 1959, stepping on Australian soil for the first time. They wanted us to stay at Perth but we said, "No, Brisbane is our goal". This story was repeated in Melbourne and Sydney. We were then told there was no work in Brisbane and if we wanted to go there we had to sign that we went at our own responsibility. We signed and received £25 landing-money. There were 32 people in our Brisbane group, including 18 children.

We left the ship with a cut lunch but the quarantine officers took it, as we were not allowed to bring food into the country. On the 9th January we boarded the train at 7.45 pm. I will never forget that trip! We were in the carriage behind the locomotive and at each crossing the whistle was blown - this went on for 17 hours. We stopped for breakfast on the platform in what appeared to be the middle of nowhere - Inverell. Tables were set with a plate and a glass of milk. We drank the milk straightaway, not understanding that it was to be poured over our cornflakes, which we ate dry. We arrived at South Brisbane at 1 pm on 10th January 1959.

To welcome us there was the Dutch priest from the Wacol camp, Father Tiding, a very nice man. Then it was into a bus. Until Rocklea it wasn't so bad but after the underpass there, the scenery changed to bush. We finally arrived in 'the camp', where we would be living for the next year. A meal was served at the kitchen and then we were shown our room. It was small, but clean, just painted, and it had a wardrobe, a chest of drawers and two single beds. If we put the beds together, we couldn't open the door unless we put the beds on top of each other. As we sat there, somewhat perplexed, there was a knock on the door. A Limburg family invited us for coffee, which was music to our ears, and there and then we were introduced to all the rights and wrongs of the camp with a lot of gossip on the side.

The next day, my husband Harry, a carpenter/builder by trade, had to present himself at the employment office and was given a job straightaway. It was only for a fortnight - to finish off the Dutch immigration office's interior renovation, which was behind schedule. On Monday morning, we had our first disappointment. Harry's train would leave at 7 am, breakfast was served at 6 am and a packed lunch would be provided - but you had to have a meal-card - and the camp office would open at 10 am. The Dutch woman behind the counter, who knew we had arrived on Saturday when the office was closed, refused Harry breakfast and lunch. The thought that Harry had to go off into a strange town without anything to eat made me burst into tears. If there had been a way to go home I would have gone there and then! Lucky enough our neighbours, a Dutch Indonesian family, took pity on us and brought us plenty of bread for breakfast and lunch. I am still thankful for that kind gesture.

Harry did well in the job and his English improved. When the job finished after two weeks, Harry took me to town to show me where he worked and to ask for another job at the employment office. The answer was: "you came at your own responsibility so it is your problem" and that was that! The same week Harry found another job with a Dutch builder, Tony van Melis. One day someone told us that our crate, which was stored somewhere on the Brisbane wharf, was found opened. We nearly died of shock - everything we owned was in that crate. Off to the wharfs I went but don't ask me how I got there! By train, tram and I walked but I made it and after explaining by talking and gestures, they brought me into the shed to inspect the crate, which was in perfect order and had not been opened at all. I was asked where it had to be delivered and the only thing I could say was "just look ...". The people at the wharf must have felt sorry for me for they took me back all the way to Brunswick station by car.

I put my name down for kitchen work at the camp and also applied for maternity nurse at the now Royal Brisbane Hospital. As I had been nursing in Holland, I was offered the nursing job for £6 a week. From that I would have to pay the camp £3 and then had to pay for train-fares and the food in the hospital - which meant that there would be nothing left. I therefore declined the offer and waited for the kitchen job in the Wacol camp, which I got soon afterwards, working 12-hour per day from 7 am until 7 pm for £12 per week. There were many nationalities working there: Italian, German, Danish, Greek, Finnish, Yugoslav, Hungarian, Romanian, Polish, Norwegian and Dutch. It did my English 'a lot of good' as I learned all sorts of accents. The women were only allowed to work there for six months to give everybody a chance. After two months I was asked to become a cook for 850 people, which was a hard job. Heavy containers had to be lifted and I did that for three months, from 5 am until 7 pm, with some time off in between, then earning £16 per week. That was good money! After three months, I felt that I had to leave, as my back was at breaking point but they gave me two months in the staff kitchen, just to keep it clean and hand out food. Then my time was up ...

Harry in the mean time worked on a job, with lots of overtime, for another builder who was building a new meat factory at Dinmore. Sometimes he started at 4 am and used to catch a lift from the Wacol gate. After a few weeks, he bought a car for £150, an old Morris - Z - utility. It was slow, especially going up-hill but who cared - he had transport. On weekends when I had to work, Harry worked for people living in the camp who were building their own house outside the camp. He put in the flooring and the windows.



1959 - Toos and Morris - utility on first trip up to Toowoomba.

After about six months in the camp, we heard that there were army barracks for sale in Victoria Park, close to the hospital. Those barracks, all timber, were built in 1942 by the US army. Harry and someone else in the camp, named Jonker, together bought one barrack intending to each build their first house from that timber. They demolished them in the weekends. Many people came and wanted to buy the materials. They made a quick trip to a hardware and timber store to scan the prices and sold their lot with a profit. They kept on buying and selling till almost all barracks were gone. By that time Harry left his boss and formed a partnership with Jonker and 'Jonker & Vullers Demolition' started, while we were still in the camp. When a big demolition job in New Farm came along, without facilities to sell materials on site and thus storage-space required, it was time to leave the camp. On the 10th January 1960, we left, exactly a year after we arrived there.

We rented a small house in Oxley: three rooms, bathroom and laundry but without hot water. For cooking there was a wood stove. The rent was £3 per week. The demolition yard started there, run by me, the lady of the house! It was not easy in the beginning - especially having to deal with 'yards' and 'square feet'. Harry would put ads in the paper and people would ring and ask for certain things. I always said, "yes" but I usually didn't have a clue what they were talking about. I still get goose pimples when I think of it! We had a very nice landlady who lived opposite and I learnt a lot of English and business sense from her. We stayed in Oxley for about 14 months and while there, bought land in Darra. With help from another carpenter, Harry built a house on that land and as soon as the roof was on and the



1963 - Harry Vullers demolishing 'Chardons Hotel' at Annerley.

kitchen, bathroom and one bedroom at lock-up stage, we moved in. Our first son was then four months old. It took us two years to complete the house. In the mean time the partnership with Jonker broke up and Harry was on his own. The house was finished in 1963 by which time we had two more children. We sold out then and bought a big old place in Woolloongabba, where we started a new demolition yard. We were so busy that we didn't have time to think that the two years we were going to stay had long passed.

Harry liked it there from day one and in 1964, we bought another property in Virginia on the northside of Brisbane. There we started a second demolition yard with a foreman looking

after it. He was a hardworking, honest man, a Dutchman from the province of Brabant. Harry continued the demolition jobs to keep the yards filled with building materials.

In 1965, I went 'home' with the three children to Mam and Dad, travelling by ship. Harry came later by plane, as he couldn't be away for long. I had a lovely time in Holland and realised how much I had missed my family. When Harry arrived, I told him more or less that I wanted to stay in Holland. Harry wasn't so keen and I could see his point: to throw away all we had worked for so hard and come back to Holland and work for a boss again? So, back to Queensland it was and in 1966 we became naturalised Australians.

In 1968, we had a visit from Harry's parents and in 1970 from my parents. We had a beautiful time with both sets of parents and they really liked the time with us. My father said that if he had known what it was like over here, he too would have gone to Australia. He was also a builder, and therefore he could have done well. Both sets of parents came back for a second time: Harry's in 1974 and mine in 1977. Life went on in the mean time and in 1972, we sold the business in Woolloongabba. Then we bought a property of 60 acres in Parkridge, where we kept cattle and horses, which kept Harry and the boys busy over the weekends. In 1979, we stopped with the demolition yard in Virginia. The foreman had suddenly died, the boys were not interested to keep it going and we decided to lease-out the land and the sheds.

We left the house at Woolloongabba in 1980 and moved to an 8-acre property at The Gap where we kept horses just to keep the grass down. In 1989 we sold the farm at Parkridge to developers. There is a street in that suburb, which has been called after us, 'Vullers Drive'. It was more in honour of Harry's father, who loved it there and had passed away by the time the street was named. A large part of the land in The Gap was recently sold for development. We live on the remaining part of the block, overlooking the area from the top of the hill.

Good and bad things have happened to us, too many to describe here and I would like to include this final story. We made headlines in the paper and were on television in 1966, when we shifted a small house from Salisbury to Point Lookout on Stradbroke Island by truck and by barge. The barge was quite small; it would hold only 17 cars. The road on the island was just a dirt track and trees had to be cut in front of the removal truck. The house is still there but we sold it in 1981.

Our children have all done well - the eldest son became an electrical engineer, who works for the Queensland Education Department to computerise their system. He did something similar for Australian Post and for the Queensland Police Department. He has three children. The youngest son, a confirmed bachelor, became an aircraft engineer; firstly in the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and then for an English private company, on contract to the RAAF. Our daughter became a nurse and still works part time. She married an Australian professional golfer, who runs the Terranora golf course. They have two little boys.



2000 - from left to right: Harry, Toos, Henk, Karin and John Vullers.

November 1999

A PLACE IN THE SUN

Corry de Haas

My husband and I met through an advertisement in 'Tuney Tunes', a little magazine that was a favourite publication, post war, for us teenagers, printing lyrics of popular songs with photographs and news-items of famous stars of the screen. Each month ads for penfriends appeared on the back page including those from boys who were serving in Indonesia during the war of independence there. One ad in particular caught my attention and I decided to do my bit to keep up the morale of a young Dutch soldier named Pierre.

I found out later he had trained as a Commando in Scotland, had gained the much-coveted Green Beret and had volunteered to serve in Indonesia for three years to put all this training into practice. On his return 18 months later, we finally met, fell in love and were married three years later. He returned to his father's business but after much deliberation, we decided to start out on our own and opened a business in Nijmegen. However, settling down again in civilian life, proved almost impossible for him. The call of a wider, sunnier country would not fade away and I finally agreed to emigrate, although I was not convinced it was the right decision. Ever since my teenage years, I had wanted to travel and my mind kept repeating the same words, "It's your last chance to see a bit of the world!" However, I had not planned to do this with five young children to care for. They were my greatest concern. What would it do to their well being and happiness to be uprooted and placed into a totally different environment? I need not go into details here of what an emigration entails. The trauma of leaving everything and everyone behind. The feelings of guilt on taking the grandchildren so far away from our parents was something with which we had to come to terms.

We left The Netherlands on December 11th 1959 on board 'SS Waterman' and our voyage would take us from Rotterdam via Curacao, Panama, Tahiti and Wellington to Sydney, places I had so far only dreamed of seeing. We had been allocated a cabin on the afterdeck. It was rather small for seven people but we managed quite well, and at least we were all together. Many of the families were split up, with husbands and sons sleeping in large dormitories and the women and girls sharing a cabin with others. The crew of the 'Waterman' was very pleasant, helpful and courteous in its dealing with so many passengers and the Indonesian waiters in the dining room spoiled our children terribly. There was plenty of entertainment on board with film-nights, dances, bingo and card games, horse racing, games on deck for the children, morning exercises for the keen-hearted, a fully-equipped creche and not to forget English classes. I enjoyed the voyage tremendously although, after the first time, I knew better than to voice my opinion for I received some very dirty looks from some of my fellow-passengers. But I truly did enjoy myself, it was something we would never experience again.

Our first port of call, Willemstad, was an almost otherworldly experience. It was as if we had arrived back in Amsterdam. The facades of the buildings were so typically Dutch, that my eyes filled with tears. So far from home and here was a little bit of Holland. Pierre and I were amazed to hear people speak Dutch fluently and to see the blue and white ANWB plates on the cars. We arrived at Panama on Christmas Eve. A big sign in the distance read, "Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year." On board the crew had been hard at work transforming the cinema into a lovely chapel where midnight mass would be celebrated. A tall Christmas tree brought all the way from Holland stood in one corner, beautifully decorated, with the nativity scene placed underneath. Our first Christmas in the tropics! Pierre and I wanted to see

Panama City. We boarded what looked like a pre-historic little bus into town. It was very busy, with people doing last minute shopping; the traffic a nightmare of cars, buses and motorbikes, and the sound of many different languages assaulting our ears. Our route back took us through the American sector of the town. It was a sight, I will never forget. All the houses were lit up with hundreds of lights. On the sloping lawns candles and oil-lamps shed a soft light on the life-size nativity-scenes in the gardens. Underneath the houses beautifully decorated tables stood ready for the festivity later. It was like something out of a dream. Back on board we attended midnight mass. The cinema was packed. Everyone on board wanted to take part in this most beautiful celebration of the year and when the first tones of 'Silent Night' were heard, there was not one dry eye. We were home, with our family and friends... We were all in the same boat, literally, far from home and an unsure future ahead of us.

Early Christmas Day we left for Tahiti. We had heard many tall tales of this tropical island, and we were not disappointed. Pierre and I found a small track that climbed all the way up to the top of the mountain, which gave us a splendid view of Papeete and the surrounding islands. I will never forget this experience. Next: Wellington harbour was quite picturesque, surrounded by green hills, with the houses built into the hillside. Pierre had just stepped down on the quay when suddenly he saw a familiar face. It was a chap, who had served with him in Indonesia and had migrated to New Zealand. He invited us to dinner that same night. Finally: as we steamed into Sydney harbour, the view was very similar but the climate far friendlier! It was our last day on the 'Waterman' and, although we were pleased to have reached our destination, we were sad to part with that last link to Holland. However, it was time to pack the suitcases and say goodbye to the crew who had looked after us so well.

Reality had come at last. We boarded the overnight train to Brisbane, which proved to be a gruelling journey. I had dressed the children in their 'Sunday best' so they would make a good impression but I should have dressed them in overalls. We had landed plump in the middle of a heatwave so left all the windows open and soon everything we touched was covered in soot. It was an interminable night. Pierre nor I slept and we were glad when we stopped for breakfast at Casino Station, so we could freshen up and stretch our legs. At South Brisbane station buses were waiting to take us to Wacol Migrant Centre, where we were met by a welcoming committee namely the managers and block-supervisor of the centre. While we stood waiting in the hot afternoon sun a young blonde woman approached me. She handed me a bottle of ice-cold water, saying, "I brought you some ice-water, I know what that train trip is like." I thanked her profusely for this kind gesture and have never forgotten it. We were absolutely parched and worn out by the journey. Our family had been allocated three rooms in a Nissen hut, with a Danish family living on the other side. As I stepped into my new domain I looked around me at the scratched wooden furniture, the green lino on the floor, at the pale-yellow walls, and mentally straightened my back thinking, "Well, this is it, Corry. This will be your home for... How long?" We didn't know. Those first days were hard and we spent them in getting our bearings, getting used to the routine of meal times and the strange environment, while our husbands spent time every day with the employment officers who came to the centre at stipulated times. Queensland was in the midst of a credit squeeze as it was called then and people would find work for a few days, a few weeks and be out on the street again. It was a sad situation for new migrants. At night we used to gather in front of the huts and compare notes, while the men made a small fire and toasted some bread by holding it over the flames on a stick. Rations were small but there was plenty of bread and butter.

My husband's first job was picking tobacco at a big tobacco-plantation at Yelarbon, near the NSW border, which meant he could not come home nights of course, as the distance was

just too far. I hated being on my own with the children, but we had to find work. Ten days later he arrived back unexpectedly, as there was not enough work. A few days later he went to Texas near Inglewood but with the same result. A few days work, then time off. Then one day he found a permanent job but when he told me where, my heart sank. It was as an electrician at Mt Isa mines 2000 km away from Wacol. He had to work there for six months before he could have any leave. I grew cold with apprehension and dreaded the thought of being on my own so long with five young children. What if anything happened to me, or to one of the children? The following day we discussed this with the employment officer. Apparently after six months, there was a possibility to get help in finding accommodation for the family, or help with financing the building of a house in the town. At least it was a permanent job and for the moment the children and I would be safe or would be able to get help easily.

On the day of Pierre's departure I felt dreadful. Peter and Mona had started school at the beginning of the new school year and Brigitte and Simone were at Kindergarten in the afternoons. It was my little baby girl Veronique, I think, who kept me sane those first days. Her little voice followed me everywhere and chased the feelings of isolation away. The following week I was rushed into hospital for an emergency operation. I had complained about pains in my right abdomen before, however, this time the pain was so severe that the nursing sister in the camp immediately phoned the ambulance. Now what to do? Two of the families who had arrived with us, came to my rescue. What it must have been for them, living in cramped quarters themselves and seeing their families suddenly doubled in size I can only imagine. I was deeply touched by their generosity. That same night the doctors removed a cyst on the ovary and removed my appendix at the same time, just in case. What I went through the next five days in hospital is hard to describe. Lying there all alone, I had plenty of time to worry and my tears flowed freely. My only visitor was the padre, who brought Peter and Mona one day, which I thought was a lovely gesture. He assured me the children were all right and well cared for by my friends, for which I was eternally grateful.

After five days, Father Tiedink brought me back to Wacol where the children stood waiting at the door, a colourful posy of flowers in their little fists. I broke down in a flood of tears as I embraced them, wanting never to let go. Recuperation was very slow however, even with the help of my friends. One day my breathing stopped and I was gasping for breath. The sister rang for the doctor, who arrived four hours later to give me an injection. That same day I sent a telegram to Pierre to come home, as I knew I could not cope on my own. He arrived on Easter Sunday. When he wanted to return to Mt Isa mines they would not reinstate him because he had left before the six months were up. So we were back at square one and trips into the city for work. He had a few temporary jobs, then at last found a permanent job at Australian Electric at Darra. At first, he walked to work, but then he bought himself a lovely second-hand bike. It had all the colours of the rainbow but was so hard to manage, he could hardly get up the small hill in the centre. Still, it was transport of a kind.

We bought a double corner-block of land in Darra close to the schools and station. Pierre designed a house, enlisting the help of a qualified architect to draw the plans. However, the foundations were condemned so we had to start from scratch. Meanwhile I fell pregnant with our sixth child and Diana was born in the new Mater Mothers' hospital. Due to complications, I was advised to move into a housing commission home at Inala until the house in Darra was finished. A year later, just before Christmas we moved into our home in Darra. After ten years, we sold this and had a nice new home built at Chapel Hill, where we lived until my husband retired. On his retirement we moved to Helensvale, a sleepy, beautiful village, with parks, trees and tranquillity found only in the country. I felt I had come home.

We enrolled in three courses of creative writing at TAFE College. I had always wanted to do this but raising six children didn't leave much time for studies. Pierre also wanted to write about his time in the army. We enjoyed the courses tremendously and this was the start of a late writing-career. My poetry has been widely published here and lately in America.

We love this country. However, I think the best teachers have been our children. In the early years, when it was often extremely difficult to think positively, they showed us their resilience in accepting the different circumstances in which we lived. This country has opened its heart to me and I like to think our family has returned some of that love. On our last holiday in Holland in 1992, I finally realised that I was a stranger in my own country. I missed Australia - in a thousand different ways. The vibrant sunsets that make you ache with their brilliance; the scent of the eucalypts and wood-fires; the sun that sings in your blood and makes life's difficulties easier to bear; the blue haze that dresses the mountains on a warm summer day. The diamond-sprinkled sky of a tropical night and the Southern cross winking... winking. Someone told me once, "You live in the past." But what is nicer than looking back on a wonderful youth? To be thankful for all the good we found in this country. Sometimes it's the sun's late afternoon slant on the trees, which remind me of a Dutch autumn day; I smell the heady perfume of a pine-forest, where we teenagers tramped for hours. Wherever I travel in life, my past travels with me. I hope we may often journey together into the future.

August 2000

<p>Whispers of the past I wanted to write me a bush-verse, - I'm almost addicted to them - But I found I lacked the right background For my pen to produce such a gem. For suddenly as I sat writing, My lines seemed to fade clean away, And a memory stirred that was hidden between Of a small country's crisp autumn day.</p> <p>What I wrote was a song from my childhood, Where the whirr of the windmills kept time; With a far different tone to its music, A much sadder note to its rhyme.</p> <p>I searched for some fresh inspiration, Read Lawson and Paterson too; They showed me the past and its struggles The back breaking plight of the few But as I was reading their verses The themes of my youth filtered in I smelt the fine tang of the heather Felt a bitter-sweet yearning begin</p> <p>And the scenes became songs of my childhood, With the lyrics etched deep in my soul, When my footsteps would pace out the rhythms On the cobblestones I used to stroll</p> <p>Your bards told of mountains and rivers Of broilgas that dance on the plains. Of young, spring-time growth in the valleys, And life-giving monsoonal rains They wrote about fierce floods and fires, Of bush rangers everyone feared, The bullockies, shearers and swagmen And the years that - with them - disappeared</p>	<p>But deep down inside mists were swirling On the low-lying fields I once knew, Where the willows stood guard at the ditches, With the cattle near hidden from view.</p> <p>They write of the rush to the gold fields, Where fortunes are lost as they're made, And tell of the slow rate of progress When the early foundations were laid. Then - later - when shadows grow longer And mirages of riches have gone, They speak with the pride of a nation, That was so reluctantly won.</p> <p>Still the pictures I see are the memories Of pine forests dressed in pure white, And of dreamy, long summery evenings When the skies were aflame with the light.</p> <p>But now, as I read recent verses That are written by poets so fine, I feel that their roots are beginning To be interwoven with mine. I can still hear the whispers of childhood, And my heart can still treasure the past, But the new songs I hear of this country I can truthfully call mine at last.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-----</p> <p><i>Corrie de Haas has won several poetry prizes; This poem, written by Corry de Haas, won the National Prize at the Adelaide Folk Festival in 1991.</i></p>
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DUTCH PRODUCTS FIND APPRECIATION IN QUEENSLAND

Herman Wichgers

In May 1959, we arrived in Brisbane with three small children aged between 18 months and four years. Initially, we stayed for six weeks at the Wacol Migrant Centre. The accommodation there was very basic - without any curtains or floor covering. After our comfortable house in Deventer that was a real set-back. Our first thought was: "What have we started" The food from the central kitchen was not too bad and amongst the amenities was a small Catholic church building. The Dutch priest, who also lived at the centre, was available for guidance, which made the settling-in process a little easier for many newly arrived migrants.

Speaking Australian English was difficult at first despite the fact that my wife and I had learned English at school. After about a week of becoming used to our new environment I tried to find a job. In Holland I was employed as salesman/representative [vertegenwoordiger] of wine-merchants but for a newcomer it would be difficult of course to continue straight away in that type of work in Australia. I became tram-conductor at first and that provided a good opportunity to get familiar with the city of Brisbane. After three months I found employment as representative with a firm importing goods from The Netherlands and four months later, I obtained a similar but better paying job selling potato chips. I did this for four years and during that period I learned a great deal, particularly in relation to marketing in Australia. Meeting another Dutchman we came to an arrangement - he baked biscuits and I sold them. Afterwards I gained a leading position with a large import-firm, staying there for seven years.

In the meantime, our family was extended with another son and the other three children went to primary school. Due to the language problem each of them had to repeat a year at school. We continued to speak Dutch at home. As the children and I had more contact with English-speaking people when away from the house, our English improved gradually, while the language-barrier remained more of a problem for my wife. She stayed at home to meet the family needs - looking after the house and caring for the children.

It was an advantage that my wife's parents, as well as all of her brothers and sisters, were already living in Brisbane, resulting in a wonderful support-network. On the other hand, we had to deal with our own problems of course and the first years were certainly far from easy. We received remarks such as: "why don't you go back to where you come from" and we wondered at times whether we had made the right decision to come to Australia but I suppose that most migrants had to go through similar periods of doubt. We had chosen to send our children to Catholic schools, which were not subsidised at that time and we found the school fees a heavy burden. Therefore, most weekends were occupied with working.

Eventually, I accepted an offer to become a representative for an importer, mainly selling products such as 'Douwe Egberts' tobacco and 'Henri Wintermans' cigars and later we sold 'Douwe Egberts' coffee as well. I worked 13 years for that company and during that time I enjoyed the opportunity to travel all over Queensland - both by car and by plane.

Most Australians own their home but because of our heavy financial commitments, mainly in relation to the children's school expenses, it was nearly impossible for us to save during the first eight years. In the beginning, we were renting a house but in 1967 we managed to buy an old house which needed considerable renovations. We did those renovations ourselves and lived there for ten years. It gave us a good feeling to work towards a more secure future.

Subsequently we moved to a more modern home in one of Brisbane's outer suburbs, The Gap, where we stayed for 22 years. We build some additions to that house and it required ongoing maintenance. Overall, it was a happy time during which the children were attending 'Marist Brothers College' and 'Mount St Michael College' in the nearby suburb of Ashgrove.

Our eldest son became a carpenter. He visited Holland and, after getting married, they built their first house here in Brisbane. He has a good job and lives with his family in a nice area. Our eldest daughter and her husband, as well as our second son and his wife, also became homeowners. The youngest son - born in Australia - followed his father's example: he is employed as sales-representative and travels throughout Queensland.

My wife and I have been members of the Catholic Dutch Migrant Association - Queensland (CDMA) for many years, became actively involved as committee-members in 1980 and continued in that capacity until recently. The CDMA provides assistance where needed, it particularly did so in the early years while the chaplain takes care of the spiritual side. The first chaplain during our time in the CDMA was Father Nouwens and Father Bede Dunn followed him, while the current chaplain is Father Joseph Oudeman. (Editor's note: the latter also wrote about his experiences for this publication). The CDMA is still holding a well attended yearly Christmas celebration (mass) at the Polish Church in Bowen Hills and I organise the choir for that event. I have done this also on a number of other special occasions.

Nearly aged 60, I was forced to retire because of health-reasons. Several years later (in early 1999 to be precise) we moved from our house in The Gap to a nearby situated newly built unit with ample space in the nicely landscaped retirement-village called Keperra Sanctuary. Due to the improved social provisions, we are able to live comfortably and without real financial problems. We are grateful for what we have achieved while living in this beautiful country. We have a rather busy social life with our children, other relatives and many friends, and we enjoy seeing our grandchildren grow up.

After a holiday to The Netherlands in 1976 (for the first time in 17 years), we came to the conclusion that migrating to Australia had been the right decision for us. Knowledge of English and a considerable amount of determination are essential when migrating. However, as attitudes and conditions have changed in Australia, the immigration experience would be less difficult in the year 2000, in comparison to the early years, 41 years ago.

November 2000

This contribution was published in 1994 in the compilation of stories 'Toen wij uit Nederland vertrokken', distributed by 'De Katholieke Vereniging van Ouders en Familieleden van Geemigreerden' (Catholic Association of Parents and Relatives of Emigrants), on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of that organisation. The story was translated and updated for this publication and Mr Herman Wichgers authorised the adapted version.

SEARCHING FOR THE SUN IN OUR LIFE

Rob-Jan & Jacomiene Mijnaerends - Bruynzeel

“You must have been brave”, several Australians, whom we have met, said. “It must take guts to leave your home country and start again in a new country”. These remarks surprised us, as we had not thought about migration in that way. It had never occurred to us when we made the decision that it would be anything but common sense.

Early in 1959, Jacomien and I became engaged. I was only twenty years old and still in my fourth year of Deventer Tropical Agricultural College when I applied for both of us to migrate to Southern Rhodesia. My mother supported my tropical ambitions. She was born in Loemadjang in the Dutch East Indies, which she left in 1909 with her family. My grandmother returned in the 1930s and died in a Japanese prison camp near Bandung. My mother's heart was in Java and it permeated the life of our family.

Jacomien's parents disliked losing a daughter through migration and were objecting strongly. Her family lived in Wissenkerke, Noord-Beveland, Zeeland and had no expatriate relatives or connections. At a more mature age and having children ourselves, we came to understand their concerns. Our migration to Rhodesia stalled when troops were dispatched from Britain to quell unrest there. We remembered the de-colonization of the former Dutch East Indies and cancelled our application. No doubt this was one of the best decisions in our life, as history would show. We also considered migrating to Vancouver. That city may be the warmest part of Canada but it can not by any stretch of the imagination be called 'tropical'. Therefore, my studies would be of limited use over there. Jacomien gave our thoughts further substance by saying: “If we are going overseas, we should go somewhere, where it is warm!”

Wim, a friend from Deventer College, announced that he was going to Queensland, Australia. We had neither a warm feeling for Australia nor much knowledge about that country. We were aware that it was large, thinly populated, close to Indonesia, a large part sub-tropical to tropical and politically stable with no foreseeable problems. The climate and the closeness to Indonesia in particular were particularly attractive to us. It seemed a good option and we decided on sub-tropical Queensland. The family saga would continue, apart from my grandmother and her children, a grandson would now travel to the Far East.

The propaganda, which was disseminated by both the Australian and Dutch Governments, was only marginally helpful. The illustrations of houses looked bland to us as if they belonged in a mining camp. Further, Holden motor cars, fridges and food-mixers featured prominently in the pictures on the brochures. The people appeared wealthy and healthy. It was nice to know but hardly the sort of thing that stirred our imagination. It was clear that both countries colluded, one to get rid of you, the other to receive you. Well, in that case there was an opportunity to go and they paid for the trip! Once the decision to migrate was made, we were married on the 4th July in Jacomien's birthplace Wissenkerke. The wedding service in the church, conducted by Cousin Rev. Duvekot, was concluded appropriately with hymn No. 293:

“Wat de toekomst brengen moge, mij geleidt des Heren hand
Moedig sla ik dus de ogen naar het onbekende land” ...

("Whatever the future may bring, the hand of the Lord will guide me
With courage, I look therefore to the unknown country" ...).

This hymn has been significant in our life. Coming into a strange country, where we did not know a single soul, we felt that we needed to know that we had guidance and encouragement, if we were to survive.

The time remaining until our departure date, which was the 7th August, was hectic. First a short honeymoon to Bentheim, next completing the arrangements for migration, including purchasing and packing and final farewell trips to members of the family. Suddenly you see your country in a different light. August 1959 was a beautiful month, the country ablaze with colour. This was a nurturing country, a country with a history of which you were a part. A country full of smells and sounds, which you never had fully appreciated. The smell of tar on the woodwork at the waterside, of herring, flowers and cheese. Coffee smells wafting from the Amsterdam open-air cafes. You remember the sound of the carillons and trams going

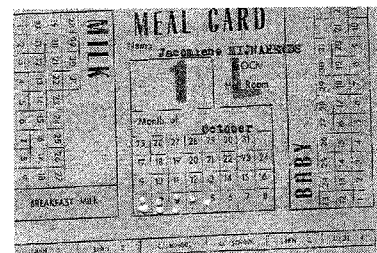


1959 - The authors, at right of photograph, boarding the 'Willem Ruys'

screeching through the corners in Amsterdam. "Oh, sweet country, what are we doing? Are we ever going to see you again?" You would like to embrace every tree and every person. This is not real! My parents felt that we were leaving a potential war zone. They already experienced two world wars and they feared there could be further problems as the cold war with the eastern bloc developed. They preferred for their children to go to safer places.

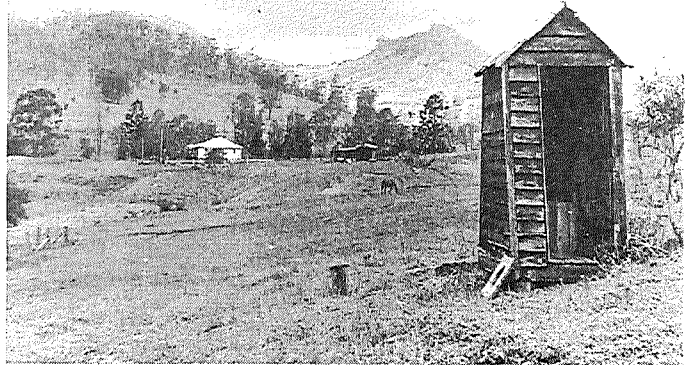
We left the Netherlands with a group of six other ex-Deventer students on the MS 'Willem Ruys'. This was a most fantastic four weeks voyage via Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Singapore and Melbourne to Sydney. As the ship slowly detached from the quay, the people waved madly. A band played the national anthem 'Wilhelmus van Nassouwe' and paper streamers in various colors stretched until they finally broke. This was an emotional and unforgettable farewell. You suddenly stand utterly alone, with only each other to hold on to. One last long blast from the horn, a spine-chilling sound and the people on the quayside slowly became unrecognizable in the throng. The cranes in front of the buildings now dominated the scene as the tugboats slowly pulled the ship into the 'Nieuwe Waterweg'; the mouth of the river Rhine from Rotterdam to the North Sea.

When we arrived in Australia real life started. It was a long train journey from Sydney to Brisbane and then by bus to Wacol. The trip was well organized and the debarkation, train-travel and reception at the Wacol Migrant centre went according to plan. The reception centre consisted of disused wartime army barracks, on the Western outskirts of Brisbane. We had some difficulty speaking and understanding English even after seven years of formal lessons.



Meal-card issued at Wacol Migrant Centre.

Some weeks of unemployment followed. We bought a 1940 Vauxhall car to enable us to move from place to place and landed a job on a dairy farm near Christmas Creek. We milked 90 cows for three months and worked seven days per week (time off on Sundays between 9.30 am and 4.00 pm) for the 'princely' sum of £15 for us both. An old cottage without bathroom or kitchen, one cold tank tap only was part of the deal - but what a view! For bathing, we used a plastic bucket filled with hot water. This was heated on a wood stove. The nearest shops were in Beaudesert 59 km away. Things improved considerably when our two cubic meters of personal belongings arrived from the docks to turn a hovel into a home. We were fired on the 5th of December because we were not experienced enough. Not surprising, as my father was a dentist in Amsterdam, while Jacomien's father was a doctor in grain farming Noord-Beveland.



1959- Our loo with a view at Lamington farm; picturesque ... but!

By that time, we felt that we were quite experienced in milking and cream separating but were only too happy to move our belongings back to Brisbane. Saint Nicholas had really come!

Next we lived for some weeks with the van Wijk family in the Azalea Street in Inala. This family had been so good to make a room available to us, when we came back to Brisbane without a roof over our head. From there I got a job, doing night shift in the 'Naco' louver factory in Hendra on the other side of Brisbane, while Jacomien worked a few days at Golden Circle pineapple cannery. She found eventually a job decorating pottery in 'Kitty's Art pottery', run by Kitty and her father Jaap Breeden in Albion. The pottery could use help and Jacomien's Kunst Nijverheids school (industrial art school in Amsterdam) training could be useful, but she was not a potter. Times were tough! Initially payment was the return train ticket each day from the Inala area to Albion. Working for nothing and learning something



1960 - Kitty's Art Pottery at Albion; Jacomien in front, Kitty in background.

was definitely better than sitting at home. Jacomien's decision has been a good one as we can still count Kitty as our first and longest continuing friend. We moved closer to work into a small flat in Clayfield where Kitty also lived with a girlfriend in an adjoining flat. I remember that we paid £5 in rent for the bed-sitter and a kitchen with a unisex shower down the hallway. The gas heater used up coins at a rather fast rate and often ran out in the middle of the shower.

Thankfully my engagement in the night shift at the louver factory, lowering metal frames into a galvanizing bath, came after a short while to an abrupt end. Meanwhile in the weekends I worked as gardener for a doctor. Next I worked for a card-box factory near Eagle Farm, making boxes for the meat industry. The cardboard factory was a family company and the

atmosphere was pleasant and I stayed there until I joined the Department of Agriculture and Stock in April 1960.

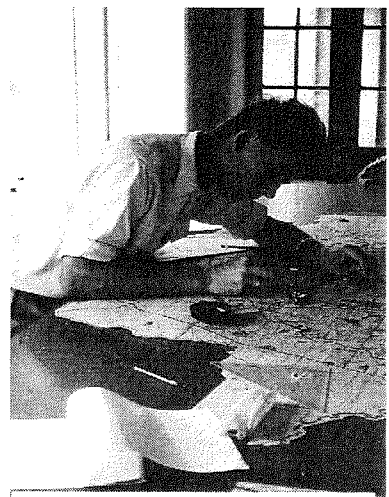
My first job in the Department was in the drafting office of the soil conservation section of the Agriculture Branch in Toowoomba. One had to wear a shirt and tie. Eight months after our arrival we felt that we had climbed into the saddle - a milestone had been reached! Toowoomba was a lovely small country town in those days. I drafted soil conservation plans for the field staff and enjoyed the work. Our first child, Jessica, was born during that time and we were poor and happy. We rented a one bedroom flat, which had a real hot shower, a great luxury. Our landlady, an elderly Polish woman, was quite congenial. We bought ourselves a mixed breed Australian Terrier from the pound and named it 'Pluis'.



May 1960 – Jacomien and 'Pluis'

In August 1960, Jacomien was offered a position as teacher in drawing and history of art at the 'Glennie Memorial Church of England Girls College' in Toowoomba; a job she would fill for the next two years. At least we could now pay for the repairs of our aging Vauxhall car. I joined the Citizens Military Forces (CMF) at that time and soon became Corporal in the Signals corps at Cabarlah. I remained in the CMF until 1965, for part of the Vietnam War, a scary period. Luckily the CMF was never ordered to take aggressive action.

In April 1961, we were transferred to Clifton, some 55-km south of Toowoomba, a town of about 800 people. We stayed in Clifton for four years. Jacomien continued for another year teaching at the Glennie School. She was three days at the boarding school with baby Jessica, who had her own little room next to the studio. I was now fieldofficer in Soil Conservation, surveying and extension of good land management practices. The people in the Darling Downs were quite pleasant and friendly to us, but real contact was missing because of a different outlook of life. We had the feeling that we had gone back at least twenty years in history compared with the Netherlands in regard to facilities and mentality. Especially the lack of a common viewpoint was more difficult than the primitive conditions, which we experienced. Our only social diversion was my membership in the Junior Chamber of Commerce, where we met other people. Our brand-new housing commission house in Clifton had no town water, as the town was not connected. Rainwater was stored in two 9,000 liters tanks. There was no hot water - only a cold shower and fixed open louver windows above the bath consistent with Council health regulations. The freezing winter temperatures at night were not considered. The Housing Commission did not want to install a hot water system. On 25th June 1964 I was naturalised as an Australian citizen according to expectations of a Public servant. Jacomien preferred to retain her Dutch nationality. "It is not something, that you take off like an overcoat" she would say. Our son Roderick as prematurely born early in 1965 and we received great practical support from the people in town.



1964 - Rob-Jan at Clifton Soil Conservation Office

Late in 1965, we accepted a transfer to Allora, 23 km further south and we managed to buy a small Queenslander on a quarter hectare of land with the help of our local dentist and a farmer as guarantors. Allora was a lovely town and we lived there for eleven years being involved in the Uniting Church and Rotary. Jacomien gave private drawing lessons to adults and children. Our third child Victor was soon born and the family was complete. Life was hectic with three young children to care for. Also, the old house needed a lot of repairing and painting and it was not dust proof. It was our first house and it turned into a lovely home. Allora was soon to be connected to town-water. We installed a shower, hot water and a septic system. Yes, a real flushing toilet! We felt rich! Not long after acquiring a water supply, a 25-meter swimming pool was built by the Council. The years in Allora were happy years. The place was a great place for children to grow up in until they became teenagers. Small country towns do have their limitations. I was getting bored through mental isolation, as it was a very conservative community. Many people then believed in the views of the 'League of Rights'



Our house in Allora - lino-cut by Jacomien Mijnarends.

I started external economics studies at the University of Queensland and continued my day job. We received our first visits from family! My younger sister Marleen came over and fell in love with one of my field-staff in Allora. Martin, the lucky fellow, was a Dutchman by birth and educated in Australia. They got married in Amsterdam, before returning to Queensland to live. Things were looking up, we now had relatives beyond our nuclear family in Australia.

An important turning point was our three months 'long service leave' to the Netherlands during the summer of 1975. This was the first time that we went back with our children to our country of birth. It was a memorable time and we loved showing our children their cultural background. Jacomien's father had died in the intervening fifteen years but otherwise not a great deal appeared to have changed. While we had been struggling, the Netherlands had flourished. Had we been stupid after all? Had it all been for nothing? How much in living and dying had we missed? We suddenly realised that this was the country where our roots were. We had the most fantastic three months of our life and I applied for a manager's job in Utrecht and narrowly missed out. We were disappointed when we returned to Allora. I now knew that I was a Dutchman with Australian nationality and proud of both. This would change my perception of what it is to be Australian. Serious attempts at assimilation had made way for integration, and now the discovery of the recognition of multiculturalism.



1980 - The Mijnarends family at Toowoomba, left to right Jessica, Victor, Jacomien, Roderick and Rob-Jan.



In April 1977, I obtained my bachelors degree in Economics. Jacomien's mother and my parents would visit us several times. Finally we would come back to Toowoomba, where we would live for fourteen years. This was our best time in Australia. I worked as Officer in charge of Oakey office, preventing soil erosion on the Jondaryan flood plains. We

were both active in the Toowoomba Repertory Theatre, Jacomien as costume mistress, and I on Committee as well as on stage. We were also actively involved in the running of the Toowoomba International Club, where we made many friends. The existence of the International club was of great importance to Jacomien in particular, in discovering unity in spirit through multiculturalism. I finished my departmental career in Toowoomba as Regional Manager in Soil Conservation at the Darling Downs. In September 1992, I resigned from the Department and moved to Brisbane to start our own factoring business, which continued until it was sold in the year 2000 after undergoing a double by-pass operation at Christmas 1999. I retired in April 2000. In April 2001, we intend to move to Buderim.

We found the sun in our life, literally and figuratively! What would have happened if we had not migrated? No one will ever know. I dare say that a lot of difficulties would have been avoided. Growing pains and economic struggle are universal. Identity and cultural difficulties are, however, specific in an emigration situation. A particular difficulty for an immigrant is the absence of a network to fall back on. It would be fair to say that if we had known everything beforehand, we probably would not have migrated. On the other hand, we would have missed many other things. The prime difference, which no one can deny, is that the climatic conditions in Queensland are immeasurably better than in the Dutch situation. Every time we visit the Netherlands we note the frequent absence of the sun. This absence has a considerable effect on the difference in lifestyles and people's attitudes in the two countries.

It is in the nature of writings such as this to emphasize the struggles and difficulties, while the successes and good times are more easily passed over. This aspect must be kept in mind to keep a balanced view. Our now adult children and grandchildren have added a new dimension to our life in this country, creating permanency and belonging. Much has changed in the last 41 years. In lifestyle and amenities, Australia is at the present little different from Western Europe. Gone are the days of the white Australia policy, scarcity, dogma and protectionism. The world has become smaller through air travel and electronic media, in particular through the Internet with associated E-mail. We still have our wide-open spaces, our natural and largely unspoiled environment and above all our glorious sun. Our search is over! Nothing needs changing.

November 2000

CARRIED AWAY

Liesje Grieve

On New year's Eve 1959 I arrived in Australia - carried away by my Australian husband whom I met in Trinidad in 1957 and married in 1958 - both of us working for Shell. We had stayed a few months in The Netherlands where Bruce met my family and our first baby was born. It needed only one visit to the Australian Embassy for the migration papers to be processed and then we could leave for Sydney.

My husband was cordially welcomed by my family in Holland and so was I by his relatives in Australia. My Mother-in-law suggested that I call her Mum and our relationship was like mother and daughter. She taught me how to bake a roast, biscuits and cakes and how to use the grill. We spent most of 1960 and 1961 in Sydney as Bruce returned to studying, converting his degree to Mining Engineering. We lived in a small flat in Clovelly near the beach and close to the university. Bruce decided to cycle there - some Dutch influence somewhere! I found my neighbours warm-hearted and understanding and we are still friends.

At the end of 1960, we stayed four months in Broken Hill where Bruce worked underground and we lived there in a rented furnished flat. An unforgettable experience was a sandstorm, which lasted for about eight hours. Although doors and windows were closed, the sand came in everywhere and you could see no further than two meters outside. One just had 'to sit it out'.

After Sydney, we went to Mt Isa in Queensland. Our family was increased with a new baby and we set off in a second-hand Peugeot and a small caravan. The radiator was overheating and it became an epic ten-day journey to Brisbane. The problem was fixed there and it was decided that I would fly to Mt Isa with the two children and that Bruce would drive on his own. Just as well, as he ran into difficulties because of the start of the 'wet season'.

Settling down again we came across many very friendly and helpful Australians. Their support made it much easier and they have become lifelong friends. A typical Australian characteristic: they may not say much but give help where it is needed - no questions asked. Two more children were born in Mt Isa; I learned there about 'morning teas', P & C (parent and citizen) activities, 'working bees', school sports, and attended rodeos - all new experiences for a Dutch woman. What I really enjoyed was the relatively easy relationship between the different religions. As well, I was amazed how strong the unions were, how well Australia looked after their returned soldiers, how enormous the distances are and how different the landscape, flora and fauna. And, yes, Bruce's mother came to visit us every year.

In 1966, we all went for a three and a half-month holiday to The Netherlands where we stayed with my father. I had forgotten how cold autumn could be, but a visit to C&A (a large retail shop) and the rather high value of the Australian dollar were a good help. It was a shock for the children that they could not walk bare-footed any longer, nor play outside 'in the dirt', as it was much too cold. The Dutch scooters were compensation and they enjoyed their first St Nicholas celebration but where were the presents for Christmas?

Back in Australia, we moved to the West Coast of Tasmania where we spent the next two years in Luina, a tin mine. It was often very cold there so it was just as well that we had experienced the wet and cold weather in The Netherlands first. Public transport was non-existent in Luina, while shops, doctors, dentists and schools were far and wide between. It took months for our furniture to arrive from Mt Isa, as the removal-truck became stuck 'in the wet'. Again friends helped us out with chairs, a table, a cot and blankets. Like in Mt Isa, we tried to see as much as possible of our new surroundings - and the scenes in Tasmania are majestic!

In 1969, we moved to Newman, Western Australia, iron-ore country. We crossed back to Melbourne on the 'Princess of Tasmania', then via the dirt road through the Nullarbor to Perth where we stayed a few days to catch up with friends from Mt Isa. Then a 1250 km journey to the North: 200 km bitumen, 700 km a mixture of dirt road and one-lane bitumen and the last bit only a dirt road - normally a fairly rough ride, but in wet weather it became very difficult. That last stretch became eventually, after 10 years, a lovely bitumen road. Arriving in Newman we were welcomed into a fully air-conditioned 3-bedroom company house. It was explained that we were very lucky as the shop had opened only that week; so we could buy some milk and bread etc. Before going shopping, I quickly brushed my hair. To my utter amazement I could not pull the brush through my hair - it was literally stiff with red dirt!

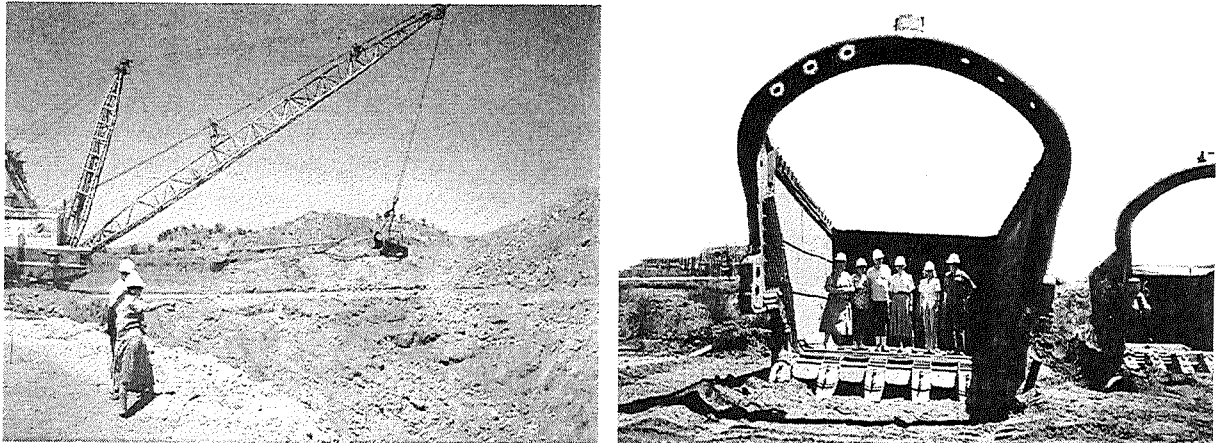
That was the start of eleven years in the West. I soon learned that coloured sheets and dark towels hide discolouring caused by the red soil. My daughter's birthday had to be fairly frugal: coloured pencils and some writing paper were the only things available at the shop. As baking tins were sold there I managed to bake her a birthday-cake. Newcomers helped each other and again one relied on friends. We organised our own parties, dances, performances and bush outings. There was an open-air cinema with canvas seating - lovely in summer but cold in winter. Initially the school had two classes in a private house. Later they moved to a proper school building with four classrooms, gradually extending to fourteen classrooms. A High School and a second Primary School were built eventually.

Our oldest child started boarding school in Perth, as did the other children eventually. Due to the development of the new iron-ore mines Western Australia experienced a population explosion and teachers were hard to get. When the headmaster heard I had been teaching in The Netherlands, he implored me to help out and afterwards advised me to visit the Education Department to show my Dutch Certificate and include my years-of-service record. Upon acceptance I became a supply teacher and did remedial work, both full-time and part-time.

It is difficult to explain to people in The Netherlands about the dirt roads in Australia, the enormous distances, droughts, riverbeds with or without water, the red soil, the outback, the beautiful scenery and sunsets, the climate, different way of cooking, picnics, bush camping and helpfulness along the often lonely roads. It seems that they are just not interested and I think that they find it quite strange that I had become a real 'Aussi' and gradually preferred Australia to The Netherlands.

In January 1980, we returned to Queensland; this time moving to Moura situated in the Bowen Basin. It is a 'mixed' town, which started as a railway siding for farmers and it has now an open-cut and underground coalmine. After a bitter strike, the mining company gradually built houses. However, the people themselves worked hard to get their tennis-courts and other sporting facilities as these were not automatically provided by the company. We enjoyed this different outlook. The two youngest children went to boarding school in Yeppoon, which is close to Rockhampton and 'only' a good two hours drive away. This

meant that we could visit them frequently. The oldest finished his schooling in Kalgoorlie and the next one could transfer his studies to Brisbane. After three years, it was off to Moranbah; still in the Bowen Basin but further North and two hours by car from Mackay. Moranbah was a well-established town, where my husband worked at two different mines and we spent 12 happy years there. Having some time on my hands now and being interested in piano playing and teaching, I decided to sit for my Australian Music Examinations Board of the Teacher's Diploma of Trinity College in practical, theory and eventually Associate exams. I happily settled into teaching piano and theory and it was a very rewarding time. As there is a chronic shortage of music-teachers in the bush the work was really appreciated.



Moranbah, Qld - Liesje Grieve inspects drag-line operations in the open cut coalmine at Peak Downs. On the right hand photo, Liesje - fourth from left, demonstrating the size of the giant coal shovel bucket, which during operations hangs off the drag-line as shown at left.

In 1994, Bruce was transferred to Brisbane. It was difficult, once again, to leave familiar and much loved surroundings behind, especially our grandchildren who were all born there. However, for the second time in our lives, we lived in our own house and isn't one spoiled in a big city! Easy access to facilities like doctors, dentists, hospitals, schools, shops, parks, public transport, libraries, churches, concerts, plays, entertainment, festivals, musea, art-galleries, sporting events, beaches, river-cruises, ice-skating, good roads, restaurants - all of them available in great variety, not just one or two or none as we had experienced. On the other hand, it is necessary to lock up your house and car, which is quite different living 'in the bush'.

Now it is just Bruce and I when we go to The Netherlands or are visiting other parts of the world. I do miss the Dutch spring and we try to travel during that period. Also, cycling in The Netherlands is a delight and their cycling paths are wonderful, especially in the countryside. Moreover, you don't have to wear a bicycle-helmet! We visit my relatives and, these days, holiday accommodation has improved enormously.

I look back on my life and find that I was privileged to have been born in The Netherlands, grew up there during the second world war, was part of a happy family and now find myself being part of Australia thanks to my Australian husband. We shared an interesting life, which was difficult at times but never dull. Just as a little bit of extra information: he has learned to speak, read and write Dutch, initially to be able to talk with my father who couldn't speak any English.

October 2000

NO TIME TO CRY

Frans Clemenkowff

I grew up in Limburg, where I received my education for nearly ten years at 'Huize St Joseph' in Maastricht. In the Second World War, our home was raided many times by the SS and the Gestapo looking for my father who was in the resistance. Then in the late fifties I had to serve my national service close to the East German border. I realised that I would be among the first to be overrun in case of an attack from the East. Thankfully, I was able to leave military service in October 1959. Soon afterwards, I left Holland, mainly because of my previous war experiences and the anxiety of the possibility of yet another war.

I had decided to migrate to Australia and was told by migration officers at The Hague that as an 'engineer' I would have no trouble getting a job. Australia needed engineers badly as many construction projects were in progress. Three weeks later, with the help of the Australian immigration authorities, I boarded the ex-military transport ship the 'Zuiderkruis' and was on my way to Australia.

The sea voyage was horrible, going West through the Panama Canal. We ran out of water and food was rationed. Many people were seasick. The ship was very hot and unstable. Medical assistance was inadequate. It all was a terrible shock to the new emigrants who had given up everything to start a new life. Many people were bored, as there was nothing to do during the long three months voyage. There were many single men and women on board. Some of the women became pregnant on the trip as we shared cabins and decks for sleeping.

When the ship finally arrived in Melbourne we were taken to the railway station and put on a train to South Australia with about 700 other men, women and children and their luggage. The train was not air-conditioned and the wooden wagons were old fashioned. Only sitting accommodation was available and the carriages were severely overcrowded. It was February and the outside temperature was a stifling 38 degrees. The train carried no water and we had to travel under those conditions for a day and night to reach Adelaide Railway station. A stinking hot bus took us the final 450-km from Adelaide to the Woodside ex-army training camp, which was used at the time as a migrant reception centre. At the centre, we were received at the office and directed to Nissen huts, which were unbearably hot in the summer. The food was shocking, bread soaked in powdered milk and a little toast. We had to survive on this and I felt that it was unfit to 'feed a dog'. Many people became very depressed and fathers of large families desperately wanted to find work but were so far from the city that there was no hope of finding work, unless they hitch hiked to Adelaide. The £25 landing-money we got did not go far - it had to last a month. Some of the men left their families in the camp to look for work. At times they didn't come back and lost contact with their families as they were jobless and had no money.

There was a lot of unemployment! The car factories were closed and long cues of workers were waiting at the gates to be hired. Before I got a job, I slept in parks and other places and lived on a bottle of milk and sometimes a meat pie a day. I could buy no more food because I was destitute and I lost a lot of weight. I remember it as a really bad experience and still carry the scars. My military training assisted me to survive but a lot of good friends returned to Holland. The Dutch and Australian Governments of that time have a lot to answer for.

We were left to fend for ourselves and did not see an immigration Officer in Woodside to help us get the promised jobs. We were dumped in the middle of nowhere - We found the whole situation totally unacceptable!!!

I felt lucky as I had received special training in construction and mechanical engineering. This helped me to get a job with the South Australian Harbour Board where I worked as a diver along the coast of South Australia, constructing and repairing the submerged parts of wharfs, slipways and jetties.

As migrants, we still live with the stigma that we are not really accepted as 'dinky Aussies'. We are often overlooked for promotions or job advancement. Government Departments tend not to accept our overseas qualifications and experience. As a result some families have broken up and returned to Holland, leaving their children behind in Australia.

I married a Dutch girl but that marriage was a mistake. We had two children, a boy and a girl. After our marriage broke up my wife was given custody of the children and I was told to forget them and to get on with my life. My wife has sole custody over the kids and I have little contact with them. I have not seen my daughter for over 14 years and I do not know her whereabouts. Confidentiality is like a concrete wall and no one in the departments concerned will tell you anything. Australia is a big country so it is unlikely that I will find them easily.

I own my house, which I built, with my own hands. I have been back to Holland many times. It is a beautiful country but I think that at present there are too many foreigners living there and that there are too many people trying to make a living in such a small area. I find this all very frustrating.

For my children and future generations, I think that I have made the right decision to come to Australia to give them a better life. As for myself, I would have been better off in Holland with all its social security provisions. I am still working but unfortunately will remain an outsider at my work and in the community in Townsville.

October 2000

THE FIRST YEARS

Hans Bierenbroodspot

In the early sixties, I worked in a Department of Agriculture team surveying in the hills of the Darling Downs. The aim of this survey, a topographic survey (dubbed topo survey for short), was to determine the height above sea level of a number of control points, which were necessary to produce contour maps of the area. That the team consisted of Dutchmen had more to do with my cooking than with a Dutch aptitude for this sort of work. We were camping out and as the others checked the surveyed data at night, I did the cooking. In Indonesia, I had acquired a taste for sentimental Javanese songs and hot spicy rice dishes. At home, I could only play these kroncong songs if nobody was home but that type of music and 'nasi goreng' were acceptable to the Dutch in our team as most of them had spent some time in Indonesia. Australian colleagues, not impressed by my cooking, and being under the impression that rice and chillies were a staple-diet in Holland, did not come back after the first week.



1961 - Topographic survey, peeling potatoes for meal preparation. l to r - Jan (Jack) van Putten, centre - Ernst Heynen and at the right - Rob-Jan (Bob) Mijnaerends.

This was the sixties, when real men ate meat and drank beer. For a cappuccino, you had to travel to Sydney, for a souvlaki to Melbourne and Asia was the place where a plane on its way to the UK stopped to refuel. There were a few Chinese restaurants that produced a rather bland cuisine, of which an otherwise well brought up lady said, "I'm not going to eat that muck." When I told my brother, who had been working as a shearer's cook before settling in Melbourne, about my cooking, he said: "Shearers would have thrown you in the nearest sheep dip." Asking in the pub in Jandowae for a bottle of wine, the licensee produced a bottle of port. When I said no, I want wine he replied with a hint of disapproval in his voice: "Oh, you mean a bottle of plonk."

In the late fifties the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock had begun to employ migrants as farm advisers, many of them Dutch and graduates from the College for Tropical Agriculture in Deventer, which used to train plantation managers for the former Dutch East Indies. After the colonial era ended, graduates had to re-invent themselves or find a new 'home' in an area more suitable for tropical crops than the country on the chilly shores of the North Sea. Queensland was an obvious choice although only one graduate achieved something more substantial than a lawn in his backyard. He became a wool producer and not a banana grower, as you would have expected.

In the topo team, I worked with Bob, Bill, Ernest and Jack, to use the anglicised calling names given to them by their Australian colleagues. At first, I found the indiscriminate use of first names a bit confusing; you were never sure you were not making a social or even a career blunder by calling someone Malcolm who in the departmental hierarchy was Mr X. No such problems existed for the female employees, they never became a Mrs in the Department. As soon as a girl married, and they married young in the country, she had to resign from the public service.

Nobody in the team had been long in Australia and after arrival all had worked in different jobs before joining the Department. Bob had worked on a dairy farm and after that been a labourer in a cardboard factory, a stopgap job. Jack had a rough time as an itinerant farm



1960 – Hans Bierenbroodspot – 33 years of age at the time, at work in the Toowoomba drafting office of the Queensland Department of Agriculture and Stock, preparing aerial photographs for the next Topographical Survey. Photograph courtesy Toowoomba Chronicle.

labourer, tramping all over the country following the season of bag sewing and fruit picking. Bill had an easier time after he dropped a brick on his foot in the brickworks in Darra and went into ‘compo’. Ernest had worked on a farm until on advice of the farmer, he applied for a job in the Department.

Of the 500 odd farmers I came to know in Queensland, only two were migrants. One had sold his farm in England and was able to buy a grain property without having to go to the bank. Even he found the going tougher than he had expected, once losing in succession two winter crops and one summer crop. The other had been a farm hand in Holland who bought too small a dairy farm on too small a deposit and struggled for years until the third drought forced him out. I felt sorry for the family; they were hard working people, steeped in the Reformed Church religion, who spent little money on themselves. They did all the right things: improved pastures, herd recording, contour banks, the lot. Piety, thrift and even skill are no match for a small capital base and a climate without pity

Years later, I ran into the failed farmer at Dalby. After selling the farm he had worked on a property in Central Queensland but when Thiess Brothers opened the first open-cut mine in Queensland, he had become a coal washer. “I was pressing buttons,” he said disparagingly, “for which they paid me a large sum of money for eight hours work.” He gave the impression that despite his unexpected prosperity, he missed the farm.

Our Australian team leader was a senior officer, no longer active in the field. He was a softly spoken man with a weakness for beer in summer and rum in winter. He liked to

organise things, sometimes effectively, sometimes as if it had been done in the pub after a few beers. He had drawn up an extensive list of camping requirements from billy-cans to 'Rid' (insect repellent) but had told nobody how to carry out a topo survey. On the first day after setting up the tent in a paddock, next to the Irvingdale church in the middle of nowhere, we sat down looking at each other, wondering what to do next. Coming from different districts, we had assumed that one of us knew what to do. Eventually we found out that, through a closed survey, we had to determine the accurate altitude of control points marked with a pin on an aerial photograph. We surveyed from and to benchmarks with known height above sea level. This could also involve cross-country surveying often through quite inhospitable country.

Once, to get to a control point we had to survey past a farm house. When the farmer's wife saw us, she came out to ask whether she could have a look through the level. "I'll set the level a bit lower," said Jack, who was surveying that day, glancing at the elderly woman who was not much over 1.5-m tall. "Don't worry," she said, disappearing inside the house, to come out a moment later with a kitchen chair on which she climbed to peer through the level. This could only have happened in a somewhat isolated area of small dairy farms near the mountains. We later heard, the lady was born on the farm, had never married and only once had been further than Bell, a small town spread out over low hills just before the road crosses the Dividing Range into the Burnett district.

There were four men to a team, two staff men, one on the level and one driving the utility to shift the team to new positions. Bob, never happier than behind a steering wheel did much of the driving. In those money-strapped days, departmental cars often had a long history of rough fieldwork, especially the Dodge utility used on the survey. Going up the Bunya Mountains with all the camping and surveying gear, we had a choice between pushing or driving up in reverse. We pushed but by the time we reached the top, where now the TV relay station is, we knew next time we would try driving. A few weeks later we had trouble with a boiling radiator but Bob, whose love for cars was not matched by his mechanical knowledge, said not to worry. Going home late on Friday the utility blew a head gasket just before Quinalow, where we had to stay until Monday to get a new gasket. Quinalow lies in a rather pretty valley but as it has only one street and its main attraction was a cheese factory, we did what the locals did, sat in the bar drinking beer. These country pubs had little in common with the continental pub, the cafe which is more like what is called a bistro here. Unadorned the Australian country pub is a place for serious drinking but for men only, women were not allowed in the bar. Ernest's wife discovered this two days after arriving in Queensland. An immigration officer was driving them to the farm where Ernst was going to work, a gesture much appreciated till they stopped in Brookstead to have a drink in the pub. She had to stay in the car staring at the heat waves rising over the plain, while the men had an icy cold beer inside the pub.

These surveys were as good an introduction to a new country as you could get. It was not the sort of work you would like to do for the rest of your life but it was not an unpleasant job. The uplands of the Darling Downs, while not spectacular, are attractive with an agreeable climate and as a team we were getting along well. Bill called it a paid holiday. He would have been right but for the flies. After the summer rains they were not too bad but there were enough left to be a nuisance. In spring, the man in front of you with the flies on his back resembled a walking raisin bun with too many raisins and the only place where you could eat your lunch in peace was in the car with the windows wound up. The heat inside was stifling.

As the farmers got to know us, we no longer camped in a tent but stayed in empty farm houses of which there was no shortage as a result of farm amalgamation. It was sad to see how these houses once comfortable, though not luxurious, had gradually been falling into disrepair. For us they were better than camping, especially in winter as they often had open fireplaces.

After a year of surveying, the Department appointed special survey officers to allow us to concentrate on erosion control in our districts. Of the five employers I have had, the Department was not the worst. As long as you did not come in conflict with departmental policy, Head Office did not interfere with the running of your district. This system worked well in a large thinly populated state like Queensland and with officers, who generally were happy in their work. Although good to work for, the Department could not forget its bureaucratic heritage but its more tiresome rules were, far from Brisbane, easy to circumvent. Still in training, I went out with an experienced officer to supervise the construction of a waterway. On the way back he stopped the car, ducked under a fence, had a look at something of no particular interest, got his little notebook out and wrote something down not saying a word. When he did the same thing again curiosity got the better of me and I asked him what he was doing. "Quarterly reports are due and I have to show more farm visits," he replied with some reluctance. In our quarterly statistics, farm-visits were meant to represent a significant meaningful visit although this was not spelled out.

More annoying in a country town, without a dentist or stockbroker, was that you had to take your leave as three consecutive weeks and was not allowed to have single days off. Our officers got around that one by taking a 'sickie', a disservice both to the officer and the department. Quite sensibly, this rule was later rescinded. Typical of bureaucratic nonsense was the case of Jack and the fire. In his monthly diary to Head Office he had reported that coming on a farm there had been a grass fire which he helped to extinguish. A week later he received a letter reprimanding him - fighting fires was not his job. Jack, who normally had a ready wit and could recognise a farce when he saw one, was furious. "What do they want me to do, run away?" he said, "farmers will never forgive and forget and I may as well ask for a transfer."

Our Department was not the only organisation suffering from streaks of irrational inflexibility. I worked for a short time with a Dutchman on a soil survey for the Commonwealth Scientific Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) near Meandarra, an area with a savage sun in summer. They refused to give him the sun-visor he had asked for. He bought a sheet of corrugated iron, which he tied to the roof rack, letting it stick out in front as a sun-visor. Together with the survey gear on top of the iron, he looked more like a travelling dealer in scrap iron than a scientist. Years later, the graziers were still talking about him.

While the men adjusted quickly to a new life, for migrant women it was more difficult. Had they gone to a city they would have felt less isolated but our work forced us to live in small towns. These five-street towns rise without warning out of the surrounding country, a landscape not of small neat lawn-like fields but paddocks of untidy brown-topped grasses and dull-green trees with a vast, almost threatening, sky above. The houses in town were mostly not the classic Queenslander with a high pointed roof and a verandah on three sides but a square dwelling with a double-gabled corrugated iron roof and, as the only concession to the climate, a small porch at the front door. This, combined with the weatherboard, gave these towns a here-today-gone-tomorrow look. Many of these towns were planned with more

enthusiasm than understanding, the planners conjuring up a Devon of small farms under the Southern Cross and a town every 15-km. Some of these towns never got beyond a name on a parish map. Others flourished in the post-war agricultural boom but by the time we arrived, these towns were stagnant, the beginning of a long, slow decline, often starting with the closure of a butter or cheese factory. Much of the writing on the Australian bush is about growing up in an outback 'Arcadia', but this reminiscing is invariably about life on a property. These towns were neither 'the bush', nor had the facilities of the larger regional centres.

My office in Jandowae was in the main street between the police station and the hall, an abandoned looking oblong building, painted olive-green. Coming back from the field one Friday afternoon there were several cars parked in front of the hall and the doors were ajar. I asked the clerk of Petty Sessions, who shared an office with the Police and tea breaks with us, what was going on. "They are having a working bee getting the hall ready for a dance tomorrow night," he said. "With a bit of luck they won't need the Sergeant." I looked questioningly at him and he elaborated: "I don't mean they need the sergeant to clean up the hall but I am talking about tomorrow night. They don't serve alcohol in the hall but there are always some that bring their own grog to drink at the back near the toilets. Although this is illegal, the sergeant will ignore it unless it gets out of hand. He has to live a few more years here before he is transferred. The problem is that there are never enough girls and if the drinking gets beyond the happy get-together stage, the sergeant has to step in."

When I told my wife about the ball - but not about the drinking - she said it sounded like fun and she wanted to go. We arrived while the band was still tuning up, sounding like a jazz quartet tuning up. If we had thought this was the prelude to some jazzy swing, we were wrong. The Clerk of Petty Sessions had told me the ball was 80-20. Not wanting to sound the ignorant migrant, I had not asked what he meant. It did not take long to find out that 80 stood for 80% old time dances, condemning us to our hard metal folding chairs four out of five dances. I know only of one migrant couple mastering these dances but light and nimble on their feet, they had been in ballroom competitions in Holland.

The towns people tolerated us without much interest, it takes a year or so to overcome their natural suspicion of newcomers, migrants and native born alike. Some, like the Greek cafe owners, remained outsiders no matter how long they lived in town. The farmers were more hospitable. Working with them would have contributed to this readiness to accept us; only a common enemy will unite people quicker than doing a job on equal footing. This was not the only reason men could adapt more rapidly than women to the new environment, there was another seldom mentioned subtle difference. Migrants in the sixties were not the same as migrants from an earlier period, who were either refugees or had migrated from a Europe, impoverished by war. By the sixties living standards, which overseas had caught up, were no longer an inducement to migrate. Motives to emigrate varied but a vague restlessness and disenchantment with the damp cold often played a role, especially if the migrant had lived in the tropics. Going back to Holland then became unthinkable, it would have been an admission of a double failure, first to feel at home overseas and later here. The women did not have the same hang-up, they had not taken the initiative to migrate and often had gone without much enthusiasm. Finally, we would all move to bigger centres, where life for migrants was more like the one they had left behind.

May 2000

OUR TRANSITION FROM THE NETHERLANDS TO AUSTRALIA

Kitty Cillekens

My name is Kitty Cillekens. In May 1961, I boarded the MS 'Waterman' with my husband Guus (Gus) and our three children: Doreen six; Bas five and Lex two years old, bound for Australia. Here is our story about how we became Australians.

Gus and I were born in the same street at Roermond in Limburg but we only met when we were teenagers. Gus went into the army after grammar school and I continued to study Medical Laboratory Technology after finishing high school (HBS-B). I would have liked to study medicine but during WWII, the Germans closed all universities after an altercation with students. After the war, I went to the then Dutch East Indies and worked in the laboratory of a military hospital. In 1950, Gus commenced his studies in Tropical Agriculture in Deventer, majoring in sugar technology and upon my return to the Netherlands, I went to study medicine, which I rounded off at Bachelor level [Candidaats] when Gus was offered a job in Indonesia. Engaged by that time, I ceased my study to follow him and we married by proxy.

Two of our children were born in Indonesia: Doreen and Bas (later called John). John was entered in the Chinese Birth Register instead of the European. The Registry Office burned down in the 'communist uprising', so we were left without recourse. On the 1st of December 1957, we boarded the MS 'Oranje' to go on long service leave. It was the last of the regular liners to leave Indonesia. One week later, all the Dutch people were ordered out of the country. The economic climate in the Netherlands was bad. Thousands of expatriates looked for work. Gus went for six months to Pakistan for a Dutch firm and was offered contracts in Iran and Trinidad. We declined those offers and after two years we decided to emigrate. We chose Australia because its sugar mills could provide potential employment for Gus. The 'White Australia Policy' promised a peaceful environment to raise our children. We were examined by an Australian Doctor, interviewed by a social worker and accepted. for emigration. So, in June 1961, we found ourselves packing everything, boarding the 'Waterman' and sailing to our unknown future!

My sea legs are nonexistent, and I was glad to finally have terra firma under my feet. We had changed our destination from Melbourne to Queensland and, after a long train ride from Sydney, we arrived at the Wacol Immigration Centre. Our youngest son Lex had pneumonia and was very sick. We were allocated half an army-hut. A family who had five young sons occupied the other half. Our little rooms had only wooden partitions and it was very noisy. One of the highlights of the Wacol Camp was the Thursday's arrival of Mr Holweg, from the Dutch shop. He had a shop under his house and went around Brisbane with a van full of Dutch 'goodies' like: hagelslag, drop, rookvlees, kaas, beschuit (chocolate hail, liquorice, smoked meat, cheese, rusks), which helped to alleviate the homesickness somewhat.

Gus started looking for work straight away and he wrote to 33 sugar mills. Only seven replied, to advise him that he was over-qualified. What they needed were workmen. In desperation, I went to the Health Department and asked to speak to the director, who was very sympathetic with my plight and rang all the public hospitals to get interviews for me. One day I came back to Wacol from the City and Gus was running towards me waving a letter and he called out: "The best birthday present for you," I asked hopefully: "You have a job?" Gus

answered: "No, you have - at the General Hospital." So on the 25th September, I started working and wondered how I would cope with imperial measurements. Luckily, they were using the metric system. It was unusual that I was accepted as a technician as, in those days, the Public Service did not employ married women. Married men could take holidays at Christmas time because they had 'a family'; it was conveniently forgotten that I also had one.

We bought a block of land in the Gap as well as a car, a VW Beetle. Gus commenced work at the Colonial Sugar Research Institute. He started on 'pick and shovel' work because the laboratory had not been built yet. We rented a house in Lutwyche and moved out of the Wacol camp! It was a sheer joy to finally to have our luggage, which was in storage while we were in the camp. Unpacking our furniture, we found the children's toys and bikes, our linen and wall hangings. It was a wonderful feeling to have a whole house to ourselves!

I was lucky to find a Dutch girl named Herma Moman. Herma became part of our family, Mondays to Fridays. While we worked, Herma looked after Lex and the house. She was there when the others came home from school. Without her, it would have been very difficult. She stayed with us for a few years until all the children were at school. We felt isolated and had no friends except one from our Indonesian years - John de Bruyn and his wife Ria. They were sharefarming in Goondiwindi and we spent some lovely holidays there. I was still very homesick. One day I met a young woman who introduced me to her mother. They lived close by in Annerley. Bien van Kammen and her daughter were to open our social life in Australia. They introduced us into the Dutch Bridge Club and our isolation was over!

Overseas degrees were not recognised here and Gus commenced studies at the Queensland Institute of Technology (QIT) to better our future. We earned only minimum wages and all our spare money went into the car and land we had bought. It was very hard to study again after all these years but Gus felt he had no choice. I am so proud of him; it was difficult to study after work at night. After five years on a small wage, a new boss went into battle for me. Within a month, I was promoted to a much higher position, though my papers were only recognised by the General Hospital. Gus obtained a similar position in the biology department at the QIT.

We sold our land at the Gap and bought five acres at Pullenvale. It was a beautiful area with only a dirt road to get there. In the eight years before building, we cleared and burned the lantana and other noxious weeds every weekend. For a while we had a big tent, later a wooden shed, which had been given to us - our little 'weekender.' Eventually, we built a 'proper' house there. Life was good but I was still homesick. Each time we went on holidays to Limburg, a province of the Netherlands, I had trouble returning to Australia.

Our children are married now and found their place in life. Doreen works part-time and takes care of her horses and her three children. John is a Civil Engineer and lives in Nerang with his wife and two daughters. Lex became a Medical Technician and did a University course in Laboratory Management. He lives now in Malaysia with his wife and two children.

In 1986, Gus and I retired and went to Europe for seven months. We sold the Pullenvale home and settled on a small acreage in Greenbank close to our daughter and we are very happy there. The last times we were overseas, I had no trouble at all coming home. Home is Australia! Finally, we are Australians!

December 2000

THE LURE OF THE TROPICS

Let Haites, as told by her son

I was born in 1916 in Jakarta, Indonesia, the first of six girls born to my parents. My family was in Indonesia (then the Dutch East Indies) as part of the expatriate community from The Netherlands. My father was a public servant responsible for town planning. We lived in Batavia (Jakarta) until I was nine years old. I enjoyed growing up there immensely. We had very comfortable accommodation and several servants as help.

We moved back to The Netherlands to live in Haarlem. I completed my education from the third grade through to arts studies and bookbinding and worked in an art gallery after completing my schooling.

I met my future husband Binnert Haites at a ball in Amsterdam. He was a geologist studying to finish his PhD at Amsterdam University. One of the challenges we faced was that he had a Protestant upbringing and mine was Catholic. On the other hand, a geologist meant travel and possibly even the chance of returning to Indonesia.

World War II broke out and things started to change dramatically. After Binnert completed his studies we married and Binnert was sent to work as engineer at the coalmines in Heerlen (Limburg). It was during this period that our first two sons were born. After the war, Binnert was employed by Shell and we were sent out to Canada, as Indonesia was politically unstable. Because of the climate, Binnert could do only three months of fieldwork and so he was home for much of the year. With a young family, this was a bonus. Shell finally asked Binnert to go to Indonesia but we were very nervous about the changed political circumstances and decided not to go. Instead we became Canadian citizens and Binnert took a job with the Canadian Geological Survey.

We moved to Sydney, Nova Scotia where Binnert became the Dutch Vice Consul and had a job with DOSCO, the local steel and Coal Company. Our family was completed with a third son and a daughter born there. As the steel industry was waning and the oil industry was booming, Binnert changed jobs to work for Husky Oil and we moved to Calgary, Alberta. After seven years in this prairie city, the Prime Minister of Canada at the time, John Diefenbacher, decided to stop exporting oil to the USA. The oil industry downsized dramatically. Binnert along with many others was forced to find other employment. He found work with a company that had started in Australia.

Thus, in 1962, we moved to Australia to settle in Brisbane. For the first three years we lived in rented accommodation in West End. We made many good friends, some of which I still contact regularly. It was at this time that I experienced one of the cultural differences that has remained in my mind. I was minding a dog for some friends who were away on holidays. I had taken it for a long walk and decided that I would catch the tram home. When the tram came I was not allowed to board it because dogs were not allowed. Then I will take a taxi I thought. No dogs allowed there either and I had to walk back home. In Holland, taking a dog on public transport was quite common so it had not occurred to me that this would not be allowed.

Having settled into Brisbane and particularly enjoying the climate after the cold of Canada, we decided to stay and we built a house in Indooroopilly. For me Brisbane completed the circle. I was back in the tropics (well almost). The fruit and vegetation were familiar to me from my childhood. I even studied Indonesian and joined the Australian-Indonesian Society. In fact, I still play scrabble in Indonesian with a friend who is studying the language. Binnert became the Dutch Consul in Brisbane and we maintained close ties to the Dutch society. This was a very interesting time for meeting many people but it was cut short by Binnert's death, three years after he took on this extra role. His work saw him involved in the development of the minerals and coal industry in Queensland.



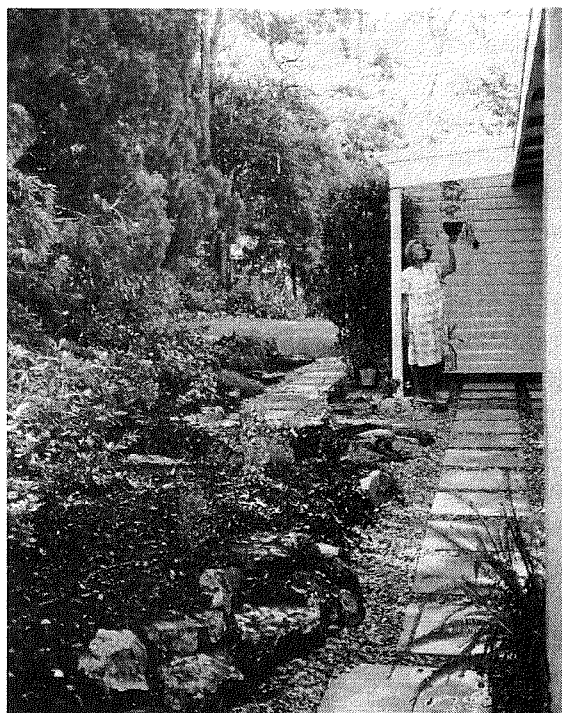
Let enjoys her garden and swimming pool in sub-tropical Brisbane.

After Binnert's death, I have been travelling to visit my children, relatives and friends around the globe. My eldest son did not come with us to Australia but finished his university studies at Edmonton, Canada and his Ph.D. at Lafayette, USA and lives in Toronto. My second son, after graduating, obtained a job in the oil industry and was sent to Aberdeen, Scotland when oil was found in the North Sea. He would love to come back to Australia, as he hates the long cold, dark winters in Aberdeen.

At this point, it seems that my youngest son will probably remain here in Brisbane. My daughter moved to California, USA. Each year for at least the last twenty years I have traveled to California, Toronto, Aberdeen, The Netherlands and back again. I do this in the Northern Hemisphere summer and therefore have not seen a winter for a long time. This suits me, as I dislike the cold intensely.

I have recently bought a computer and I learnt how to send e-mails to stay in touch with my far-flung family and friends.

I feel that the tropics crept into my blood at birth in the East Indies and that I feel most comfortable in a hot climate with all the lush vegetation, delicious fruit and outdoor life style. Aged 84, I still live in the house that Binnert and I built and spend much of my time at home in Brisbane, gardening, swimming and meeting with friends and I do not wish to go back to Holland to live there permanently.



A sub-tropical paradise surrounding the house

November 2000

THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Annelies Zeissink - Van Leenhoff

Reflecting on nearly 40 years of residency in and around Brisbane, I would most certainly say to be very pleased with the decision made in 1962 to emigrate from The Netherlands to Queensland. After several return-visits and some travelling in other countries, I definitely regard Australia as my country by choice; to live and to work, with a feeling of belonging here. On the other hand, my Dutch heritage is quite important to me, leading to the privileged situation in which 'the-best-of-both-worlds' can be experienced and appreciated.

I was a student-nurse in Zutphen, when, newly married, my husband and I decided to move to Australia where we arrived just before my 20th birthday. Leaving everything behind could, in hindsight, be seen as a big step; yet at the time we regarded the process merely as a challenge and as some kind of an adventure, thinking we could always go back (when we had saved the return-fare) if we did not like it in Australia. Not having to do National Service was another reason for our emigration, whilst well aware of the fact that men could still be called-up for military service if returning to The Netherlands before reaching 30 years of age.

When departing from Amsterdam harbour to go to the other side of the world, family and friends indicated that we might never see each other again. As assisted-passengers we had a wonderful sea-voyage of five weeks on the 'Groote Beer'. Although separated for the first few days (each of us sharing with seven others) we eventually were allocated a twin cabin. The nurse in charge who came originally from our hometown arranged that privilege. We enjoyed the swimming pool and other entertainment on board, such as a fancy-dress ball, concerts and movies. On crossing the Equator for the first time, we received a certificate from King Neptune. When reaching Fremantle the immigration-officials advised us to disembark there but we convinced them, with great difficulty, that Brisbane was our desired destination because of further study-plans.

When arriving in Sydney, it was surprising to see the rather dilapidated harbour-buildings, in contrast to a vague expectation that everything would be 'modern' in this 'new' country. Getting our luggage from board caused some problems due to a 'wharfies-strike' (a typical introduction to Australian industrial relations at the time). 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.

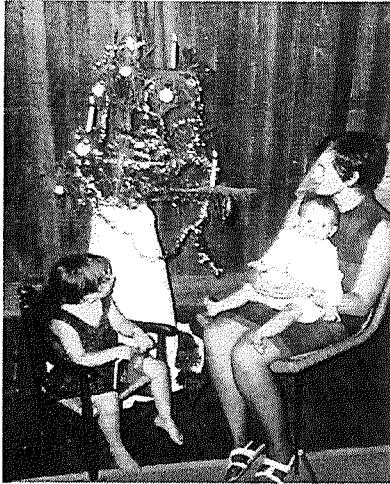
Compared with Dutch prices, bananas were very cheap here, leading to some overindulgence, which in turn resulted in an ongoing dislike for that fruit. While staying at Wacol, we accepted the kind invitation from our Dutch greengrocer to watch TV at his home. The only program that evening was ... a boxing-match!!! By 1962, television was already well established in The Netherlands, but obviously still some kind of a novelty in Australia. Another 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 paper work 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). My husband started employment with the Department of Agriculture and Stock (now called Dept of Primary Industries). Own accommodation and a job were essential criteria to take delivery of our 2-cubic metre crate with humble belongings. It was a great moment when it arrived, particularly after having lived out of suitcases for some months. The 'flat' consisted of a 2-room section in an old 'Queenslander'. Our property owner, who lived in the same building, was rather interfering about matters such as hot water usage, laundry arrangement and mail delivery. On the other hand, this woman of German descent was also very kind; she showed us the views from Mt Cootha and invited us to attend a garden-party at 'Yungaba' organised by the Good Neighbour Council. After 12 months, we moved to a small rent-free cottage in Samsonvale, leading to the opportunity to become caretakers of the large house on the same property, then paying £4 rent a week. That was the Australian environment we had been dreaming about; with rugged open spaces and even a 'billabong' for swimming!

Immigration officials had ensured me that it would be possible to finish my nursing training in Australia but this proved to be incorrect information because married women were excluded. My first job was as assistant-nurse at the Mater Mother's Hospital, staying there for three years. With our level of secondary school English, the language caused minimal problems but expressions such as 'a cuppa this arvo' sounded rather strange at first. I remember very clearly being asked once whether I would mind to attend to a certain task at another section of the hospital. Believing I had a distinct choice, my reply was "I would rather stay here". In hindsight I realised of course that it was the polite way of saying 'go and do it!!' There were quite a few similar minor cultural differences we had to get used to.



Christmas 1968: Beryl, Andrew and Annelies.

I felt a little home sick around Christmas time during the first years only and after a serious accident, I did miss the support from relatives. However, some (Dutch) friends were very kind and helpful during the 10 months of my immobility. Living in the 'bush' was a good way to raise our children, but we left there when they were two and four years old. Due to the need for a more adequate water supply in Brisbane, the Petrie Dam was constructed nearby, resulting in 'Lake Samsonvale'. When back in the suburbs our daughter went to kindergarten. She had been talking Dutch with us but changed over completely to English within about one week, despite our efforts to speak Dutch at home. The same happened to her brother when he started pre-school.

The children continued to understand us when we spoke Dutch to them, but insisted to answer in English. Eventually, at the age of 18, they independently spent some time with relatives in The Netherlands and (re) learned to speak some words in Dutch; yet without the proficiency needed for a more in-depth conversation. It is now generally known that people from non-English speaking background, although having become proficient in English, tend to reverse to their first language after retirement. This could lead to communication problems with their adult children and particularly their grandchildren.

When family responsibilities decreased, my application to enter hospital-based nursing training was again rejected although marital status for females was no longer a barrier. This time it was due to my age, then 36. However, attitudes in society continued to change gradually in that respect and about a decade later I was accepted for the inaugural full-time nursing-course at Griffith University, leading to a Bachelor of Nursing degree in 1994. During that course my divorce was finalised and I continued to work night-duty as an Enrolled Nurse at a local nursing home. After graduation I found employment as a Registered Nurse in another aged care facility, while continuing with two years part-time study for an Honours-degree, completed in 1996. Conducting a research project was part of the requirements and I chose to do it about the elderly with a Netherlands background in the larger Brisbane area. That choice was predominantly influenced by a number of Dutch community representatives who had indicated that there was a real need for such research.

Although previously not really involved with Brisbane's Dutch community and initially mainly in order to get the required number of research participants, I started to attend some meetings of Dutch-specific organisations. This led to an active involvement on committees, which in turn resulted in accepting the role of conference convenor for the 1996 National Dutch Australian Community Care Conference, held in Brisbane. That year I also joined the Board of Directors of the Netherlands Retirement Village Association of Queensland (operating the 'Prins Willem Alexander Village' at Birkdale); a voluntary role held up to date. In 1998 I took on the role of president of The Dutch Australian Community Action Federation - Qld Inc. DACA's activities are described in the Epilogue of this book.

Multicultural issues at large have my interest and I'm also involved in areas with a particular impact on nursing, such as palliative care (not addressed here) as well as industrial relations. For example, I am inaugural branch president of the Queensland Nurses Union at

my workplace and, as employee-representative, I participated recently in lengthy but worthwhile negotiations between our employer and the nursing-staff in order to improve working conditions. An agreement acceptable to both sides was eventually reached ... a real win-win situation and consistent with the aim of the enterprise bargaining process.

Apart from the time spent in my employment and the 'spare-time' required for committee-work, I am trying to maintain a certain balance in life by attempting to make time available for family and friends, playing tennis, to enjoy travelling, going the movies and attending live theatre performances. Regretfully, there is presently minimal time left for my other hobbies, such as bicycling, reading and cross-stitch embroidery. These will have to wait until after my retirement in approximately five years time.

As indicated at the beginning of this story, I have always valued my ties to The Netherlands, while feeling privileged to be living in Australia. I appreciate the wonderful climate here, have integrated sufficiently to participate fully in the community at large and enjoy the challenge to make a small contribution towards the changing world around us. When asked, for instance, why I bother to be involved with committee-work, I usually respond simply: "because someone has to do it". Having had minimal opportunity to participate in community activities when younger and while caring for a family, I am trying to do something in return now.

Since my emigration to this multicultural nation, I cannot recall that I have ever felt being disadvantaged because of my country of birth. However, stereotyping has been common. For instance, when the subject of euthanasia was discussed at a public function, someone expressed the assumption that because of my Dutch background I would be in favour of it; merely because of that person's awareness that relevant legislation was introduced in The Netherlands. I responded that, despite the current law in my country of origin, individuals tend to have their personal opinion in the euthanasia-debate. The assumption made would be comparable to the myth suggesting that all people in The Netherlands are wearing clogs. However, I'm unsure whether the person who did the generalising understood my reasoning.

Why have I consistently used the term 'The Netherlands' when referring to my country of origin? Calling it 'Holland' would be a mistake commonly made by Australians, including Dutch Australians. The Netherlands has twelve provinces, two of which are named 'Noord-Holland' and 'Zuid-Holland'. Historically those provinces may have been the most influential part of The Netherlands, but it would be incorrect to use the word 'Holland' when referring to the country as a whole. This is comparable with using the name of one of Australia's states when referring to the nation at large. My father, who died last year, would have enjoyed the inclusion of this issue in my story.

The effects of incorrect information received before coming here, as well as the initial 'discrimination' experienced in relation to gender, marital status and age were eventually overcome by changing attitudes towards those aspects of social justice within Australian society. That is certainly the experience of this most contented migrant, who is appreciating 'the best of two worlds'.

August 2000

Experience is not what happens to a person – it is what a person does with what happens to him/her (Huxley).

EMIGRATION? - NEVER!

Hans Geissler

Here I am - an immigrant, a naturalised Australian, a New Australian, a fellow Aussie in this egalitarian society. Looking back over 38 years, I am asking myself: "did I do the right thing?" I never wanted to migrate in the first place - did I? However, The Netherlands was not for me either. Born in 1934 and raised in Indonesia for 17 years, my roots were over there. My entry into Dutch society was traumatic. My parents kept telling me that I was a 'Hollandse jongen' (Dutch boy). They told me that from the time I was born, or so it seems. Every time when tears welled up during my childhood, or when things were getting tough during puberty, I was presented with that panacea. The initial trauma aside, coming of age in my new environment in Holland, away from parental supervision, was a beautiful and everlasting experience. Music, movies, personalities, and events of the 50s are still opening a gamut of memories. With my Indonesian cultural background I felt different - not a 'Hollandse jongen'.

The Diploma from the Deventer College of Tropical and Sub-tropical Agriculture was my deliberately planned ticket out of the Netherlands. A return to Indonesia? Yes, that was part of my plan, but I soon discovered that my roots had been severed. Politics intervened. Emigration was discussed amongst my fellow graduates. Some of the 'Hollandse jongens' with a farming background took the plunge. Still, in my mind, emigration remained something for farmers' sons whose family's land had become too small to be viable, or tradesmen, who were not as well educated as I was, I thought. No, I was different. I had been trained to become a manager of people, instructing them to plant coffee, tea, cacao and other exotic cultures. So I went to explore dark Africa and I believed that I succeeded. I even sent for my fiancée and we were married in the jungle in 1958. A great future was awaiting - so I thought.

Yet, I was a white planter. I could not help that - that I was white I mean. "Off you go" said the Africans, "Africa is for the Africans". Dutch New Guinea then? "Nay, this is no place for you either"- Sukarno said - "that is not New Guinea or Papua, it is Irian Jaya and it belongs to me." However, the Dutch said: "we have learned from our past, from our social reformers such as Douwes Dekker, and we are not colonials any more. We want to give Dutch New Guinea its independence!" "No!" The world cried, "give it to the Javanese, you arrogant little Dutchmen!" So, after a stint with the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority to submit our projects to my 'root brothers', I packed my bags again at the end of 1962 and travelled further South. My wife had earlier been evacuated back to Holland, as it was no longer safe for women and children. Robert Menzies was Prime Minister of Australia at the time and he was a pillar of stability with a firm grip on the other side of the island, Papua New Guinea (PNG). It was only a small detour on my way home to Katwijk aan Zee (~~North~~ ^{SOUTH} Holland) to go via Canberra. There I visited the former Department of Territories and told the officials what I had to offer. They confirmed that I would be welcome to plant cacao in PNG.

"We can pay for the journey ourselves, or travel on Government expenses and be classified as assisted migrants," I told my wife, who was waiting for me in Katwijk. We decided to become assisted migrants 'for a couple of days or so'. After all, we would not need further Government assistance. I knew what I wanted and Australia needed people like me. "Ah, but you have to live in Australia for five years, before you can become naturalised and before we can do anything with you officially." Five years, nobody had told me that! What could I do in

the mean time? Work for a private company in PNG? Their conditions were appalling. "The Queensland Department of Primary Industries needs people with your qualifications behind the 'Great Divide'," the officials told me. For the first time since my arrival, my qualifications were mentioned. I studied the map and the information provided and realised that I had not been trained for that. What did I know about cattle and sheep, droughts or fires? I wanted to work with people. Thank you but no thank you, I was not going behind the 'Great Divide'.

Before I knew what hit me, I was in the back of a truck, as part of a Parks and Gardens 'gang'. Unskilled labour! The promising colonial boy had landed in the pit. The 'real' migrants with their trades' qualifications were laughing. Reminding myself that I was supposed to be a 'Hollandse jongen', I started up from the bottom again by planting thorny *Pyracantha* bushes with my bare hands to beautify the parks and gardens of Canberra. "Become a member of the Miscellaneous Workers Union," (MWU) they told me, "then we'll make your life easier." "Go and jump in lake Burley Griffin!" the Dutch boy replied. So he was 'visited' by two Union bosses and a kangaroo court session followed in one of the glass houses. "Join or face a black-ban," was the verdict. It was time for me to 'integrate'. Indeed things happened with the MWU ticket. Promotion to Leading Hand, wow! Technical Assistant, Technical Officer! What more did I want? I was congratulated: "would you ever have achieved that in the old country?" they asked. Later I was 'discovered' by a scientist of the Department of Forestry, who had been a POW in Changi, so we had something in common as I had been imprisoned by the Japanese as well. He became my boss, my friend, my mentor on Australia, its people and the bush. One day over a beer, he said: "Hans, you talk about your training, yourself and your dreams but Australia is more interested in your children." That was a terrible psychological blow. As Technical Officer, I was not too happy with my lot, knowing that I could achieve more. If Australia was waiting for my children to make that happen, it was mistaken! That was it, I had enough of agriculture, horticulture and forestry. I became very interested in politics and multicultural affairs and I enrolled at the Australian National University (ANU) to study for a degree in Asian Studies and Islamic Civilisation. Mature motivation resulted in High Distinctions, which in turn awarded me a 'free place' by the Commonwealth Government to finish my final year without gainful employment but on full salary. I was offered a position with the Department of Foreign Affairs before I completed my degree. That was 'the great leap forward' for me. It took eight years from arrival in Australia to gain my rightful place. The following 30 years were however, well worth the initial effort. Because of my age I had to do a lot of catching up in the Australian bureaucracy but I advanced quickly. My first diplomatic posting as Second Secretary was to Singapore in 1973; this was followed by First Secretary postings to Kathmandu and Nairobi. Then I became Head, Foreign Affairs Passport Office in Brisbane, and after that Regional Director of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau, also located in Brisbane.

After my retirement, we visited Holland again in 1998. This time it was not a fleeting visit, like the ones at the end of my diplomatic postings. We stayed there five months, absorbing the Dutch way of life. There, we discovered a friendly, mature society without the political polarisation, which we just could not get used to in our adopted country. Australia faded away quickly from my mind. For family and economic reasons, we returned to Australia. Why was I so reluctant? Why did I have the feeling that I wanted to die on the 'Wim Kan Boulevard' or 't Merellaantje'? Why does it have to be 'Rupert Murdoch Pde' or 'Alfred Deakin Cr.'? For what purpose did I have to discover that I was after all, a 'Hollandse jongen'?...

September 2000

OLD FRIENDS MEET AGAIN

John Gyzemyter

This is the story of how my family - my parents and three children - migrated to Australia at the end of 1963. To understand why we ended up living in Queensland we'll go back to 1936. My father, Jan Gijzemijter, was employed by KLM - Royal Dutch Airlines - as an aircraft engineer. Aircraft of the DC-3 type, stripped of their wings and tail assembly, had been shipped to Waalhaven, Rotterdam, from the United States. My father was assigned to a team of engineers to re-assemble the planes, which were named after birds, and one of them - PH-ALW - became known as the 'Wielewaal' [Golden Oriole].

In 1937, after flying around Europe for about a year, Dad was offered a position as Flight Engineer with the KNILM - Royal Netherlands East Indies Airways - based in Bandung, Java. From 1938 to 1942, Dad flew within the Indonesian Archipelago, around South East Asia as well as Australia. Dad's first flight to Sydney took place on the 15th June 1939. During his many trips to Sydney, he developed a love affair with Australia and the Australian people.

The following is an extract from Dad's memoirs in which he writes about his first trip to Australia and his wartime adventures.

The flight, under the command of Captain 'Fiets' van Messel, followed the route: Batavia - Bali - Koepang - Darwin - Cloncurry - Longreach - Sydney; staying overnight in Bali and Cloncurry. In Darwin, I set foot on Australian soil for the first time and I was very excited. However, when I wanted to have the aircraft serviced, I had trouble communicating with the ground staff. "How much 'juice' (fuel) do you want mate? Do you want your 'lavvy' taken care of (lavatory emptied)?" What were they talking about? It had become customary to bring some cigarettes for the boys. We would hide the carton in the radio rack for the cabin cleaner to find and smuggle out. Being a new face, they did not know whether I would follow the custom and they appeared to be a bit stand-offish. The radio operator, who had made several trips before said: "You'd better tell them their cigarettes are in the usual spot." When I did, everything went like clockwork. At that stage, I did not know the Australians as well as I do now. The price of a carton of cigarettes in Batavia was two shillings and sixpence - a small price to pay for a lot co-operation.

We reached Cloncurry before dusk and our agent, local character Charlie de Warren, greeted the passengers with "Welcome to Cloncurry, hoe gaat het met je feest pistool" [how is your party gun]. Someone had taught him those words and he was tickled pink as he genuinely thought that they meant a welcoming phrase in Dutch. These words became his trademark and nobody was game to tell him the true meaning. English passengers wouldn't understand him anyway but it raised a few laughs with the Dutch passengers and an occasional raised eyebrow from the ladies. Our hotel for the night was the Post Office Hotel. From the moment Charlie and I met, we clicked. At the hotel Charlie introduced me to Ma Miller, the publican. Charlie took me for my first visit to a bar and ordered three 'scotch and drys'. As it had been a long day and we didn't have much to eat and drink, the scotches hit me with a bang. Captain van Messel told me that in Australia it was customary after accepting a drink, to buy one in return, called 'shouting'. When I ordered the next round, I saw that Charlie approved, considering me to be 'fair dinkum'.

It was only my first day in Australia and I had already experienced many things, which were strange to me. so I felt that nothing else was going to surprise me in this country. I was wrong! Taking our place in the dining room. I had not counted on the size of my steak topped with two large 'country eggs'. I looked at Van Messel but he only grinned and said: "Now don't complain because they will only think it's not big enough and they will take it away and bring you an even larger one." I told the waiter that I did not want a dessert but that I would love a cup of coffee. Van Messel told me: "you'd better make that tea". No, I wanted coffee! I believe that was the last time I drank coffee in a country hotel. I stuck to tea instead. Australians could at least brew a lovely cup of tea - but coffee? Brrr ... ! Breakfast the next day was another eye opener and when it was served, I nearly fell over. A huge plate with two fried eggs, three strips of bacon, two lamb chops, tomatoes and toast - it was only 0500 hrs. This was something I was not used to but I said to myself: "if you want to enjoy Australia, better do as the Australians do and get stuck into it."

After our stop in Longreach, we went on to Sydney. I will never forget my first impressions of Sydney as we flew over the harbor with the beautiful rock formations of 'The Heads' and the water under the bridge sparkling in the sunshine. Mascot was only a poky sort of aerodrome in those days and it was lovely to feel the plane rolling along on the grass surface. It was the first of many flights to Australia and many flights to Sydney followed until the war with Japan erupted.

The KLM service between Amsterdam and Batavia became impossible as the war in Europe extended to the Middle East. The last KLM flight departed from Lydda for Batavia in February 1942. The aircraft used for that flight was PK-ALW, the 'Wielewaal'. Due to the war, some of the KLM aircraft were transferred from the Dutch register to the Dutch East Indies register, hence, the change from PH-ALW to PK-ALW. Until the Japanese invasion, Dad continued his flights to evacuate women and children from the outlying islands to Batavia. On the 2nd March 1942, six KNILM aircraft evacuated essential personnel and families via Broome to Sydney.

Dad's story continues: "There were no maps of Broome and the north-western Australian coastline available. However, one of the pilots had found a school-atlas and traced five copies of that coastline including three tiny islands off the coast near Broome. A course was set and six planes took off, individually flying, a distance of 1550 km, mostly over water and in darkness while maintaining radio-silence. After six and half-hours flying we sighted Broome and landed there following an uneventful flight. Broome was in the grip of fear after the recent bombardment of Darwin and a Japanese spotter plane had been seen earlier that day; an air raid was expected at any time. There was no fuel for our aircraft because several American B-17 bombers had priority. We were told to go another 130 km to Derby. However, I estimated that we had only about 40 minutes of fuel left in our tanks. In the end my captain said that: "we won't do any good here, so lets go and try it - we might just make it."

Again flying without a map, we headed for Derby after we were told: "You can't miss it." After 35 minutes flying, we did see Derby in the distance and at that moment we ran out of fuel and both engines stopped. What rotten luck, so close! We spotted a clear grassy area without trees. There wasn't much time other than to lower the under carriage and flaps and we were rolling on the grass. Fortunately, we were able to send a radio message to the control officers at Broome, to tell them about our predicament. A search and rescue mission was organized. Looking for us, several aircraft flew overhead but could not find us as the plane was painted in camouflage colours. Finally, we were spotted and an aircraft with supplies for our passengers and fuel for the planes landed beside us in the grass. After sufficient fuel had been transferred, both aircraft took off for Broome. Among our passengers were many women and young children. It was therefore decided to stay overnight and get a good night's sleep to prepare us for

the long flight ahead. The threat of Japanese air-attack was always there, hence, I made sure that our aircraft was ready for immediate departure in the morning. Soon after breakfast, we departed on the 3rd March 1942 at 0910 hrs for Alice Springs and Sydney. An American B-24 carrying 33 people was the next to take off. Five minutes later, five Japanese 'zeros' attacked Broome. My captain brought our aircraft down to near ground level and continued. Meanwhile the attack on Broome was devastating. The B-24 was shot down during take-off and all on board were killed.

After stopping in Alice Springs and Charleville, we finally arrived in Sydney and were initially accommodated in the hotel that the KNILM was using for their flight crews. Eleven aircraft managed to escape from Java and our PK-ALW was amongst them. After reporting to the KNILM office in Sydney, I was told that the fleet had been chartered to the Australian government and that my colleagues and I were to move to Brisbane to fly personnel and supplies to Darwin. The Australian government welcomed the additional air transport capacity.

My move to Brisbane meant that my wife Co had to stay behind in Sydney. Unfortunately she did not speak one word of English. After reporting to the Darlinghurst police station to be finger printed and registered as aliens, we made a quick tour of the city. I pointed out the big department stores so that, with the help of a pocket dictionary, she could do a little shopping while I was away. When asked later to crew a flight to Sydney, I was given leave to spend with my wife. During my absence, KNILM staff had to move out of the hotel and into private lodgings. Most of the people went to King's Cross which was a well known international quarter and accommodation was easy to find there. With the help of one of my colleagues, Co went to a real estate agent who had 'just the apartment' and Co, being unable to ask any detailed questions, took it. The apartment was nice but she had not been told that the building was a well-known brothel. It was a big shock to me when I discovered this and I cancelled the lease immediately. We found a much nicer apartment at a far more acceptable address at the bottom of Elizabeth Bay Road.

All our aircraft were placed under direct US Command; nine were to join the the 21st squadron US Air Transport Command in Brisbane and one was assigned to 22nd Squadron in Melbourne. We were most disappointed to lose control over our planes. When we learned that all the aircraft had to be test-flown before delivery, we made a pact with the engineers to have the ten planes in the air at the same time. This resulted in the biggest 'flying circus' Sydney had ever seen. We flew down to the docks at Woolloomooloo where one of the pilots spotted the Dutch destroyer 'Tromp' and buzzed the ship and soon our other planes joined in. For 1942, those planes, DC-2s, DC-3s and DC-5s were large aircraft. Seeing ten such planes going helter skelter must have been quite a sight! All of a sudden, one of our aircraft headed for the Harbour Bridge. We followed suit and another aircraft followed us. The three of us flew under the Harbour Bridge and then turned around for a second go. The others did not. Their crew thought that they were already in enough trouble having buzzed the 'Tromp'. They were right! Before we landed, US General Kenny was on the telephone to our boss Versteegh to protest furiously about the 'irresponsible behaviour' of our aircrews. "Your pilots may know what they are doing but I've got all those young pilots who could be tempted to do the same, killing themselves in the process!" Our boss was not amused and 'boy, did he read the riot act'. After he calmed down, he admitted that he did not mind the American general being upset. The hardest part had been convincing the Australian Department of Civil Aviation that his aircrews had not violated any air traffic regulations. "You fellows should be paying for the lunches it cost me to convince them."

On the 18th May 1942, I was a crewmember on a flight to Melbourne to hand over the last remaining KNILM aircraft to the Americans. The KNILM, founded in 1928, ceased to exist on that day. Our aircrew had officially become civilians as they had lost all their aircraft to the Americans. In the meantime, the Dutch 18th squadron had taken delivery of a number of B-25 bombers. We were asked to assist in making the aircraft combat ready. We were issued with RAAF uniforms and became part of the Dutch 18th squadron under RAAF command. I instantly became a sergeant. After a while the group was transferred to Laverton air base to assist with another B-25 project. Progressively, each aircraft was dispatched to the Bachelor air base in the Northern Territory. On Boxing Day 1942 I moved to Bachelor. That air base was still under construction and facilities were very primitive. Lack of water was the biggest problem. We were given one minute to soap up and another one to rinse off. On the 6th January 1943 the KNILM group was recalled. The base commander was very upset at losing us and refused to authorise seats on an aircraft to Sydney. We had to travel back to Sydney by road and rail. In hindsight, it was the experience of a lifetime. After having flown over the country, I now saw it from the ground. After 13 days of constant travelling via Alice Springs, Adelaide and Melbourne, we reached Sydney. During the time on the road I had managed to grow a nice beard but on arrival in Sydney my wife informed me that she wasn't impressed and that the beard had to come off.

Our group was now assigned to the US Army Air Force. We were attached to the 39th Troop Carrier Squadron based at Archerfield Aerodrome in Brisbane. Our boss told us that a number of flight engineers would be retrained as pilots and I was delighted to be one of them. Until such time that we could arrange private accommodation, the Dutch group was billeted at the then 'National Hotel' on the corner of Adelaide Street. After we were kitted-out, the American squadron commander checked out our pilots and we commenced flying operations to New Guinea. On one of these trips my captain, being of an inventive mind, started the first airborne hot-food kitchen on the Brisbane - Port Moresby run. He had acquired a Primus burner and after flying for about two hours in perfect weather conditions at 8000 ft, he announced that he was going to cook breakfast. The burner was put on the navigation table. While the flight engineer stood by with a fire extinguisher, I started pumping the plunger and when we had enough pressure, the captain lit the burner. We had a fantastic breakfast of sausages, bacon and eggs, while the aircraft flew on automatic pilot. In hindsight that was a crazy thing to do of course but at the time no one gave the potential danger a thought! In September that year our son John - the author of this article - was born.

The Dutch squadron had built up a good record and it was appreciated that we always uncomplainingly accepting the oldest aircraft which often suffered lots of minor defects. To our delight and as a reward, we were given five brand new planes for our exclusive use. Everything worked including the cockpit heaters. Flying through the tropical rain, the aircraft didn't even leak!

My wartime duties as flight engineer as well as my 'on-line' pilot training continued. However, a persistent problem with my landings became obvious and it turned out that I had a deficiency in my depth perception, which made my final touchdowns less than smooth. I accepted advice that I would never make a competent pilot and was offered an alternative position on the ground. On the 1st September 1944, the Dutch squadron left the American Command and formed the 1st Netherlands East Indies Transport Squadron and I was given the job to set up and manage the maintenance division of the squadron. The new squadron was allocated hangar space at Archerfield Aerodrome but tools and parts were hard to come by. We had only one set of wing jacks and a second set was desperately needed. Obtaining them through the normal official channels was hopeless. Danny, an Irishman in our crew with the gift of the

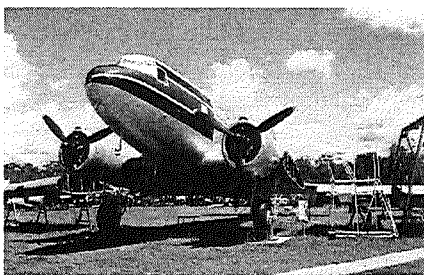
gab, had discovered there was a shed full of RAAF equipment including at least two dozen wing jacks. There were two guards in the office, and over the next couple of weeks, Danny set about befriending them with his yarns. One day while Danny had the two guards in fits of laughter, two of our engineers spirited away a couple of RAAF jacks. Those jacks were taken straight into our hangar where they were immediately repainted. Before Danny finished telling his yarns the jacks had been converted to Dutch Air Force property.

In January 1945, our daughter Joann was born. Our war in the Pacific finished on the 6th August 1945. After various assignments, I was posted to Jakarta and my time in Australia came to an end. Once over there, my wife and I realised how we had come to love Australia and the Australian way of life. In 1950, working once again for KLM in Jakarta, our third child Frank was born. In 1953, the family found itself back in Australia for a short time on a posting on behalf of KLM, Royal Dutch Airlines. It was during this time that our son John met his future wife in grade four of the Landsborough primary school.

After postings to Rome, Italy, and New York, the urge to return to Australia became too much and on the 8th November 1963, our family officially emigrated to Australia. By doing so two of our children, Jan and Jos, returned to their country of birth and we settled in Sydney. Soon after arriving there, I was offered a job by Reg Ansett, as Maintenance Manager, which I did not accept. I wanted to get out of the high-pressure airline industry and do something totally different. One of my life's ambitions was to own and run a news agency but after a short stint as the proprietor of a general store/news agency in Quaker's Hill, New South Wales, it became quite clear 'that it was not for me'. After seven months, I returned to the airline industry and on 12 October 1964 I joined Qantas as a mechanic in the hydraulic section.

On my first day at work the Manager Aircraft Overhaul and Maintenance discussed my past experience and qualifications with me and I was later introduced to two gentlemen, the Manager Technical Training and the Supervisor Apprentice Training. It was explained to me that a few months ago a Dutchman had given a series of lectures on Dutch apprentice training methods. They were so impressed that they wanted to incorporate the main part of that system into the Qantas apprentice training method. They said: "We are in the process of updating our apprentice training in readiness for the introduction of the Boeing B747. We feel that you are the person to do it." Thus, in time, I was appointed to the position of 'Apprentice Training Controller'. On the 1st July 1975, after almost 11 years, I retired from Qantas and my second aviation career had come to an end. By this time our children were married and had moved to Brisbane. We therefore retired in Queensland.

In 1994, I was contacted by a member of the Queensland Air Museum Inc. at Caloundra aerodrome which just acquired a DC-3 VH ANR. Investigations revealed that the aircraft was originally delivered to KLM in 1937 and that it used to be named the 'Wielewaal'. It was a great surprise to see the plane again that I had worked on and flown in so many years ago. Later, when the aircraft was put on public display at Caloundra, I was able to sit once more in the cockpit. It was a fitting end for two old codgers who commenced their aviation careers in Holland to retire in good old sunny Queensland.



September 2000

IMMIGRATION - I, II & III

Harry Rynenberg

I was born in Indonesia and spent the first 19 years of my life in the tropics. After a three-year stint with the Japanese in their prison camps, I was repatriated to the Netherlands to continue my education (my first immigration, as I call it). My schooling was three years behind because of my imprisonment and I was short of money. I decided to attend the College of Tropical Agriculture in Deventer, which was at that time a three-year technical course. By completing this course, I hoped to eventually return to Indonesia as a plantation employee with the intent to become manager. Studying in Deventer, I had a fantastic time, became active in the students' 'Corps' and I made a large number of friends - friendships that would last a lifetime. In 1950, when the end of my studies approached the last Dutch planters in Indonesia were unfortunately being kicked out as Indonesia had now become independent and the sentiments at that time were very anti-Dutch in the aftermath of Indonesia's fight for freedom. Our envisioned future was therefore no longer a reality.

As I was not used to the cold climate in the Netherlands and employment prospects for aspiring planters in a cold country were minimal, I considered immigration to be a way out. Four countries were on my short-list to choose from - Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia. Canada due to its cold climate was a no-no, South Africa had racial problems from which we had previously escaped and Australia seemed to be too large. Finally, New Zealand with its mild climate and developed social structure seemed to be the pick of the bunch. Later I felt my Deventer training had been wasted time, as the colonial system did no longer exist.

I decided to emigrate, resulting in my second immigration, and I travelled to New Zealand in 1950 as a single man. I already was contracted to work in a dairy factory. It is of interest to mention that I was on board of the first direct KLM - Royal Dutch Airlines - flight from Schiphol [Amsterdam Airport] to Auckland. The flight took six days and was under the command of the well-known Captain Virulie.

The initial period in New Zealand was the hardest because I had only a basic knowledge of English and minimal experience of manual work. In the beginning I felt very lonely in the 'new country' but stayed there for a total of 19 years. First, I worked for a dairy company to fulfil my 2-year contract period, then I became a technical assistant in forestry research in Rotorua. Next I became a machine operator making newsprint and later a timber chemical treatment 'expert', followed by insurance salesman and I finally settled on a job as representative selling new Ford motor cars. Each time I changed careers, I improved my income and type of work a little. Working for a Ford dealer opened the doors when I was looking for work in Australia.

I married a New Zealand girl and we have four children. English was therefore the sole language in our household. In fact, in the six-year period that I worked on the big paper machine, I did not speak a word of Dutch. Unfortunately, our youngest son was born with a degree of deafness for which help was not readily available in New Zealand. However, we found out that there was a well-known school for the deaf in Brisbane where we could find assistance. We were also attracted by the warmer climate in Brisbane and we decided to migrate. That was the third immigration for me and our family has never regretted this move.

This time migration was not a novelty anymore and different problems, of a minor nature compared with the move to New Zealand, were encountered. As language was no barrier, finding work was not a great hurdle. The difference between New Zealanders and Australians in habits and in history is not too obvious. The greatest disadvantage of moving from New Zealand to Australia was the loss of friends and the difficulty to find new friends. In those days, the transfer of money from New Zealand to Australia was a problem. Therefore, our financial situation was rather tight when we arrived in Brisbane. After overcoming that hurdle, we bought a house in Sunnybank and settled down. Fortunately, I immediately found a job with a Ford dealership and continued selling new motorcars for the next 11 years.

I joined a Lyons Club and enjoyed the company of the members there but still find it difficult to make friends. I feel that this may be due to the dominating factor of diverse backgrounds. In contrast, our children's outlook on life is nothing but Australian. Only for curiosity's sake would they like to visit Holland to experience their father's background.

Lately, being actively involved in the demand for reparation from the Japanese Government, I had to speak Dutch again. I was pleasantly surprised how neatly that language came back to me. Despite the fact that my wife does not speak Dutch, I have been active in a Deventer 'old-boys' group; predominantly in Australia and sometimes also in the Netherlands.



Harry Rynenberg, on the far right of the left-hand photograph, the Chairman/Co-ordinator of the Australian Civilian Japanese Prisoner-of-war Reparation Action Group - 'Japrag', taking part in the march to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War.

Finally, I set up my own small finance business from which I semi-retired in 1996, while keeping a few customers to have something to do and to top up my Australian old age pension. Every five years we have been on a European holiday and visited Holland, which we enjoy as a holiday destination. These visits usually coincided with the five yearly anniversary celebrations of the Deventer agricultural students union. To live permanently in the Netherlands would be another matter of course. The children have grown up, we enjoy our grand children and we would miss all that, if we were living overseas. It would be difficult to get used to the Dutch way of living again and one needs a high income to manage financially over there.

Such is life! In hindsight, staying in The Netherlands may have been a better proposition but that's how it goes. It has been a long and sometimes difficult struggle to get where we are now.

August 2000

OUR BLESSED DECISION

Anna Kuiper

Our family consists of: father Willem, mother Anna, daughters Anne-Mieke and Lily, and sons Jon, Alexander and Pieter. We lived in Ede, The Netherlands, and my husband, an engineer, worked together with his father and brother in the family business. However, we felt pressured to make a change in our life. The children were often sick because of a lack of sunshine, although we headed each year to the Riviera to receive our dose of sunshine. This was an unsatisfactory arrangement and there was a lot to organise with so many children of course. Sometimes we were too tired to have the strength to follow the sun. However, if we didn't go, we would pay for it dearly for the rest of the year through constant colds and flu in the winter. I remember Mieke going to school on her bike (half an hour each way) and it seemed she was always wearing a raincoat. The weather appeared to be so much worse than I remember from my childhood. The place where we lived in The Netherlands, though a beautiful spot in the woods, could be very a depressing landscape full of dripping wet trees. That is why we made the decision to migrate to sunny Queensland in Australia.

In January 1970, we traveled on the Greek ship 'Australis' via Cape Town to Australia. I had hoped that a month of peace and quiet without cooking or other household duties would give me a good period of rest in preparation for the life to come. However, we had wild weather almost all the way and the journey seemed long. I was the only one in the family who spoke English but lessons were available on the ship and I tried to teach the children a bit myself. When we came to Australia we discovered that almost everything seemed so different, even Australian-English was quite different. The traffic kept to the left, the moon was upside down, the houses were built on stilts and people lived upstairs. The children had problems with English at school. In comparison to Queensland the education standards in The Netherlands are very high, almost absurdly so, therefore it only took them three months to catch up once their English improved. Mieke and Lily started high school together in 1970 and that year Mieke managed to become third and Lily thirteenth out of a class of 180 - that was amazing!

We settled on acreage in Pullenvale, in the western hills of Brisbane. It was still very much rural over there but close enough to the city to give us city comforts. The children loved the easy way of living. We were able to keep horses and horse riding was their favorite pastime. We did not feel homesick at all. Sometimes there were hard times but we did not lose our sense of belonging to this sunny country. We always looked ahead.

Our children completed their tertiary education. Mieke became a general practitioner (GP), Lily a veterinarian, Jon a teacher and Alex and Pieter both electronic engineers. They are happily married and we now have eleven grandchildren. Throughout the years a very pleasant custom developed. All the families come together for a reunion on Christmas day. This is a wonderful time of catching up, mixing and bonding with our entire family. We reminisce about the 'old days' and laugh at all the silly things that happened throughout the year.

Our decision to migrate has been an excellent one.

July 2000.

SNOW TO FIRE

Lily Podger – nee Kuiper

Our family, all seven of us, migrated from Bennekom in Gelderland in 1970. There was a lot of snow that winter. I was 11 and had never heard of Australia or kangaroos. My father was a partner with his older brother in the engineering firm that my grandfather had started; at least I presume so because it was called 'Kuiper and Sons'. It was a large, dirty factory in a little village and smelled of oil, rust and welding fumes. My mother graduated as a physiotherapist but was a fulltime mum looking after five kids between the age of 4 and 12. She strikes me as a brave woman to take all of us to the other side of the world without any contacts or support at the other end. My parents sold almost everything; the rest went into two huge wooden crates that Dad had built. They had 'KUIPER MELBOURNE' written on them. Dad took his old speedboat with him and he bought a big tent just in case we could not find a place to stay.

On the ship 'Australis' to Australia, my parents changed their mind about going to Melbourne, I think because of the rumours about the extremes of weather in that city. Therefore, we went on to Sydney, where we disembarked instead, and boarded a rickety train to Brisbane. That trip took about 24 hours and the train was full of other migrant families with wailing children who had the measles. My sister Mieke was the first to set foot on Australian soil in Fremantle. To me that was more significant than crossing the equator. It was a bit like setting foot on the moon.

Communicating in English never seemed to be much of a problem. Mum had prepared us a bit by teaching us. My sister and I had learned English at school and there were also lessons on the ship. I think, however, that I mostly got the hang of it from watching Australian television, especially the ads, because they were so repetitive and if you missed a word you had another chance 5 minutes later.

My youngest brother, Pieter, was only four years old when we arrived. He soon lost the ability to speak Dutch. When my grandparents visited a few years later, it irked him so much that he couldn't be the chatterbox he normally was, that he set himself the task of re-learning Dutch. He was quite taken by 'Dutchness'. He married Ingeborg in the Netherlands and my parents attended their wedding. My brother and his wife lived and worked in that country for a few years. When the weather got him down, they moved to Brisbane. My other siblings and I have never gone back to the Netherlands. I have no real inclination to do so and feel that I have no ties with the country or its people. I still have a bit of an accent and I don't like it when people ask me where I come from. I have a whole catalogue of responses now, ranging from 'my mothers vagina' to 'I am a child of the universe'.

My brother Jon (changed from Jan) and I went to Goodna Primary School. I found learning rather easy there compared to what I was used to. Back in Holland, I had seen a picture of some school uniforms worn in Australia. It was a bit of an eye-opener. I rather fancied the wide brimmed straw hat but found in fact few hats and mostly no shoes either. A fair percentage of children didn't have a school uniform at all. The schoolroom we were in was 100 years old and had big posts in the middle of the classroom, supporting the second story. These posts were quite handy as a place to stand behind when everyone in class was saying

the Lord's Prayer and I didn't have a clue of the words. My teacher wore clearly a wig and we had to read 'Dick and Dora' (I was supposed to be in Grade 7 but I was in a special class for non-English speaking students) and we were bored stiff. After a while, having to write numbers as words such as 'one thousand three hundred and sixty-nine', ad infinitum and the French boy repeatedly throwing scrunched paper balls at me, my mother requested some sort of tests, to explore whether I could go to High School.

I was admitted to High School and soon I was studying the Periodic Table and how many electrons whizzed around each atom. I ended up in the same Grade as my sister Mieke but somehow I never managed to get my own identity at school. I was always 'Mieke's sister'. My name was actually Caroline but when I left school, aged 16, and went to the University of Queensland, I decided to make a clean break and change my name to 'Lily', which was really my first name.

My ambition was always to become a Veterinarian. Guidance officers at school told me it was not a suitable job for a girl, which made me even more determined. It is interesting to note that up to 80% of Vet Science graduates are now women. I had to finish a Science degree before being accepted into the Veterinary Science Faculty but after eight years at Queensland University, I was pleased to leave its car park for the last time. I met Greg in second year Vet and married him before third year began.

We bought a practice in Hervey Bay and started work in the January after graduating. We worked without a holiday for six years with one and a half day off a fortnight, until we sold the practice and started a family.

After our second son was born, I started testing the possibility that there was an artist living in my brain. I had dabbled a bit in oil painting and I became involved in Community Art and large-scale performances with lanterns, fire and fireworks. It seems to be what I'm good at. I still spay the odd cat and do the occasional locum stint in our old practice. Recently I learned to weld, make large metal sculptures and the sparks are nearly as good as fireworks.

I became a naturalised Australian when I had lived longer in Australia than in Holland. My young son wanted to know afterwards which words I'd said to the Queen when I 'swore' I'd be a good little Aussie "What do you mean?" I asked. "Like 'f...' or something" he said.

Two of my aunts are coming to visit us, 30 years after we left Holland. I am actually looking forward to meeting them again and so I will try to 'bone up' on my Dutch speaking skills by watching Dutch movies on SBS-TV. After spending a week with my Dutch sister-in-law in 1989, I realised it's all still in there. The only problem is that I still have the vocabulary of an eleven-year-old. In addition, things like computers and microwaves did not exist when I left the Netherlands, so I have no idea of their equivalent names in Dutch.

I think moving to Australia was the best thing my parents ever did for us but I feel that it was not so successful for them. Although they could speak English reasonably well and Dad started a job almost straight away, they never made any real friends and became quite isolated in suburbia. Family gatherings are the only social events that take place in their lives and I think the whole emigration experience has been quite a sacrifice for them.

September 2000

SELAMAT TINGAL INDONESIA - GOODBYE PAPUA NEW GUINEA SELAMAT DATANG AUSTRALIA

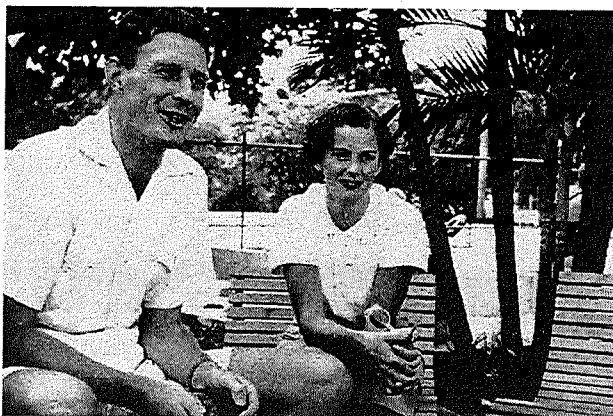
[Goodbye Indonesia - goodbye Papua New Guinea: Welcome Australia.]

Tes Eeltink - Bouchier

The above phrase, in a nutshell, is my story of arrival Down Under!

I never dreamt that I would live one day in Australia and probably would have called anyone who suggested this - even in good spirit - quite mad. However, life is full of surprises and often likes to push us in different directions, whether we like it or not.

My husband was educated in Tropical Agriculture (Deventer) and I was a qualified nursing sister (midwife). Han, my husband, was working as a tea/rubber planter and I worked



part-time at outpatients clinics for the plantation workers and their families, which included delivering babies and emergency treatment. This medical assistance was much appreciated by the workers, as the nearest clinic was a long way down the plantation road and it helped to establish good relationships with the Indonesians. Eventually, though we had to leave for political reasons.

*1950 - Han & Tes Eeltink, just engaged,
at Djember, East Java, Indonesia*

After our beloved time in Indonesia (Selamat tingal [goodbye]), we departed for the Netherlands where we lived for a couple of years in three different cities, had three different jobs but found it hard to settle in our own home land. My husband, especially, was missing his outdoor life and the freedom of managing the tea/rubber plantations. He wanted to transfer the family to Australian Papua New Guinea (PNG) if this could be arranged by way of the Australian Embassy in The Hague. The information we collected from an Embassy official was very encouraging but the nail in the coffin was that we had to migrate first to Australia as ordinary migrants and once there, could apply for positions in PNG, which were usually published in Australian newspapers. We were told, however, that many positions on the plantations were vacant and that we, old professionals, were very welcome and in great need!

Although I was not so happy about the implication of going as migrants, I agreed for the sake of my husband's happiness and longings and we applied for the third round of moving to a totally new environment! As soon as we arrived in Australia, Han scanned the newspapers and after contact with a company in PNG, was offered a plantation position some distance away from Port Moresby. We were not very impressed with Australia. Most of the suburban houses we saw were unpainted and gardens looked dry and untidy. The clothing too was not the typical tropical clothing we were used to, the men wearing black suits and the women gloves, interesting hats and stockings. We were happy to pack up again, this time onto a beautiful cargo ship heading to Port Moresby. After a short stay there, we flew on to the rubber plantation where Han could start his beloved work once more. We had six good years

in our new homeland but I missed my daughters who were at boarding school in Brisbane and they in turn were not really happy there without us. We all missed our family life together. I decided that we had to move again. As well, the economic and financial situation in PNG had deteriorated considerably and we were losing too much financially. The Company my husband worked for also had losses and, to compensate, began asking managers to keep cattle as well, to make up for the crop losses. I thought the time had come for me to leave PNG and go to Australia for a new start to our hectic life. My husband would stay on for a while and follow later.

1969 - Tes's daughters, 1 to r, Marjolein, Brigitte and Tes Jnr, on holidays during boarding school - Moreton Bay College.



I travelled back to Australia in 1970 to prepare for the fourth move of house, land and kids. Once in Brisbane, I found that I could start work straightaway in my profession as a midwife at the Royal Women's Hospital near the centre of the city. Being a staff member, I lived in the nurses quarters, which enabled me to save money while our daughters remained at boarding school. I needed some time to settle down after the move and used that opportunity to save sufficient money to buy a house. At least the children were happier knowing mum was in Brisbane and I could take them out for long weekends and holidays!

After a year of preparation my husband quit his contract and left PNG and he joined us in Brisbane. We were fully aware that it would be hard to start a new life again and to build a future for us all in Australia, but we did it, again but with now with less luxury. We rented our first home in Chermside and it was a pleasure to live as a complete family again. Both Han and I found work at the library of the University of Queensland. We enjoyed that work as we love books. With hard work and planning we reached our goals. I believe that settling in Queensland has been the best move for us. We learned to love the state, the sunny climate, the green and brown scenery as well as the easy approach to living. We did not regret to have come here nor were we homesick for the other three countries where we spent part of our life.



Christmas 1995 - Tes Jnr and grand children, Blake, Alyssa and Holly.

That is my story of our migration to Australia. My daughters also love the life in their new country. They are married now and have families of their own. After my husband happily settled in Brisbane, he sadly passed away - too soon - but such is life. Fortunately, we managed to travel a lot to far away countries, a much-desired pastime. We preferred travelling to living in an expensive house and I am thankful for the time given us. We found that we do change and learned to accept and love a new country.

I would like to finish by saying that Australia gave us a truly 'Selamat Datang'[welcome].

July 2000

ABOUT LANGUAGES, AVOCADOES, BREAD AND SAILING AROUND THE WORLD

Carel Vogelsang

When travelling to the other side of the globe, you may as well take your time and enjoy the journey. We therefore opted for a ship rather than a plane when we were migrating from Sweden to Australia in 1970.

We had moved from Holland to Sweden in 1964, after our daughter Caroline was born. We had become country dwellers after having grown up as city people. My Swedish born wife, Kristina, was a nurse/midwife, and I had worked for Philips Industries, in The Netherlands, Africa and South America. In Sweden, I was engaged in various activities, while Kristina worked as a midwife at a nearby hospital. We enjoyed country life in general but the winters were always a bit of a nuisance, with a lot of snow and slush and ice. After a particularly severe winter with temperatures of -28° C, we decided to move to a better climate and, having considered various possibilities, we figured that Australia would offer the best future both for us and for our children.

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 21st 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.

We made a round the world trip via Hawaii, North and South America, Europe and Asia, and when we returned we moved to Mt Tamborine, where we had initiated a small avocado farm in 1973. After we finished building our house there we looked for another activity and bought the local bakery - established in 1924 - when it came up for sale in 1984. For a while we ran it by ourselves, then employed more staff and later leased it to the baker we had employed in January 1985. In the late 1980s my nephew Alex Baan, who had lived in the Canary Islands, migrated to Australia and, after leasing the bakery for a few years, bought the freehold from us. Of course, the money involved in our buying and selling transactions belonged partially to the bank!

In 1992, we sold the avocado farm and moved to the southern end of Mt Tamborine, where we had built a pole-house with uninterrupted views to the west. Two years after that we bought a yacht in Sweden and the two of us sailed it to Brisbane via the Panama canal. Our youngest daughter Caroline and husband Stefan and their children were briefly with us at the beginning and again in the Caribbean.

Upon our return, we became acquainted with the 'Amway' business, through our daughter and son-in-law who had come to Australia from Sweden a year earlier. After some reservations, we began to participate actively in the networking. In July 1999, Amway finally started in Scandinavia as the last territory in Western Europe. We went there and stayed six months, establishing the foundation of our own business there. In the year 2000, we went back to Sweden for a similar period, helping the people who joined last year and finding others to conduct business.

Travel has always appealed to us and it seems that this is one way of getting plenty of it. Although we are away a lot, and enjoy being in other countries, we have never regretted moving to Australia - as Peter Allen wrote:

**“But no matter how far or how wide I roam,
I still call Australia home”**

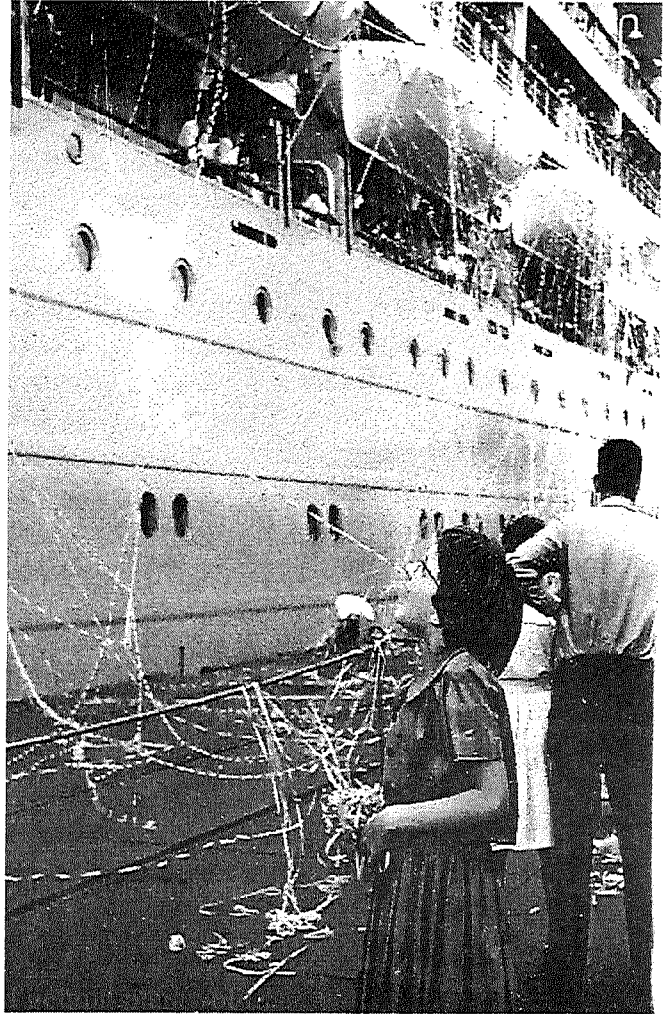
August 2000

I FOLLOWED MY HEART

By Marleen Hengeveld - Mijnarends

I was born in February 1948 in a big house in Amsterdam, only a few houses away from the famous 'Concert Gebouw'. Our father had his dental practice on the middle floor of our house. With so many people walking through the house, my mother needed some extra help with the housekeeping. Lida was with us every day, she was like a big sister to me and she always had time to listen to my stories. Lida fell in love with an Australian and left by ship when I was about four or five years old. So from that time my interest in that far-away country was awakened. Lida sent me postcards and one day a parcel arrived which contained a little statue of an aboriginal girl with a fat tummy sticking out and a necklace of wattle flowers around her neck. I absolutely loved it. That was Australia for me!

In 1959, my brother Rob-Jan married Jacomien and soon after they left by boat for Australia. Letters went back and forth, photos were sent and my interest in Australia grew. After finishing high school I went to Teachers college in Amsterdam where I specialised in the Montessori method of teaching.



Marleen at Rob-Jan and Jacomien's departure 7 September 1959

After three years at college I decided to take a break. Thanks to some money left to me by an elderly great-aunt when I was only young, I made a trip of three months duration to Allora on the Darling Downs in Queensland. I visited my brother Rob-Jan and his wife Jacomien there and got to know my Australian niece and nephews. My first impressions were amazement at the very long and empty roads, the big advertising signs and the little towns with their corner pubs and awnings shading the footpaths. It reminded me of American movies! And the flies! Walking to the shops in Allora, your back would be black with flies!

As I had always lived in Amsterdam, I enjoyed getting to know the small community of Allora and joined in many activities. There was another Dutchman in Allora, called Martin, who worked with Rob-Jan in the Soil Conservation Branch of the Department of Primary Industries. He was a 25-year-old bachelor who enjoyed photography and painting. It didn't take long before he came to visit us and he invited me to a dance, a walk in the rainforest and to help him develop and print his photos. Three weeks later I wrote a letter to my parents

telling them I'd fallen in love and wouldn't be back! My parents came over for six weeks to get to know their grand children and Martin. His parents, who lived in Melbourne, drove up to meet my parents and me. We organized an engagement party at Rob-Jan and Jacomien's place.

I went back to Amsterdam to organise our wedding and my migration. Martin came over and we married on May 30th 1970. We had a great honeymoon, riding our bikes through Holland while camping on the way. Then we took the train to Switzerland to visit Martin's relatives. Soon it was time to prepare for migration. I'm sure every migrant remembers those last dreadful months and weeks in which you have to decide what to take and what to leave behind and those terrible 'good-byes' at the airport. I left in 1970, not knowing whether I would ever see my elderly parents again. The tears came when the plane took off and didn't stop until Bangkok.

When we arrived back in Allora, Martin received the news that he was transferred to the Soil Conservation office in Jandowae, about 200-km northwest of Allora. Jandowae was a town of 900 people situated on the Northern Darling Downs. When we moved there, it was still a flourishing town. There were two banks, three pubs, three churches, two doctors, a hospital, two butcher shops, a drapery, a couple of milk bars and a baker. The movie theatre showed two movies on Friday and Saturday nights and there was a choice of dances, either in Jandowae itself or in any of the dance halls in nearby country towns. Martin and I both love dancing, so every weekend we danced away in a hall somewhere, sometimes many miles away. I loved the rides through the dark countryside, wondering where on earth we were going until suddenly you saw the light of a hall in the distance. The dances were usually announced, like 'the Canadian Three-step', 'the Pride of Erin' and the 'Barn-dance'. As neither Martin nor I knew the exact steps we often improvised and created our own movements, which won us a few prizes (like Mars bars!). Alcohol was not served at the dances, we had cups of tea and sandwiches for supper. In the early 1970s Australian fashion was still at least one season behind. So when I came to Australia and wore my maxi skirt, people's interest was stirred and I was often asked what people were wearing in Europe. I was even invited to be the judge at one of the balls and to choose the 'Most Fashionably Dressed Lady' on the dance floor!

We moved into our Public Service house on high stumps. Our only furniture was a double bed, two garden chairs, a wooden box turned upside down as a coffee table and an old curtain as table cloth. We hung Martin's artwork on the walls and lived like this for many months until some of my furniture arrived from Holland. Martin went to work at his office in Jandowae. Most of the time he'd be away in the country, advising farmers how to save their soils with the help of strip cropping and surveying levee banks etc.

So there I was, on my own, in our house on stumps. I still remember that first day - it dawned on me that I didn't know anyone in town and that there was nothing in the house, except my clothes, that was mine. This was a scary feeling! What was I going to do? I walked to town and bought a magazine. After reading it I decided to knit one of the patterns shown. The knitting needles and wool I bought were my first possessions in Australia.

On one of my walks through town I discovered that the Presbyterian Church had a Ladies Guild, which met once a month on Tuesday afternoons. I thought it might be a good way to get to know some people. When I walked in I realised that the meeting was well underway. Everyone turned around when I entered and introduced myself. Later I was told that new

people in town “didn’t just walk in, they were usually invited by someone to join!” How was I to know that? Anyway the rest of the meeting was ‘abracadabra’ to me. There was a lot of talk about a ‘Lamington Drive’ which I interpreted as ‘lemmings’, little animals that suicide in the water? Luckily one of the women then said: “well, I baked two dozen of them and Max loved them”. So that gave me the clue at least that it was something to eat! I found out that the minister of the church was also born in the Netherlands and the Presbyterian Manse became a regular stopping place for me after I had done my shopping. Peter and his Australian wife Anne gave me a lot of insight about ‘who was related to whom’ and the unwritten ‘rules’ of a small community. They are still good friends of ours.

After a while I got a bit bored and looked around to see whether there was any opportunity for me to work. I wrote to the Queensland Education Department but it took them a while to reply. In the meantime I saw an advertisement in one of the shopwindows for a ‘Show Secretary’. I applied even though I had no idea what an agricultural Show entailed. Very soon I was visited by the President of the show society and his wife, who had just seen another applicant who had talked to them non-stop, so they decided that a ‘quiet Dutch girl’ was the better of the two. They took me to a couple of Shows to show me the ropes. My job would be to write minutes of meetings and organize ribbons for the winners.

I went to the hospital to ask whether they needed a nursing-aid. There was a job available. Despite my lack of nursing skills, I got the job at the outpatients’ clinic and through it I came to know many local people. My biggest problem was how to spell the surnames of the people and how to find their records quickly. I lasted only six weeks and resigned just before they decided to put me on night duty!

Soon after that the local kindergarten teacher said she was getting tired of her job and asked whether I would like to take it. I was delighted of course! Initially there were kindergarten sessions on Fridays only, to coincide with the local cattle sale. My job was to set up the tables, easels and play corners and at the end of the day everything had to be put away again. No paint spots should be left on the floor or the Ladies Guild would complain. (It was a good training ground for my later teaching job in Melbourne). I loved the kindergarten and didn’t mind the miserable \$5.00 I got paid for my efforts. At long last I was doing what I always had wanted to do - teach!

After a while I received a position at Jandowae Primary School, where I taught 35 Grade-3 children. The previous teacher had suddenly been transferred. My first encounter with the Queensland school system was not favourable. At my first appointment with the principal he was busy caning one of the year-7 boys who’d called his teacher ‘Smarty Pants.’ Walking along the school verandah I often heard teachers yelling at their pupils - a far cry from the gentle Montessori system I had been brought up with. The school was very under-resourced at that time. Preparation of lessons was very difficult without a library in town but the children were lovely. Towards the end of the year I knew I was pregnant and I left my job at school.

Our first son Aldo was born in July 1972. How I wished my parents could have been there to see our beautiful baby boy! Aldo got a little brother (Tobias) 15 months later and a little sister (Anouk) in August 1975. Three children in three years: we certainly were busy!

Around the time Anouk was born we’d bought an old Queensland house in town for \$3000. It was very old and neglected but Martin was keen to restore it, getting up early in the

morning and doing some work before going to the office and also during the weekends. These were difficult years: the children were sick a lot, the baby kept on waking several times at night for two years and my hay-fever drove me mad, day and night! I always felt as if I had the flu. We had three children in nappies so we had to light the wood-stove every second night to heat the hot water. The little house would get so hot that in desperation I'd go to the park across the road and sit on the seesaw to get away from it all. I'd dream of 'escape'.

One weekend Rob-Jan and Jacomien came to stay with us for the weekend. Rob-Jan brought an advertisement he had seen in 'The Australian', in which a Montessori teacher was required in Melbourne. He was somewhat apologetic for even bringing it along, because Melbourne is far from Jandowae. Nevertheless, he thought it interesting that Montessori schools existed in Australia. Martin suggested that I apply for the job, which I did. I was appointed and in 1978 we moved to Melbourne and I joined the one and only teacher at the 'Plenty Valley Montessori School', which had been running for a year.

As I had Queensland Teacher Registration, I expected to be registered in Victoria without any trouble but that was not the case. I could register there only if I would do several subjects at Melbourne Teachers College during the holidays. "Queensland is different," I was told. Many times I wondered if I'd made the right decision. I was working so hard to build up this school. All my spare time was needed for my studies. Martin was the one who took the kids out for several hours every weekend.

The school had been started in a church hall so we had to set up daily and pack everything away at night. In 1982 we had grown big enough to move to a block of land in Diamond Creek. I've been working for the Montessori school on and off for 21 years. Martin became a 'house-husband' in the first few years until Anouk was old enough to go to school. Then he became a builder.

The children are all in their twenties now and have moved away from home. Martin spent the years 1998-1999 building our dream home in a bush environment in Eltham; with abundant wildlife and plenty of space for visitors from interstate or overseas. We love living here.

Migration is a big risk for anyone and I feel very lucky that everything has worked out as well as it has. The move to Melbourne was also risky. After all, Martin gave up a good job so I could fulfil my dreams! Of course, there are regrets with any big move. It is particularly hard to have to leave the people behind. My parents were able to visit us several times, so our children did get to know them. After my parents' death, it was very hard to come to terms with the fact that I had not been there to help them. However, migration is also a chance for freedom, a chance to reconsider the priorities in your life without the baggage of your past.

People often wonder why I haven't become an Australian citizen after living here for 30 years. That is one step I still can't take - I am Dutch inside. I can't change that!

September 2000

THE AUSTRALIAN AUNT WITH THE DUTCH ACCENT

Nelly Smets

A niece called me by that name, when she came to visit from Belgium where I was born and where I lived until we migrated. In 1989 my mother, who spoke only Flemish, visited and I started taking her to the 'Instuif', which is a 'coffee group' for Dutch people - and since then I have continued to go. I started doing some work for Home Care for the elderly, which takes note of the language groups so people get a helper whom they can understand. I worked particularly with Dutch people. So, let me now tell my story.

For us 1968 was a happy but also a sad year. In April I gave birth to my third son - he was such a beautiful little boy! - and everything was good. I had three lovely sons, a beautiful house, and my husband asked me, "Are you happy?" I said, "Yes, what else could I want?" I didn't know then that he was trying to tell me he had lost his job. He had talked on and off about migration but I was not at all keen and certainly I didn't want to go to South Africa, for which you had to sign that you would not befriend black people. I thought no more about it.

One day he went to 'work' but, in fact, he had lost his job and was being treated at the hospital for his drinking problem. Only the week before his discharge, I found that he had earned nothing for the last three months. Everything happened very quickly after that. A week after his discharge a big truck came unexpectedly to repossess everything in the house, some of the toys were even taken. Eventually the house was also lost. I went back to my mother with the three children, and he went to live with his mother. I did not know that he had applied to go to Australia while he was in hospital but within a few months we were on our way. He promised not to drink again and to work hard in the new country.

We went by plane and were allowed 50kg luggage only. He wouldn't allow me to take any household goods or toys. I was not told we could have shipped a crate as well. It was a very sad parting from Belgium and my family. I was very unhappy. We arrived at Sydney Airport on the 7th August 1970 and it was a dark, warm day. A Government car took us to the East Hill Hostel. When we arrived I saw many sheds looking like igloos and said to my husband, "I will not live in such a tin shed. I will not come out of this car, if this is it." The driver didn't understand Flemish of course. As it happened, the car drove on and stopped when we reached a brick building. This was it - the driver took our luggage up the stairs to our door. He let me go in first and I cried out: "This isn't even finished!" because the walls were of ordinary brick. I had never seen brick walls inside a house but I was pleased it wasn't one of the tin sheds and we made the best of it. When we arrived in Australia the boys didn't even have their toy cars and we didn't have any coffee cups. I cried a lot at that time. In the end, I had no choice but to see it as an adventure.

My husband got a job in the army and I was left alone with my children in the hostel. I worked odd jobs there to feed myself and the children - as the army paid very little money. I didn't speak any English and I could not find time to go to classes to learn English, because I was looking after the children. I had never been outside Belgium before coming to Australia but my husband said that if I didn't like it, we could return after two years. The only thing that made me happy was the weather, always sunshine and the boys were happy - they could play all day in a sandpit. I wrote many letters to my mother, to ask if I could come home with the

children but by the time my letter was finished I could see how happy the children were and didn't mail any of those letters. I suffered in silence. Later we moved to Coogee Hostel, close to the beach and the army camp where my husband was stationed. After two years we had to leave the hostel and were moved by the army into a rented house in Liverpool. The house was very dirty and noisy and there were no beds so we slept on the filthy carpet. One hot day the boys and I took the garden hose inside and just scrubbed the carpet till we could see the colour again. It took a whole week to dry and we slept on the kitchen floor, making the beds every night! Here I must tell a funny story. One afternoon when I was alone at home a big truck stopped in front of our house and with towel and soap in his hand the truck driver asked if he could take a shower. I was on my own and afraid and didn't know what to say. My English was still pretty bad. He said: "Don't worry, I do this all the time," and I replied, "Not in my bathroom!" and slammed the door. My husband was cross, he said they did this often - "it is the custom" - but I didn't believe him and was glad I slammed the door.

After a few months, we moved to Moorebank - and another army house. Friends of my eldest son gave us some single beds for the children. I got a job as a cleaner in Liverpool hospital and I worked shift work, trying to have mostly early morning shifts so I would be home when the children came home from school. I learnt English by talking to people and looking at the children's TV programmes and after a while I spoke English even with the children.

In 1974 I saw on TV the floods in Queensland and said to my husband: "I won't go to Queensland for I can't swim." That year the army transferred him to Brisbane, where we lived in Arana Hills and Stafford Heights. The boys finished primary school there. Let me tell you another anecdote. Peter, the youngest son, felt conspicuous amongst the Australian children with bare feet and he would take off his shoes and socks behind a bush on the way to school. After some time, his teacher called me in, suggesting that the school could help me to get him shoes and socks if I couldn't afford them. I marched to the school, holding Peter by the hand, wearing his shoes and socks, and explained that he only wanted to be like Australian children.

For six years, my husband had kept to his word not to drink but the situation was getting worse and he had to leave the army because of his drinking problem. This meant that we had to leave the army house. In 1978, we moved to a house in Everton Park. After a year of constant upsets, we decided that it would be better if he moved out. I was then working at the Royal Women's 'baby factory', as the boys called it. I provided for the boys through high school, gradually paying off the house. In 1980 I wrenched my back for the first time using the heavy polisher in the hospital and was off work for a while. I went back until 1984, when I had another back problem caused by the polisher. There was no disability payment and workers compensation paid only 50% of my wages at that time.

After the three boys left school, they joined the Navy and I didn't have to support them anymore. My disability pension came through in 1989 and that same year my mother came for a nine months visit. This was when I started taking her to Dutch speaking activities, like the 'instuif', as she was too old to learn English. This is where my Dutch accent comes from. I work sometimes for Dutch people for 'pocket money'. I still live in my own little house and am happy to do so. I love Australia and especially Queensland. Belgian friends and relatives, which stayed with me over the years, envy me and say: "it's a country, which is heaven on earth."

September 2000

WHY AUSTRALIA?

Andreas Flach

The stories from migrants as to why they chose Australia as their new homeland must be as diverse as people are. In 1958 I was thrown out of my country of birth Indonesia, like many other Dutch people, because president Soekarno of Indonesia, wanted to put pressure on the Netherlands to hand over West New Guinea, the last remaining bit of Dutch colonial history in East Asia. My family and I went back to Holland to try to build up a new career. I gave myself a honest fifty-fifty chance to stay in the country in which my father and my wife were born.

I was lucky to find a well paid job as a group-leader in the steel laboratory of the blast furnaces and steelworks in IJmuiden, in the province of North Holland. The Department of Social Services gave us a low rent home in Heemskerk, about 10 kilometres from my work. Everything looked great. I bought myself a bicycle with a little engine attached to the front wheel (a bromfiets - moped) to go to work. That was nice in summer but going to work in winter on your motorised bicycle, often through a very cold northwesterly wind, that's a completely different story. After a year of mixed feelings about the climate in Holland, we decided to look for a country with a far better climate.

Australia was a popular destination in those days and we went to one of the regular migration information evenings to make up our mind. The Queensland scenery and tropical climate on propaganda films of the Immigration Department brought memories back from our good and happy life in Indonesia. We applied for immigration into the country 'Down Under'. How disappointed we were when the Australian immigration officer in The Hague told me that he didn't give me much hope to be approved for migration because of my dark skin. As I wasn't familiar with the 'white Australia policy' of the Australian government of those days, the verdict was a shock for my wife and me.

Once I had made up my mind not to stay in that miserable cold country they called very appropriately 'de lage landen' (the low countries) and realising how low when you see ships passing through the canals that are higher than the road you're on, I looked for work overseas. I found a job in Ecuador, South America. After many years of interesting administrative and supervising work at large banana plantations in Ecuador and later in Surinam, we returned to Holland in 1971. By then the political situation in Australia had changed dramatically and we heard that the 'white Australian policy' was abandoned. Australia was still on our mind and we applied again for immigration. Within three months, we were on the Greek passenger ship 'Ellinis' on our way to a new but uncertain future. We went under the assisted scheme in which both governments Dutch and Australian, paid for the travel expenses of the whole family - two adults with four children - the eldest a girl aged 16 and the youngest a boy of six years old.

We arrived in Brisbane on the 1st April 1971 and were temporarily housed in the Wacol Migrant Hostel, along the Ipswich Road.

With my background as an agriculturist, specialised in tropical plantation-management, there was not much opportunity to find a similar job in this field; not even one remotely

related, as large plantations in tropical products such as tea, coffee, cocoa, oil palm or coconut didn't exist in those days in Australia. This has changed quite a bit and there are now large tea, coffee, mango and cashew plantations in Far North Queensland and the Northern Territory.

Not used to the dole I took on the first job I was offered - machine-operator in a plywood factory in Ipswich. I knew it wasn't the sort of job I would progress in when, one bad day, I cut off my mate's thumb. At the time, he was assisting me on the plywood-cutting machine. They had to take me back to the hostel in an ambulance! Microsurgery in 1971 was not advanced sufficiently to sew back the clean-cut thumb, poor man.

After six months of writing application letters for all kind of jobs, I finally struck luck. I started work as a technical officer at the CSIRO Long Pocket laboratory in Brisbane. I worked in a team to find a vaccine against the ravages of the cattle tick, which caused millions of dollars of damage each year to Queensland's cattle industry. When our research team was transferred to the newly opened laboratory in Geelong, Victoria, in 1989, I chose to retire instead. I migrated 18 years ago to Queensland's subtropical climate and I wanted to stay here.

My 'Indische' (Dutch-Indonesian) and Dutch upbringing taught me to address my boss always with 'U'. An equivalent for 'U' does not really exist in English and that made me address my boss with 'Sir'. He could not appreciate this as he felt uneasy and asked me to call him by his first name - Barry. Now it was my turn to feel uncomfortable. Calling people by their first name is done only to friends. It took me a long time to get used to this typical Australian familiarity. I soon gained insight into some other typical Australian ways of life such as the 'she'll be right, mate' attitude - almost comparable with the Indonesian 'besok saja' outlook or 'mañana' in Ecuador. Also the friendly barbeques with the inevitable booze-ups, where the language became more and more mixed with the word 'bloody', sounded a bit strange out of the mouth of a PhD graduate in animal health. Occasionally when a joker tried to intimidate me with: "Hi, blacky, 'ow are ya", I responded to the friendly greeting with "Not too well now, having seen another convict." Knowing you can cope with their way of saying things, I never had any problems concerning the colour of my skin or my Dutch accent. Show them they can't get on top of you and they accept you as you are. That's my genuine experience, not only in Australia but everywhere else where I have been in the world.

The children coped well at school, though it must have been a big difference from the school in Paramaribo, Suriname, where the official language was Dutch but the local language Takitaki was spoken outside the school amongst the children. After having to change from Dutch to Spanish at the local school in Ecuador, it wasn't too hard for them to change to English this time. They were lucky to be enrolled at the Oxley State High School as, at this school most of the students were migrant children from the suburbs Oxley, Wacol, Goodna, Inala, Darra and the Centenary suburbs, Jamboree Heights, Jindalee, Middle Park and Westlake. For the youngest son, who went to Primary School, the transition from Dutch to English was even less of a problem.

The language spoken at home has remained Dutch even till today. We did not see one reason why the children should speak only English. Being bi-lingual can be only an advantage for them. They learn to think in two different languages and cultures and it gives them a better understanding of the many cultures of our modern day ethnic diverse society of Australia.

From the beginning it was clear to me that buying one's own home would save a lot of money spent otherwise in rent. However, not one commercial bank would lend us the money as we were not used to buying on credit. Then somebody advised us to try the Dutch Credit Union. With their help we bought our very first home. The loan-repayments were rather high and the night before signing the contract we both couldn't sleep. Never before did we have to make such a far-reaching financial decision. We bought that new house for \$14,000, a typical (for that time) 'Queensland high-set' home in the Western suburb of Jamboree Heights.

The Dutch Credit Union soon helped us again by providing a loan to start a Delicatessen shop in the new shopping centre in Jamboree Heights. The business was booming. All around us they were building houses in the new suburbs of Middle Park and Westlake and the builders came to our delicatessen to buy their lunches and drinks.

My wife Anneke managed the business as I was working for CSIRO. Before going to work I went to the fruit wholesale markets at Rocklea at 5.00 am to buy fruit and vegetables for the shop. After work at 5.30 pm Anneke would go home to do the cooking and I managed the shop until 7.00 pm. The business hours were from 7.00 am to 7.00 pm, 7 days a week. After five years of hard work we sold the business which gave us a comfortable financial backing.

I made up my mind to choose between keeping the job and moving to the cold weather of Victoria or become redundant. It wasn't hard to make the decision and, after receiving redundancy payments, I retired and moved to the hot and wet climate of Tully in Far North Queensland, to hobby-farm on ten acres. We grew all sorts of tropical fruit trees and plants, all together about 200 different species. We planted all the known tropical fruits from Indonesia plus many more from South East Asia, Africa and South America.

After four years of happy farming a car accident put an end to it. I damaged my back and couldn't sit on the tractor for prolonged periods anymore. We sold the property and moved to Cairns, closer to where my sister and a daughter live. Having time on my hands, it was then that I became involved with my Indonesian background. Knowing many Dutch/Indonesian friends in the Cairns and Atherton Tablelands area, we started an 'Indische' social club.

In 1997 we moved back to the southeast corner of Queensland and settled at Glasshouse Mountains in the hinterland of the Sunshine Coast. We moved again in 1999, our last move we think, to a retirement village in Sippy Downs.

During our 30 years stay in Australia we have been back to Holland and Indonesia several times. Indonesia is my country-of-birth and I will always see Indonesia as 'my country', though I opted already back in 1974 for Australian citizenship. Holland for me is a nice place to go on holiday, like so many other European countries, not a country to return to resettle as a 'spijtoptant' (a person who opted to stay in Indonesia but eventually chose to leave).

Having been in many countries, for work or on holidays, I must agree with a large number of migrants that we are so lucky to have chosen Australia as our new homeland, for ourselves and for our children and grandchildren. There are not many countries in the world that can measure up to Australia!

August 2000.

MIGRANT OR REINCARNATED ABORIGINAL?

Hendrika Johnson nee Van Haasteren

During my whole life, I had a strong feeling that I was born out of place, that I was a stranger in Leiden, the city of my birth, and that I had nostalgia for a home I did not know. This sense of strangeness sent me into the wide world in search for something permanent, a place to which I belonged. Maybe the source of these feelings was just the result of an unclear destiny, a deep-rooted problem or just a gross mistake in my reincarnation. As a young girl, I did not believe I was the child of my parents and imagined that I really was adopted from gypsies. I always felt I was living in the wrong world, feeling a longing for a land somewhere, where ever that would be ... The world I felt I belonged to was wide open, tropical, with a mixture of cultures and races. There was a close interaction between nature and people, comfort and just surviving, to love and to be loved. My literature as a child was limited to Red Indian stories (plenty of those around with four brothers), books about Africa, China and articles written by priests and nuns about the successful conversion of coloured pagans into devoted Catholics.

All I ever wanted to be was a nurse working in developing countries and all I did and studied was done with this ultimate goal in mind. I finished a High school for girls [Middelbare Meisjes School (MMS)], learning four languages: Dutch, English, French and German. My favourite subject was social geography. During the holidays, I went camping as a member of the Girl Guides and as a leader with the cubs. I camped in the Netherlands, Wales, Italy, France and Yugoslavia, practicing my languages and survival skills. For three and a half years, I studied nursing in The Hague and after that completed a midwifery course. I was particularly interested in tropical diseases, first aid and diseases related to other peoples and climates. I also studied Medical English and Medical French.



1970 - maternity nursing in The Hague.

In March 1971, I was ready to search for the land of my dreams. With a friend, my brother and a VW bus we travelled from The Netherlands overland to Nepal. Through southern and Eastern Europe, Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India to our destination - the world



1971 - Iraq, I came across 'the Garden of Eden'

just unfolded itself. Five months later I left for Ghana, in western Africa with 'Memisa', a catholic foreign aid organisation. However, the reality of help to the less privileged seemed to be based more on religion than on Health. I felt that I had to make a choice between doing things I didn't agree with or following my conscience. By that time I had become a non-Christian and made the choice to follow my conscience. The 'Christian' attitude practised by 'Memisa' was the biggest disillusion in my life and I broke my contract premature.

The desire for the land, which I did not know, remained as strong as ever. The reality of being penniless and futureless made the pathway to reach that land often cloudy and out-of-reach. I studied for two years full-time at the University of Nijmegen, obtaining a Diploma in Nursing Administration and a Diploma in Nursing Education. While studying, I worked in a psychiatric hospital, wrote a book about Palliative Care with a couple of colleagues and obtained a truck, bus and semi-trailer licence, which could be handy anywhere in this world! I applied for a job in Geneva for the International Red Cross but was rejected for being too young and I had no useful connections. After a year working in community health, I had enough money to travel the world again.

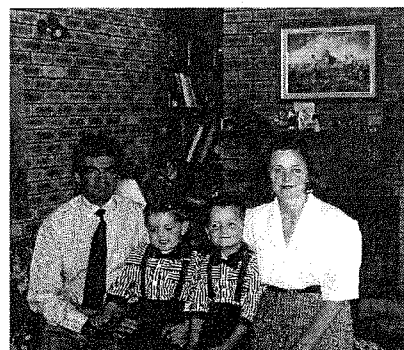
This time I went alone. My aim was to travel through the Middle East, then across Africa over land from Cairo to Cape Town. I would work there and then cross the Indian Ocean to Australia where my brother lived. I planned to work there and then go north to take the Siberia Express to Moscow. I obtained migration and nursing qualification papers for the Republic of South Africa and Australia, which were easier to get than a working permit. It more or less happened as planned and it took me nine months to reach Australia. The journey led to inner peace and fulfilled my dreams and longing for my personal Promised Land. Despite hardships, tropical ulcers, a shipwreck on the coast of Ethiopia, facing rape and death, I never doubted my ultimate reason of doing this - finding the land I truly belonged to. During my nine-day trip from South Africa to Australia, I felt that I had reached the end of a long hibernation.

When I saw my first sunrise over the coast of Western Australia, I felt this was for me my Promised Land and I never have doubted it. My life took on a new meaning from that time onwards. It was August 1976, I was 27 years old, had \$12 to my name, a tablecloth to sleep under, a few items of clothing and an immigration permit. In Sydney I was welcomed by my brother, became registered by the New South Wales Nurses Council and had a job as a registered nurse in the Cowra hospital within days after arrival. I started in the maternity ward, while boarding in the nurses' home for two months. From my first pay I bought a guitar and soon I performed as 'Henny, International Folk Singer' in clubs and restaurants in the district. Four months after arriving in this country I began work as an untrained diversional therapist in the hospital's day-care centre, which was the only place with regular shifts. I spun wool, knitted garments for profit and was the singer in a Rock and Roll band at weekends. I was earning good money while meeting the locals in a great variety of ways. What struck me most with Australians was their casualness, their generosity, the hiding of their deeper-self, their kindness and their willingness to include me into their lives. It seemed however, that woman's liberation was twenty years behind. I was unable to adapt to that 'pre-historic level.' Equal relationships with Australian males were hard to find or maintain.

I moved to Casino in northern New South Wales in 1978. Again, I found work easily, this time as a Community Health Nurse. As I had problems having my Diploma of Nursing Administration recognised in this country, I attended lectures for a Degree in Business Administration at the Southern Cross University at Lismore. For five years, I lived in a cute worker's cottage at a historic cattle station, enjoying country life.

In 1981, I was very fortunate to meet my future husband Phillip, a beautiful Australian. He is a direct descendent from the only First Fleeter, able seaman Peter Hibbs, who was with Captain Cook when he discovered the east coast of Australia, with Captain Phillips the leader of the First Fleet and also with Flinders when he circumnavigated Tasmania. Phillip was surely 'true-blue', having also five convicts as ancestors. With his consideration and great

tolerance, he was able to discuss, accept or simply live with the cultural differences, which we would always come across. For twelve years, I helped my husband in two pharmacies. We had two sons and enjoyed the life of a 'more mature' couple with young children. It appeared that my happy life was 'meant to be'. At times I would stare from our backyard over the river and think about my long journey through this world in order to achieve all this. I decided to write it all down for my children and their offspring. I wanted them to know that it is important to follow your dreams and that hardships can pay off. I also wanted to tell them that to belong to a minority group - foreign, free and female - does not have to mean that we cannot succeed. We simply have to try and work harder! Late 1995, I finished my 420- page, illustrated autobiography, which was printed and distributed to my closest family and friends.



In 1996, we sold everything and moved to a beautiful isolated valley at Kooralbyn in SouthEast Queensland. Dozens of kangaroos and other native animals roam around our house. Our aim was to let our boys attend the Kooralbyn International School, a small non-denominational school with students from about 20 countries from all around the world as our family embraces multiculturalism. My husband and I both work part-time so we can spend plenty of time with our family. We have visitors of many cultures, races and languages.

Since coming to Queensland, I worked more or less free lance for the Blue Nursing Service. I also worked as a Nursing Educator teaching the course Certificate III in Residential Aged Care, as well as Workplace First Aid, to hundreds of people. Furthermore, I relieved the Registered Nurse at school, did the marketing for a large pharmacy and obtained a Graduate Certificate in Palliative Care through the Flinders University in South Australia. My ultimate aim is to specialise in Ethnic Palliative Care.

In 2000, I started work as a Director of Care in the only Dutch Retirement Village in Queensland. I try to give the quality of care I would have liked to give to my own parents. I feel that, through the 'tyranny of distance', I, as their only daughter, have let them down at an age when they needed me most. I belong to two worlds, the Dutch and the Australian. I have always kept up my Dutch language but my children never showed great interest in learning it. However, they have a very basic understanding of Dutch conversations. I have returned to my motherland six times since my migration. Many family members and friends have visited us here or over the years on the Web and the world seems to be so much smaller than when I first put foot on Australian soil. For practical reasons though, I have never applied for citizenship.

Recently, my 16-old son Rohan flew me in a small plane over SouthEast Queensland. Full of pride and admiration for this beautiful young man, I was reminiscing about my life - a great life, an Australian life. Yes, I live in the present ... but neither have I forgotten where I came from. A deep feeling of gratitude engulfed me on that flight, gratitude to all the people, challenges and opportunities, which crossed my path. They helped me to become who and what I am now. I am grateful that I was born with enough strength, capabilities and motivation to keep on believing in my deep-rooted desires. I had an ever-blowing wind in my sails and I forever dreamt about a land I could call home. Australia, I love you!!

September 2000

TWENTY YEARS HERE AND STILL NOT SURE!

Hette Johannes Kingma

It was in the later stages of our five-year stay in Indonesia that the idea to emigrate to Australia entered our minds for the first time. Most of our friends and contacts were within the English speaking community in Surabaya and Jakarta and the Australians amongst them were nice, open and down-to-earth people. They gave the impression that Australia was an egalitarian society with a fair measure of freedom, yet organised in a Western way. So we inquired at the Australian Embassy in Jakarta where we received the message that we had to return to the Netherlands to apply from there. This we did, though later we heard that the advice given was incorrect and we should have been able to enter Australia from Indonesia.

When in July 1977 my contract in Indonesia expired, the Kingma family went back to The Netherlands and we tried to establish ourselves. We soon applied for immigration to the USA and Australia. The USA was an option as both my wife and I held perpetual entry visas but the process was going to take about four years. We favoured Australia as we saw it as a safer, less violent society. My sister, who lived in Melbourne, was willing to assist us.

One of the hurdles to overcome was the fact that I was not a trade's person but that I had worked in managerial positions. The problem was that I needed to have a job before I could enter Australia. The only way I could get a job was to present myself at an interview with a prospective employer, which meant I had to be in Australia before I could get a job. Luckily, this impasse was overcome when I obtained a written statement that a position was offered. This enabled me to obtain approval for Australian residency for me and my family.

We left The Netherlands during one of the longest and most severe cold spells of the northern winters and we arrived by Qantas at Tullamarine Airport in February 1979. We stayed at my sister's place at Mitcham, Victoria, where we had our own private space in the caravan, which was parked beside the house. Our two boys, aged nearly 16 and 14, went immediately to school and slotted in quickly despite their American accent. I went job hunting because the job, which enabled me to enter Australia as promised in the letter, did not materialise. In May, I found work at Geelong, Victoria. I was there Production Services Manager with a company producing woven fabrics and felts of enormous dimensions for the paper industry. I now had a position similar to one I left in The Netherlands. We soon found a place to live; an old farmhouse on Mount Duneed mid-way between Geelong and Torquay.

A few things readily became apparent to me:

- a) Renting a property gives you very few rights. Alterations are not allowed. Not even an extra nail in the wall to hang a picture. This is very different from the Netherlands where improvements are encouraged while the implementation of significant improvements may lead to rent cuts.
- b) Getting a housing loan was not easy. Some banks wouldn't cooperate, despite the fact that I offered a 60% deposit.
- c) In work-place relationships, there was much more distrust here and a strong 'them-and-us' mentality, compared with Europe.

Just when we were about to buy a property, I had first hand experience with the 'last in - first out' principle and I lost my job due to worldwide restructuring. This meant going on the 'dole' while looking for work. Since Victoria's climate was not a great improvement over the climate in Europe and with the warmth of Indonesia still in our memory, we embarked on a 'holiday trip' to Sydney and Brisbane. Thanks to our stay in Indonesia and travel in the US and Europe we were used to large distances so a trip of a few thousand kilometres did not faze us. We loaded our camping gear and to cut travelling time did not stay in camping sites but found ourselves quiet secluded spots for the night until we reached our destination.

There was a job available as factory manager in a modular kitchen company in western Sydney, nevertheless, we decided to press on to Brisbane, reaching that city in January 1980. I continued looking for jobs as we liked the look of Brisbane and decided that this was the place to be. However, no job could be secured and so it was back to Sydney. It was a story by itself how we moved our belongings from Mt Duneed to Guildford in New South Wales. I hired a 3-tonne truck in NSW on my Victorian licence. We enthusiastically overloaded the beast and loaded the rest onto our double-axle-trailer. On level roads, things were fine but as soon as we used suburban streets the camber of the road made the truck lean over so far, that it nearly took out the streetlights and power poles. I was driving the truck, blissfully unaware of the anxiety of my wife. She was driving behind me towing the trailer and she saw all the narrow misses, expecting half of the truck's body to be taken away by one of those poles. Anyway, we made it and decided not to do this ever again.

Sydney was a good experience. We have been fortunate to sample all three big cities on the East coast and for us Brisbane was the best. It quickly became clear that Sydney was not our end destination. We wanted to buy some acreage, which was either very expensive or very far out of the city. Another reason to move was that our boys, though liking the high school where they were enrolled, did not make any effort to establish lasting friendships. We had the impression that they simply held off, as if to say: "In Sydney we will stay only temporarily and soon have to move again. It will just cause pain to leave friends behind, so why bother?"

The next school holiday, we went again up to Brisbane and I succeeded in securing a job as a planner for a heavy equipment manufacturer at Wacol. This meant a step back in position as well as in salary but we wanted to move and to move quickly. The reason was mainly to allow our children to become accustomed to their surroundings and settle into high school. From there, they could follow a tertiary study if they chose to do so. I am glad to say that this worked out well and that both our sons obtained a university degree. It was not solely the interest of our children we had in mind; we wanted to have a place of our own with some space and without interference of a landlord. We found a good spot with the right house, only 1.5 km from work and we have lived there ever since. It allowed us to have two horses and some dogs. As a bonus, a creek runs right through the property. The water attracts turtles, water dragons, scores of ducks and other birds. All this less than half an hour from the city!

Work was not entirely satisfactory. There were a few clashes with management, particularly when my opinion was asked for. When I did tell them what I thought, it was not always what they wanted to hear. In contrast, people in The Netherlands were encouraged to think for themselves, not just to follow directives. Criticism was expressed in a civil manner and respected. The nature of the industry required that business continued during the festive season. For this reason, I worked every year from Boxing Day until late on New Year's Eve. This made it impossible for me to take leave while the children had their summer vacation.

However, there were lighter moments as well. Some of them had to do with me being an 'English as a second language' user. Heavy equipment was often shipped out on big low-loader trailers. Where the trailer rested on the prime mover the trailer often had a large, protruding platform onto which smaller machinery could be loaded. This part of the trailer is called the 'goose neck' and when I started talking about the 'swan neck' - as that was the Dutch name for the same stupid thing - nobody understood what I was talking about!

Command of language I believe is one of the crucial points that will determine success of the immigrant and acceptance by Australian colleagues. This is probably more so for the non-trades person who will have to rely even more on communications skills. Having had extensive exposure to the English language, firstly through my service in the Dutch Air Force, then working for American companies in Europe and later working in Indonesia, I think my language skills were pretty good. Still, there are instances when one makes mistakes, particularly when tired or when missing part of a conversation or a joke. As I pride myself of having a good command and understanding of the Dutch language, it is sometimes frustrating when I can not use the same subtleties of expression in English as I would in Dutch. This frustration showed also during my university studies, which I undertook in the mid-eighties. At work, I felt the need to extend my knowledge of computers. Therefore, I started evening classes at TAFE in a Diploma of Management course including general computer knowledge and simple programming. While enrolling for the second year courses, it was suggested that I consider a six-year part time study for a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Queensland. My Dutch education was recognised for admission and I completed my BA degree with a double major in Psychology and a single in German; finishing a major in Sociology in a post-graduate semester.

The difficulty of having to write reports and assignments was not so much in finding the words but in getting rid of the tendency to use elaborate and lengthy sentences such as is common in the Dutch language. I sometimes wrote appropriate English words using a quite normal - 'Dutch' - sentence construction. Punctuation is still a bit of a problem as the Dutch throw in one or more commas wherever they can. My spelling and general knowledge of the grammar rules on the other hand, were distinctly better than most of my fellow students and co-workers. This resulted in one of my colleagues asking me to proofread her assignments and believe me - I did find some anomalies!

Early in the university study I lost my job. Perhaps management became fed up with my rather critical and outspoken stand on matters or because the company was about to fold, something I was not aware of at that time. We found ourselves living on the 'dole' for about nine months, which meant sacrifices for all of us and it made distinctive inroads into our savings. Lucky for me I could continue my study and I graduated in 1988. I say 'lucky' for I enjoyed the study and the contact it brought with fellow students, although that contact is limited for part-time students like me as everybody wants to go home quickly after a long day at work and Uni. 'Lucky' also as it ultimately gave me an Australian recognised qualification, which must have had a positive effect on the assessment of my applications.

Early in 1984, I was given a job as Method Engineer with a subsidiary of a major retailer and worked there until I retired at the end of the year 2000. It meant working again in a capacity for which I had studied and saw me eventually in a variety of middle management positions. It also meant regular holidays again for my wife and me. We took the opportunity to explore Northern and Western Queensland and later the Northern Territory as well. We

have seen a fair bit of this vast country and I like it. It was good to learn how this popular myth of the 'bushie', most families identify with, was created, as people West of the Great Dividing Range often do have something special in their quiet, 'no nonsense' manners. The Australian scenery may be impressive and beautiful but it lacks the variety and excitement of the sudden changes experienced when travelling through Europe.

After 17 years, we finally made a five-week trip back to the Netherlands. We stayed with family and friends and made short trips to Paris and Prague. As the weather was quite good for the time of the year, we enjoyed our stay. It confirmed our view that Europe also has a lot going for it. Both my wife and I always felt really more European than Dutch, leading to our predicament as follows: both continents have advantages and disadvantages; we see a lot of good and bad in Australia, yet the same goes for Europe. We still have a foot in each continent and ultimately have to decide, whether we will stay here after retirement, enjoying the space and the climate or whether we will go back, enduring bad weather but enjoying the culture, the variety of scenery and difference in cultures while travelling. Our choice has become more difficult since Brisbane's dramatic cultural development after Expo-88.

During my lengthy studies, we did not meet many Dutch people but gradually we became members of Dutch clubs and at present, our main social interactions are within the Dutch community. Most of our contacts are on a friendly rather than on a friendship basis.

For the last four months, we had to re-appraise our situation in this country. In April 2000, just after the council elections, we received notice that the council intended to resume our property, which we have owned for 19 years. We can accept that the 'common good' has to prevail but question the process by which it is conducted and the meagre monetary compensation offered. This gave us a strong sense of being powerless and with few, if any rights. It made us more aware of what we still have - the quiet and the space, the weather, the birds and other wildlife, all very close to the city. In fact, these things are the essence of what we like here most.

September 2000

THE UNKNOWN

Henny Kingma nee Paardekoper

As we arrived early in 1979, we are comparative late immigrants compared to most of the Dutch people that we have met here. Nevertheless, I found it hard to adjust. There were so many things we were used to in Holland and Indonesia, the countries where we lived for years before we migrated, that were different in Australia.

For instance, we've always had dogs and even before we settled on our block of land in Brisbane we bought a long-haired Dachshund and a Gordon Setter. However, travelling with our dogs was a big problem. In Europe, you may take your dog on a train, in a bus, to most camping grounds or even into hotels and pubs. On Dutch public transport, it is possible to pay half fare for dogs as you would for children. In this country, if you don't have car, you can't take a dog on holidays. Even taxis are not allowed to take them. Taking dogs into National Parks is also a big 'no no'. We really miss the opportunity to take our dogs wherever we go.

As a responsible dog owner, I feel penalised for the lack of understanding manifested by regulations. This is not a 'dog-friendly' country and I really regret that but fortunately, things are gradually improving. People are taking better care of their dogs and keep them fenced in.

Another difference with Europe was the lack of outdoor cafes or restaurants to have a nice meal or just a cup of coffee. After 7 pm, it was hard to get anything at all! When we were travelling, we used to sit on a bench in a park or along the road with fish and chips or a pie. Compared with France, Spain or Italy this was a real setback. I further miss the European variety both in nature as well as in culture. When travelling interstate in this country, I don't get the feeling of being somewhere different: there is no challenge!

However, the scenery and the beaches in particular are beautiful. During our first years, we travelled every holiday throughout Australia visiting most of the states, including the stunning 'outback' with its still plentiful wildlife. We noticed that the remote areas are getting drier, the population is declining, and trees are disappearing while the traffic is increasing. It would appear that there are more dead animals along the road than living ones. Usually we spent the last week of our holidays at a beach to relax before heading home again.

Things have changed a lot during the last years. The roads are much wider and better, good coffee is available everywhere instead of only tea and the variety in food has greatly improved in comparison to our early days. Australia has an easy and relaxed lifestyle for most of the time. 'Expo 88' has had an enormous influence on Brisbane's café and restaurant scene. Most of those places now stay open until late in the evening.

After seventeen years, we went back for our first European holiday. Yes, it was crowded, but we enjoyed ourselves and it was surprising how everything fell into place again after all those years and how easily we did fit in with family and friends. Had we really been away that long? We had a marvellous time! The weather was not too bad and you do the things that you want to do anyway, even if it rains. We did not take many photographs with sunshine though, as we found out when they were developed. There surely will be another holiday to Europe.

When we bought our first home in one of the outer suburbs of Brisbane, people used to say that we were living in 'Woop Woop' [far away from everything]. We had all kinds of native animals either in our ceiling, garage, shed or the trees around us. Our two boys could ride a horse anywhere in the neighbourhood because it was all bushland with dirt roads, which have now been changed to bitumen. A great deal of the surrounding land has already been taken up by industry. We now live with our neighbours and animals in a small remaining pocket of natural bushland. It is still nice around us but we are being pushed out. We know already that we must give it up and leave as our property is being resumed. I suppose this is called 'progress'. By moving, we will give up the place where our boys were raised and they will find no familiar things when they return to the area. In our next house, there will probably be no room to look after their horses and kayaks. The Gordon Setter, the Dachshund and our little stray Pomeranian are all buried here in our yard and they will have to remain there. Our three new dogs are moving with us to our new home.

No more 'Woop Woop'! We're not so young any more but are not ready for a retirement village either. As we have to move again, we ask ourselves: Where will we settle down ...?

September 2000

CHERISHED MEMORIES

Jettie Zigas

What does one do when one meets an Estonian/Australian doctor in Washington DC coming from Papua New Guinea? Get to know him better. You got it! What does one do when he asks you to join forces while you yourself have just graduated (anthropology) from an American University and have a top job? You got it: you go with him to PNG. What does one do when your partner retires and wants to go to live in Brisbane? You got it: follow suit.

And so, in 1980, Vin and I became denizens of Brisbane, at that time a small town. Not so much in size but still parochial. We had already bought a bungalow kind of house during one of our stays in Brisbane visiting friends while living all over the globe. Other friends living in Brisbane were kind enough to teach us the ropes. What to plant in our garden, preferably native shrubs and trees so the birds would come visiting. How to have the house painted and more of these practical problems, which can form a quagmire for the non-initiated. The painting and the wall-to-wall carpeting (still find that a strange notion for houses in such hot climates) had to be done quickly as our 'cargo' was on its way from Port Moresby.

Meanwhile, Vin had decided to put in the front garden one of those huge cassava cacti, which he called 'ballerina'. So out I went to search all the garden shops ... but alas the plants were rejected as too miserably small. However, across the street were a few beauties. Without much ado Vin crossed the street, introduced himself to a handsome gentleman and asked if it was possible to get one of those gorgeous cacti. Within two shakes of a dog's tail Jack, the neighbour, had planted the cassava in front of our house and that started a warm friendship with our across the street neighbours lasting from now until forever.

In many ways it was not difficult to settle in Brisbane after PNG. Having command of the English language helps, even though my ears were still not used to 'Aussie talk'. Vin's first book had been published and he started on his second. That did not prevent us from roaming the countryside with the Dolphin (our silvery Lancer). Where the Dolphin could not take us all the way the silver birds belonging to TAA or Ansett would wing us to Canberra, Perth, Sydney, Devonport, Cairns etc. Beautiful this country, praised in many languages and tones; the laid back attitude with easy smiles and quick comeback even with the mix-up in English, American or Australian use of the same word. The great differences in backgrounds caused a sometimes-defensive response, which, especially by Vin, was easily disarmed. It was for neither of us a great problem to feel at ease in the various Australian sub-cultures due to ourselves having lived in so many different countries. All the same we did miss many a European thing; the music evenings; the philosophising, sometimes the typical European celebrations, the old courtesies and maybe some of the foods.

Then I was asked by the audio section of the library of the University of Queensland to transfer textbooks to tapes for blind students. That not only gave me something stimulating to do but it also kept me up-to-date in my field of training. What guts these kids have to study with such a great handicap. It is nice, no its is great, to know that some of the students have already graduated and found jobs. By the way I called each student I had to read for whether they could understand my foreign accent: "No worries," was the usual answer.

A nice way of keeping in touch with things Dutch was the Alumni Club of Dutch speaking university graduates. This group would come together about once every three months. No fees, no fuss, we just came together in the University of Queensland staff-club when notified by one of the group. The requirement was to speak in Dutch no matter how haltingly.

Apart from that I worked on and off for the Dutch Consulate in Brisbane due to my previous experiences. Many a story we heard in that little office; sometimes good, often amusing but also some sad and tragic histories of migrants and their offspring. Success stories after hard struggling; the tale of the little (new) Australian battler was repeated again and again. Those who could not settle or stick it out returned or moved on.

A constant stream of friends, relatives, acquaintances and ex-colleagues from the four corners of the world cast their shadow over the threshold of our house. The more we came to know the country we had chosen in which to retire, the more fun it became to show it to others and have them share Australian experiences. The mistakes they made reminded us of our own misunderstandings as, for instance, when invited to come for tea thinking this meant a cup of tea not realising dinner was implied. By the time we were ready to go home we were asked to partake in a delicious 'spread'.

A while after Vin had passed away, a thought ripened in my head. A thought of returning to the country of my birth and see what it would be like to live in a four seasons' climate again. Why not try for a year?? Of course, I had been back regularly but with a mind geared to vacationing. That is still very different from living somewhere for a longer period of time. I returned to a vastly different place from the country I had left in the 50s. Just the same as Queensland is now vastly different from the Queensland to which we had moved. The Dutch language had changed; many words had different meanings and very modern gadgets were available everywhere. Also the attitudes of people had 'matured' and become similar to the rest of the world ie less parochial.

Not once during my life have I owned so many coats as I need now. I learned about the different way the washing machines work here; became used to living with central heating; learned to understand the way people of The Hague talk; live close to friends in other European countries and the USA and so on. In short, after a year I just stayed. And, though I miss my friends in Aussie-land very much as well as other aspects that make life in Australia dear to me, I decided to stay here in Holland where my umbilical cord is 'buried'. When I go 'walkabout' I need no more than 24 hours to take me back to **cherished memories**.

June 2000

[Editors's note: Vin Zigas, the author's husband, is known for his clinical findings and research on the endemic occurrence of 'Kuru', a dementia in the 'Fore' tribe in the Eastern Highlands of New Guinea].

BACK HOME

Rinus Lagerwaard

“Did you hear that on the news?” asked my wife when I came home from work one day in 1979. “Hear what”, I answered. “The Government is now proposing to introduce a noise-tax. That is really the pits don't you agree?” It all started with that conversation between my wife and me. We were fed up at that time with the government's proposals to introduce all kinds of further regulations.

We were doing all right. I had a good job as a sales-representative with the use of a company car. We had a good relationship within our young family with two children. Our son was all of three years old and our baby daughter a little over 12 months. Assisted by government funding and with a reasonable bank-loan we had bought a pleasant house. One could wish for little more. What else was there to want? The thought of emigration had never progressed beyond just a thought.

There was an uncle in my family, being married to my father's sister, who emigrated to Australia in the fifties. They had two sons and I remember them only from photographs. My uncle and aunt came back in the early seventies. They resettled quickly - he found work and they lived in a nice house - but they could not really settle again in The Netherlands. In the end, they went back to Australia, mainly because they missed their grandchildren.

“Well”, I said to my wife, returning from my thoughts, “We could always migrate?” “It is funny that you should mention that”, she replied. “I was reading the local weekly paper the other day and did you know that there are still information-nights about emigration?” I was vaguely aware of that, but you seldom heard anybody talk about it. “Wait, I will get that paper” and she returned with a small advertisement. As it turned out there was an invitation for an information evening for people interested to migrate to Australia, Canada and New Zealand. “Why don't you call them” I suggested with a laugh. “Why do you want to leave Holland,” she asked rather confused. “Well, it can't hurt to find out a little more about it”, was my reply.

The next day we were told much to our amazement that the particular night was completely booked out. We had no idea that people were still so interested in emigration. We were invited to come along to another night and when we arrived, the number of people attending really astounded us. The interest in emigration was obviously very much alive. The information provided was very poor and rather out of date. However, our interest was raised enough to make further inquiries and eventually, attracted by the adventure in particular, we made up our mind that we would apply for emigration to Australia.

How could we tell the family? That must have been difficult for most migrants of course. For us it was certainly a very hard thing to do and we delayed telling our relatives and friends that we were leaving. Some of them accepted that reluctantly, but most people could not understand our reasons for moving to Australia at all.

Several farewell-parties were organised for us and some of the people present expressed a keen interest for our belongings. They assumed that we were not allowed to take more than

the contents of one cubic meter per person (according to previous regulations for assisted migrants). We had to pay full fare and took all our belongings using a standard-size container. This was sent ahead by ship, and only a load of firewood was left behind.

In June 1980, the time had come to leave our hometown - Rotterdam. The entire family and many friends came to say their final farewells at Schiphol - airport. Some of them even brought a small present along and nearly everyone had tears in their eyes when waving us goodbye. That was certainly the most difficult moment of our decision to migrate. It seemed such a terribly final moment.

Before our departure, we had contacted our relatives in Australia and a cousin we had never met welcomed us at Brisbane-airport. Another recently arrived 'new migrant' (we had met her at the first introduction-evening) was also there to greet us and the first things she said were: "I am very pleased that you have come" and "I find everything extremely disappointing here".

The first days were occupied with the buying of household appliances and a car, while electricity and telephone connections had to be organised. We were so busy with those things that we hardly found time to register for work. When going to the Commonwealth Employment Service to register, two days after our arrival in Brisbane, the gentleman behind the counter remarked: "You did not waste any time!" Little did I know that I was applying for unemployment benefits at the same time. Within three weeks, I found a good job (similar to the one I had in The Netherlands and with the use of a company-car) but I will never forget those first weeks of sunshine and the wonderful beach, while being paid for doing nothing at all.

After some time, we started our own business in which my wife and I are working together. Our married son is also working in the business and so did our daughter at one stage. She fell in love with a young Dutchman during an extended holiday in The Netherlands. They are currently living over there, because he could not find a suitable job when he came to Brisbane for a year so they could get to know each other better.

We have lived for about six years in Newcastle in New South Wales and became involved, by coincidence, with the Dutch Radio program there. Upon returning to Brisbane we continued our interest in the Dutch language program of Radio 4 EB (Ethnic Broadcasting); both on the broadcasting and organisational side. When there was a vacancy for Editor of 'De Meerpaal' (bi-monthly Dutch magazine) I took on that task for some years. This led to further involvement with the Dutch Community in Brisbane (I had several functions in the Executive Committee of 'The Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland Inc' for a number of years and was president of the 'Borrelclub-Brisbane' for a year). I am presently committee-member of 'The Dutch Australian Community Action Federation - Qld Inc'.

Looking back, I would like to say that the past twenty years have been good for us. Sure, we get a little homesick now and again. When that happens we book a trip to Holland, eat ourselves silly on typical Dutch food and tape a lot of TV programs to take back (so we can watch them whenever we feel like it) and go home fully recharged - **Back home to Australia.**

June 2000

FAR AWAY FROM EVERYTHING

Hein and Erica Bouwknecht

When in September 1987, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at The Hague informed me that I was to be transferred Brisbane I was not overly happy. Australia was not on my preferred list of postings. Frankly, I did not know a lot about this 'Down Under' nation. When we arrived at Melbourne airport in late November 1987, my wife and I had for some moments thoughts like: "My, oh my, are we far away from everything we know!"

However, once we were in the hotel in Brisbane and had looked around a bit, we realised things were not too bad. We settled into a rented house in Philip Street, Hawthorne, and soon started to feel at home. The house was a typical Queensland weatherboard home, high on wooden stumps, corrugated iron roof and walls of Australian hard wood. The view over the Brisbane River and the City area was beautiful. Eventually we came to understand Queenslanders in general and Dutch-Australians in particular and said to ourselves that we were happy to be in the capital of Queensland.

I arrived as Vice-Consul and later became Consul. One of our initial tasks was to improve the relationship between the then Honorary Consulate and the Dutch immigrants. It was a gratifying challenge and both my wife and I liked it very much to work with my expatriates. The Dutch clubs in Queensland, from South to North, as well as many individuals not belonging to the clubs invited us. It gave us an opportunity to get to know many of the Dutch Australians and we listened to their stories of adventure on arrival in this country. It made us realise the bravery, perseverance and courage of the Dutch who had left the Netherlands or the then Dutch East Indies, or came here via other countries, with only a few of their personal belongings. They went to a country they did not know, with a language which many of them did not speak or fully understand, while they were very, very far away from all they had left behind. It all made a big impression on us.

We were always well received by the Dutch clubs and its members went out of their way to make our stay as pleasant as possible. We learned many things during our sojourn in Queensland about the people, the land, the distances and the different flora and fauna.

Apart from the normal consular work, I was involved with the establishment of the Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland and with the preparations for the building of the Prins Willem Alexander (retirement) Village. An interesting experience was the conversion of 'Honorary Consulate' into 'Career Consulate' and the subsequent move to the new consular offices, which were then situated at North Quay. I also became a member of the Brisbane Borrel Club and attended several dinners of the Dutch Alumni Group.

After we left Australia for Madrid, we realised how we had come to love Queensland and the people we knew there, and how we missed it all. After some years, we heard that the Brisbane consulate was to be closed and we were sad to hear that. When we were informed that Mr Kasper Kuiper had been appointed to Honorary Consul of the Netherlands in Queensland, we were quite pleased, as we believe that Queensland deserves Dutch consular representation.

June 2000

NOT AS DIFFICULT

Ingeborg Kuiper - Hoek

I am always amazed when I hear the stories of immigrants who came to Australia just after the Second World War. Some of them had such a difficult time. They left their families behind, endured a long sea journey, came to a country they hadn't seen before, learned to speak a strange language, sometimes lived in very basic housing, drove on dirt roads, suffered intense heat, breathed the dust...How did they do it? Forty years later; we have a one-day trip by air, bitumen roads, air conditioning, telephone calls for 25 cents per minute, e-mail, nice hotels and nearly everyone has learned English.

I immigrated to a country I did see before during a three-month holiday ... and that's how my story started.

My father promised my sister, my brother and me, that after we finished high school, he would send us on a trip. My sister was first, being the eldest and she chose to go to Australia and stay with my father's eldest sister. Two years later, my brother went for a holiday to an island off Spain. When it was my turn, I asked if, instead of the holiday, my father would pay for an expensive school in Leiden, so that I could do a course to become a doctor's assistant in one year instead of the usual three years. It was hard work but I did very well. After I finished the course, I worked in a hospital in Schiedam (which also happened to be the hospital where I was born). I really wanted to go overseas too and I was choosing between Brazil and Brisbane. In both places I had family with whom I could stay. My father suggested that I should go to Brisbane first. Neither of us knew then that I was going to meet my future husband there.

Pieter, the son of my aunt's best friend served in the RAAF and was based in Adelaide. He happened to come home to Brisbane for Christmas at the same time I was there. We fell in love and had a wonderful time together. In January 1988 I had to go back to Holland and Pieter had to go back to Adelaide. But our holiday romance did not just stop there. Less than a year later, we were married in Holland and after our honeymoon we flew to Adelaide together as a married couple.

That was a very difficult time for me. I arrived 'home' to an airforce house that my new husband had organised, however, there was only a bed and a set of saucepans. I was married to a man whom I had really known only for eight weeks, the rest of our contact had been via letters. However, I got through those first hard weeks because I knew we were in God's hands and that our marriage was not a mistake. The main thing I had to do was to 'go shopping' as we had so little. I loved that part.

Being the wife of an officer had good and bad sides. Some of the good sides were that I was treated with respect (unlike a lot of new immigrants) and the parties and balls were magnificent. A bad side was that not many people want to make friends with people from the forces because sooner or later they move away. I will not forget the little girl that lived in our street. Her name was Elizabeth. She was only five years old but was a real friend to me. Less than two weeks after my arrival, Pieter had to go to Sydney for a meeting. Elizabeth came every morning to say hello and asked me how I was, what a sweetie.

I tried to get a job as a doctor's assistant. I had my papers officially translated but here in Australia my education was not recognised and I was allowed to do only a bit of administration and answer the phone. I could start a nursing course but Pieter was going to be posted to another city soon. We decided to have children sooner than we would have preferred, so that I would not feel lonely. A year later our first daughter was born. We called her Natasja. Pieter was posted to Melbourne when she was only five weeks old.

After a year in Melbourne we went on a holiday to The Netherlands and while we were there, Pieter talked to some companies and received three offers for a job and finally made a choice between KLM and Fokker. I was three months pregnant then. When we came back from our holiday we decided to go and live in Holland for a few years. Pieter had lived in Ede up to his third birthday and his Dutch was fine. He resigned from the airforce and we planned our immigration to The Netherlands when we found out that I was carrying two babies! That was a suspenseful trip because I was seven months pregnant with twins. We took labour-retarding medicine with us in case I would go into labour during the flight. All went fine however, and a few weeks after our arrival Tessa and Lukas were born while we were staying with my parents. That was a very special time for my family and me.

We bought a house in Hazerswoude and Pieter worked for Fokker Space. We had a wonderful time living in Holland. I was close to my family who could see our children grow up but Pieter became homesick. He could not get used to the cramped lifestyle in Holland and of course the bad weather. He could not believe how short the summers were. It took him two years to realise that you must really enjoy the sunny days and use them carefully.

After a holiday in Brisbane, where we stayed with Pieter's parents, and after a lot of prayer, we chose to go back to Australia. Pieter went for an interview with a company in Brisbane and was offered the job. Six weeks later, we were on the plane back to Australia. Natasja was now six years old and the twins were four. Leaving my family again was harder this time because of our children; but we were certain that this was the right decision. We now live in Brisbane close to Pieter's family. We are very happy here. I think Australia is beautiful, there is so much space. It might be hot now and then, but most of the year the weather is perfect. You don't have to travel far to see the most beautiful scenery, birds and other animals. Recently, we even had a swim with wild dolphins at a Moreton Island beach. Where in the world would you find such a beautiful national park, two hours away from a big capital city like Brisbane?

With my family being able to come over regularly, I think I am very lucky to be one of the immigrants that came to live in Australia.

September 2000

RETIREMENT IN QUEENSLAND

Nel de Bruyn

My story is somewhat different because I am a 'late comer' amongst the Dutch migrants. I had been a teacher in the Netherlands. In 1948 the church sent me to Indonesia, and I expected to be there for just three years to help with education. When I came back to the Netherlands after that term was finished, the Church asked me to go to West Papua. So there I was, teaching until 1963, when Indonesia took over the territory and the Dutch people had a choice either to leave or to stay on and opt for Indonesian nationality.

At that time the Lutheran Church in Papua New Guinea (PNG) asked me, together with a dozen other colleagues, to come to Papua New Guinea. This meant learning another foreign language, after having used Bahasa Indonesia all those years. Besides using English, which was not that hard, we had to learn the common language 'Pidgin', which I learned quite quickly while living there.



Asoroka PNG, 1992. Temas receives her diploma and a prize from Nel.

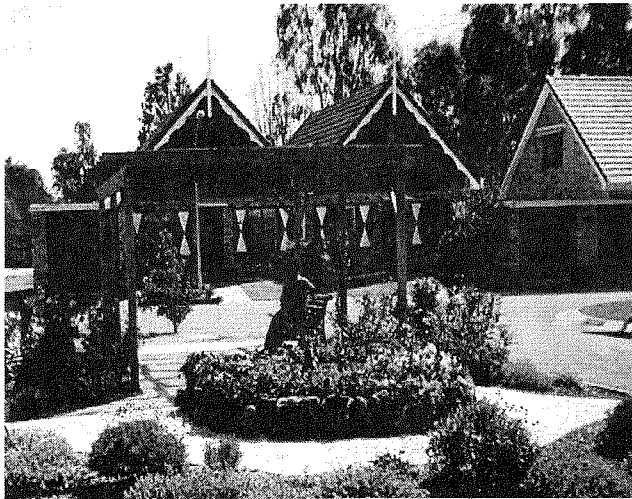
During the time I lived in Papua New Guinea, several holidays were spent in Australia, where I made some friends. On a visit to the Dutch consulate in Brisbane, I noticed a brochure in the office, providing information about the Dutch Retirement Village to be built in Birkdale, in the Redland Bay area. My friend Ruth and I discussed and I pondered: "Could that be the right spot for me to retire?" After nearly forty-five years living in the tropics, I could not imagine myself living the rest of my life in the Netherlands. A common feeling isn't it!? As I had lived for many years at out-stations, Holland just seemed too crowded, noisy and conservative. I had 'outgrown' the old country.

On another occasion, Ruth drove me to the Prins Willem Alexander Village, which was only half completed at that time and I was allowed to choose a spot on the plan far from the main street, fronting the village, close to the bush and railway station. That was what I, the farmer's daughter and nature lover, needed. Meanwhile, I had reached retirement age and I was well off. I could live on my pension and one of my options was to stay in Papua New Guinea to continue teaching indefinitely as a volunteer.

How to get a residents visa for Australia is a separate story. I had no problem with the Dutch officials as, according to the statistics, I had left in 1963 and 'had never returned

again'. This was patently untrue, as I had been on holidays many times during that period but that was never recorded. The Australian officialdom was a different matter. After applying in Papua New Guinea for a residential visa for Australia, I was told that I had to be financially completely independent. I needed a health check, including an AIDS test and a clearance from the police; honestly - I had never committed a crime except perhaps punishing students. Financial independence meant that one had to show on black and white that one had about half a million dollars, which demanded a lot of writing and assistance.

Having the paperwork completed, the Immigration Department was willing to issue a visa 'for retirement only', which caused some problems. Australia does not seem to want elderly people. However, in January 1993 I left Papua New Guinea, heartbroken for leaving that beautiful country and many indigenous friends. When I arrived in Brisbane, Ruth was there to drive me to Birkdale. Imagine how excited I was to get the key of my own house! Why? Well, in my eighty years of existence, I hadn't owned a house, a washing machine, vacuum cleaner, telephone, TV, electric stove, furniture, bedding, nor crockery etc. Until that time I had only lived in church- or schoolhouses, which were equipped with some of these items. My few belongings came from Papua New Guinea and Holland, where I stored them for years.



Typical housing in the Prins Willem Alexander Village, Birkdale

Well, there I was in a brand new empty house, surrounded by strangers, although my closest neighbours were nice and helpful. Now I could start unpacking and after transfer of my pension money was arranged, I could go out and buy bedding, furniture etc, which took me nearly all of the first year. This was great fun! Obviously there was 'neighbourhood watch', for one day when I had bought an ironing board and dish rack, my neighbour Bep said: "Oh, look, it's just as if Nel has just been married.

I still didn't have any curtains, so I asked around to borrow a sewing machine in order to cut up and re-sew my old curtains but my search did not succeed. Finally the Manager offered me his wife's machine. This was good teamwork as I am not sure that he had asked her first. The 'new' curtains made my two-bedroom home more cosy.

However, I still felt a longing for my beloved PNG, my students, colleagues and friends. Believe it or not I was longing for all those frizzy haired dark people as only white retirees now surrounded me. I really missed the black children, the young teachers' and workers' families, darling black toddlers, crying and crawling around in church. When I started teaching at our High school, there was only one indigenous teacher and when I left, I was the only white teacher there. What a changes I had experienced over the years!

Fortunately, in the beginning I had plenty to do in and around mu house, but then the question popped up: "What am I going to do with my spare time?" Sitting down watching TV and knitting or cooking and house cleaning had never been my hobbies as I had gone to school all my life, either as a student or a teacher, since I was six years old. So I would never be a good housewife. This would have shied off the men, I guess. "Never mind, I like to be on



Judy Scholtes and Nel de Bruyn in folkloric dance-group costumes.

my own and do outdoor things”, I thought. I looked around for jobs, but my visa read: ‘Not allowed to work’. Besides that, my age was of course a handicap, so volunteer work was the solution. Indeed, I ended up being a volunteer in our village and in the church, Meals on Wheels and even in a bookshop. In our retirement village I joined the choir, the Netherlands Folkloric Dance Group, assist with bowling, the village shop, visiting. By helping with the craft group, I got to know hostel residents and I joined them on outings. As for my profession, even here I continue teaching a handicapped young woman, which is all very enjoyable. In addition, the independent social club organises trips, dinners and social nights. To fill my time in the first years, I followed craft courses and did private bible studies to keep my brains active. In church, I assist with some activities - all contributing to get to know younger, non-Dutch people.

Financially I can not complain as I receive a so-called ‘Indonesian pension’ in Holland, sufficient to live on here. However, all my efforts to obtain a permanent or even temporary residency have been to no avail. I applied, even the Dutch Consul did his utmost, but it now appears that I will never be able to become a resident. This means that I have to get a new visa every two years at the cost of \$145.00. To top it off, I pay full fares on public transport, can not get a pension card nor be in Medicare. Never mind, it does not really worry me, as I am reasonably healthy and enjoy life here.

The big cultural difference was to get used to live with white elderly people, seldom meeting dark skinned nationals as I did as ‘guest worker’ in the tropics. However, over the years I have assimilated to some extent. Now that I can take holidays whenever I like, I manage to go to the Netherlands once a year, preferably in the European summer to escape winter here. I love to meet my relatives and old friends, as it is good to maintain the ties. However, every year I am glad to be back here as I am aware that I can not get familiar with that crowded, busy ‘low country’, nor forget its awful climate. Let me be in the ‘Redlands’ with its sunshine, warm summers, mild winters, flowers all the year round, the wide open landscape, beautiful white beaches, islands close by, even in walking distance to the bay. Besides all those things, we enjoy good care and wonderful facilities in our Dutch village.

One will understand that I never feel ‘homesick’ here. Overall, looking back at my life, I feel that I am home. I made the right decision to live in Australia, having a nice house of my own, enough hobbies, with plenty of friends but always short of time. Somehow, the dream of my life has been fulfilled!

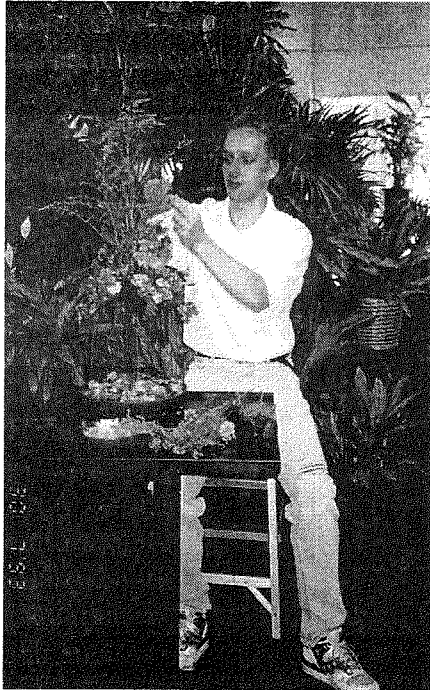


The choir of the Prins Willem Alexander Village in action

September 2000

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS - A LOVE AFFAIR

Adriaan (Bas) Kamp



July 1993 - USA, Bas Kamp. arranging flowers

My name is Bas Kamp and I'm another Dutchman living in Queensland. Australia had always been a place of interest to me. I have worked in Greece and Canada. In 1991, a short-term job in the USA had ended when I met Melanie, an Australian traveller, who later became my bride. With my interest in Australia, a friendship was quickly formed and I spent time with my newfound Australian friends who proudly shared their stories of 'home'. After a week of sightseeing, Melanie and I parted but arranged to meet again and, as fate would have it, we met in six different countries over the following year with no longer than six weeks between our meetings. We eventually decided to settle together in London.

I was trained in the Netherlands in Horticulture and Floral Art and took a position as a Florist with Harrods of London. By the end of 1993, we had decided that I should finally become acquainted with Australia and we began our journey to Melanie's family in Brisbane.

We travelled for six months, returning to my family and friends in Waalwijk, in the Dutch province of Brabant, to say farewell for what we thought would be a trip of about one year. We travelled via Turkey, India and Nepal and finally down through Malaysia to Indonesia and then over to Australia. We arrived in Brisbane on 26 November 1993. Melanie hadn't seen her parents for over two and a half years and it was a fantastic reunion for them and a wonderful welcome for me as a first time visitor to Australia. My first impressions of the country were very good. I marvelled at the big trees and tall palms that I had in the Netherlands only seen as indoor-plants. I loved the outdoor-living and the 'Aussie Barbeques'. A few days after our arrival, we visited the centre of Brisbane and it was such a pleasant surprise to be greeted by friendly shop assistants and people who were genuinely interested in the country I had come from. It was Christmas Holidays; the city was alive, clean, and it was warm, quite warm. Very strange to experience a hot Christmas!

Almost immediately, I started work with Perrots Florist and in the beginning of 1994 changed employers to work again in wholesale flowers. I was really enjoying Australia. I had entered the country on a one-year working holiday visa and applied for residency upon its expiration. We had bought an old 'Queenslander' and were making plans to get married. We loved it here! We decided to marry in Waalwijk to share the occasion with my family. The residency papers were taking a long time to arrive and I was unsure about leaving the country without permission to return. It was a very stressful time and unfortunately there was minimal information divulged by the Department of Immigration. We became acquainted with the Dutch Consul, Kasper Kuiper who kindly offered help and guidance.

In 1995, a few days before leaving for our wedding, I obtained approval for permanent residency. The wedding had been postponed several times; nevertheless, we were fortunate to have 16 relatives and friends from overseas joining us to celebrate our special day. It was wonderful to have both families together for the first time. Language proved to be no barrier; we watched everyone form their own friendships while we were all together. The time came when we had to return to Australia. It has never become any easier leaving special friends and family behind, knowing we are unlikely to see them again for another two to three years.

In 1997, we started our own fresh flower wholesale business in Brisbane. 'Petal Peddlers' primarily operates as a broker to the florists, supplying wholesale fresh flowers around Brisbane and to country areas in Queensland and interstate. Most flowers are sourced directly from growers or via the auction at Rocklea, Brisbane, where a small version of the Dutch auction system is used. It can in no way be compared to the famous Dutch flower auction in Aalsmeer but it is adequate for Brisbane at present.



April 1999 - Four generations Kamp, Grandmother, Mother, Bas and baby Natasha.

The weather, architecture, gardens, space, coffee, food, bicycles and people - all these things I find to be different between the two countries but I do still consider The Netherlands to be a place I also like to call 'home'. The differences are welcomed even though they are not always positive but it is these things, which makes it such a pleasure to be part of both countries. After giving the matter a lot of thought we came to the conclusion that we could have a better standard of living and offer our family more if we stayed in Australia. Of course I miss my Dutch family and friends but on the bright side I have to say that the time I do get to spend with them is certainly valued and appreciated so much more.



2000 - 'Just Roses' at the Glass House Mountains near Brisbane. Henry Westkamp, at left, inspecting the roses with Bas Kamp.

Recently we moved from our Queenslander to a brand new home in McDowall where I hope to continue to enjoy our Australian lifestyle with my wife Melanie, our two year old daughter Natascha, who is quickly learning to be bilingual, and our six-months old son called Flynn. Henny Westbrook and I set up a rose nursery at the Glass House Mountains at the end of the year 2000. Henny grows 1st quality roses which are then distributed by 'Petal Peddlers'

September 2000 (adapted in February 2001 with new information received)

EPILOGUE

To conclude: While settling into a new country requires integration, the urge to maintain contact with other people from the 'old country' remains very real for some and the urge may increase as we become older. To overcome general problems and to assist Dutch people socially, committees and clubs have been organised to provide social, religious and aged care facilities.

The following are brief accounts of services and organisations available in Queensland.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF DUTCH CONSULAR SERVICE IN QUEENSLAND

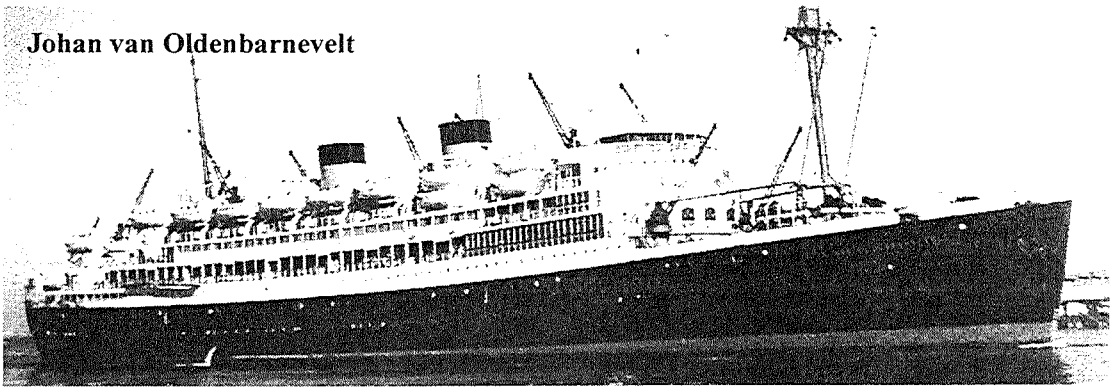
The Dutch Republic has sent representatives to foreign lands since 1584 and it was the first country to regulate consular services by statute. After the restoration of Dutch independence in 1813, consular services were revived in 1814 (with additional regulations in 1846 and 1874). The Netherlands was amongst the many countries to sign bilateral treaties on admission of consuls to colonies (1855). Primary tasks include: to protect Dutch shipping and trade, to represent interests of Dutch subjects overseas, to monitor compliance with commercial treaties, to issue travel documents and visa and to attend to varied requests and protocol.

King Willem III of the Netherlands appointed Mr J.C. Heussler as Consul for the Colony of Queensland, a position he held for 40 years. Mr J. Clark replaced him in 1905 followed by Mr F.H. Hart Jr in 1935. There have been a number of Vice-Consuls, such as in Thursday Island (because of pearl fishing), Townsville and Brisbane. Mr N.S. Pixley served as Consul during the 1948-1973 period, followed by the Netherlands-born geologist Mr B. Haites (1974-1976) (Mrs I. Haites contributed an article to this publication) and Mr G. Morris (1977-1988). Brisbane had a career-consulate from 1988 to 1992 when Mr T.H. Bouwknecht, who was initially Vice-Consul to Mr Morris, became Consul (his story is featured in this book). His successor, Mr W.J. Hilgeman, was recalled to The Netherlands in 1992 and Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands subsequently appointed Mr K. Kuiper to (honorary) Consul in 1993. Later that year he accepted exequatur from the Australian Government with jurisdiction throughout Queensland (holding that position up to date). Not only does Consul Kasper Kuiper represent the Netherlands Government at an official level but he is also considerably involved with the Dutch community at large. He attends many of their functions and is Patron of several Dutch-specific organisations.

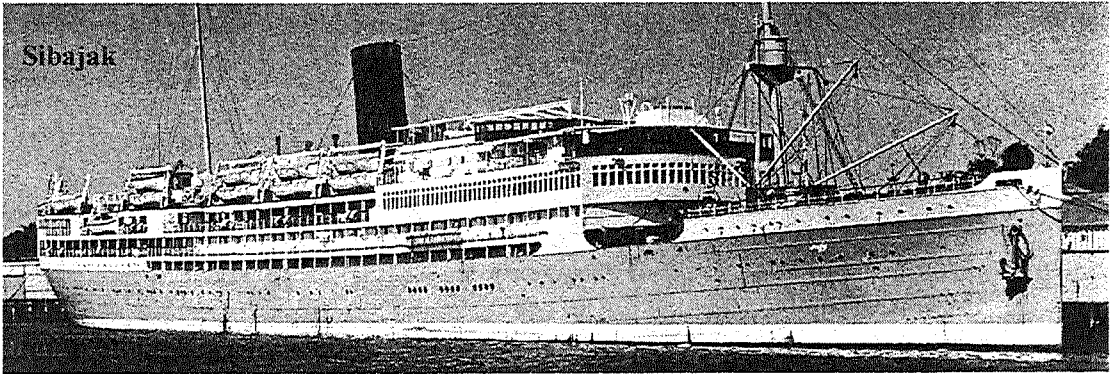
Some of the information used in this section was provided by Consul Kasper Kuiper for the chapter The Dutch in Queensland in the publication Multicultural Queensland 2001.

The Ships on which many of us came ...

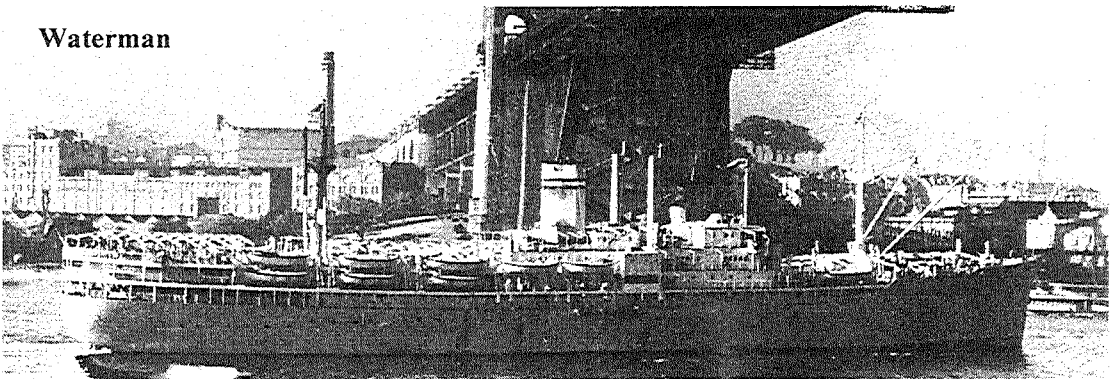
Johan van Oldenbarnevelt



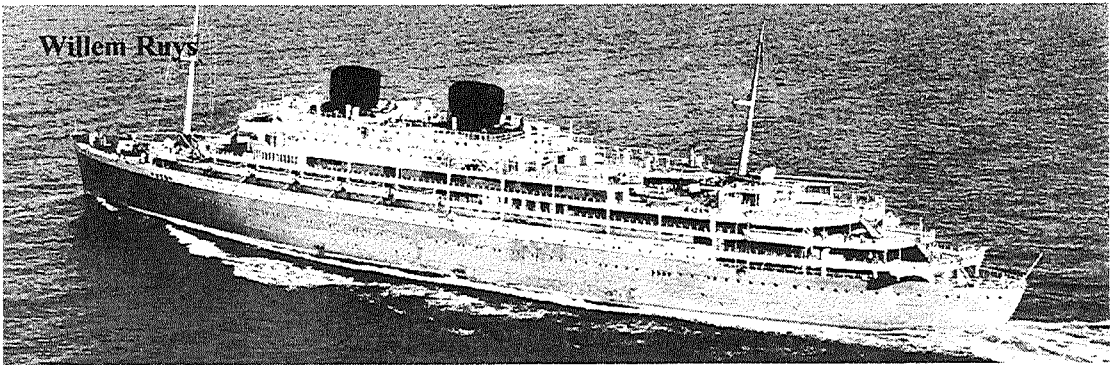
Sibajak



Waterman



Willem Ruys



Also other Ships not illustrated ...

Aagtekerk, Aurelia, Australis, Ellinis, Fairsea, Grootte Beer, Himalaya, Klipfontein, Maloja, Nelly, New Australia, Oranje, Orcadis, Orion, Roma, Skaubryn, Volendam & Zuiderkruis.

THE 16 GROUPS CURRENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH DACA

Australian Netherlands Chamber of Commerce (ANCOC) - Queensland Branch
Bambu
Borrelclub - Brisbane
Catholic Dutch Migrant Association
Dutch Alumni group
Dutch Australian Social Club of Townsville
Dutch Care Supporters
Jongeren Borrel - Brisbane
Gold Coast Dutch Community Association
Holland House Dutch Bridge Club
Nederlandse Gemeente in the Uniting Church
Netherlands Ex-Servicemen and Women's Association - Queensland Branch (NESWA-Q1d)
Netherlands Retirement Village Association of Queensland (NRVAQ)
Netherlands Sunshine Club
Queensland Community Credit Union
The Stirrers; Limburger Karnavals Club

SOME OTHER DUTCH COMMUNITY-GROUPS AND ORGANISATIONS

Algemene Vereniging Oud Marine-personeel (AVOM)
Contact Oud Mariniers (COM)
De Instuif
Dutch Friends Group (Wide Bay)
Dutch Language-group of Radio-station 4EB
Dutch-Ossy Friendship Association (Bundaberg)
Dutch Over Fifty groups (Birkdale, Brisbane North, Brisbane West, Redcliffe Peninsula)
Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland
Netherlands Association of Queensland (NAQ)
Netherlands Folkloric Dance Group
Queensland Holland Festival Association

THE FEDERATION OF NETHERLANDS ORGANISATIONS IN QUEENSLAND

Social needs of a large proportion of Dutch migrants were historically met by involvement with Dutch-oriented clubs and organisations, most of which were 'highly compartmentalised' [verzuiling] into religious affiliated groups, leading to minimal unity and consensus. To foster co-operation while maintaining Dutch culture, The Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland (FNOQ) Inc was founded in 1982. This umbrella organisation publishes the bi-monthly magazine 'De Meerpaal' and organises the yearly Federation-ball. FNOQ published the 'Dutch Australian Community Directory' in 1996. Delegates from member-groups (not all Dutch groups have membership) meet bi-monthly as the FNOQ-Council. While co-operation is strongly encouraged, the associated groups function autonomously and remain independent.

DUTCH-SPECIFIC AGED CARE SERVICES

Consistent with other ethnic groups, a small proportion (6%) of the Dutch elderly is reversing to their language-of-origin. When impaired health, compromised mobility and transport problems are also experienced, it may become difficult or impossible for older people to attend Dutch-specific functions. This may lead to social isolation, in particular when relatives have moved away. The second generation has usually minimal Dutch-language skills and the grandchildren often do not speak any Dutch at all.

To face those problems, the Dutch community came together and the Netherlands Retirement Village Association of Queensland (NRVAQ) was formed to build the Prins Willem Alexander Village (named after the Dutch Crown Prince) in Birkdale. The village was opened in 1978 and the complex has expanded gradually over the years. The buildings are replicas of houses from a particular district in the Netherlands, 'de Zaanstreek', North of Amsterdam, along the river Zaan. The village has 40 independent living units (ILUs) and 43 places for hostel-type accommodation. Most staff-members are bi-lingual in Dutch and English; Dutch festivities are observed and the meals are generally in accordance with Dutch customs. Realising that nursing home type care is now also urgently needed, serious attempts are being made to build 'high-care accommodation'. In line with other service-providers, the NRVAQ receives federal funding for the residential care in the village. The NRVAQ also receives funding for 20 Community Aged Care Packages (CACPs) for residents, primarily of Dutch background, at the Sunshine Coast. This means that 20 care-recipients at the North Coast (Caboolture to Noosa) are getting assistance with 'activities of daily living' such as bathing, shopping, gardening and cleaning. Dutch-speaking and culturally aware staff members provide these services.

The Ethnic Communities Council of Queensland (ECCQ) provides similar Brisbane-wide services for several culturally diverse groups, including the Dutch. Support services are provided for around 50 care recipients with a Dutch-speaking background.

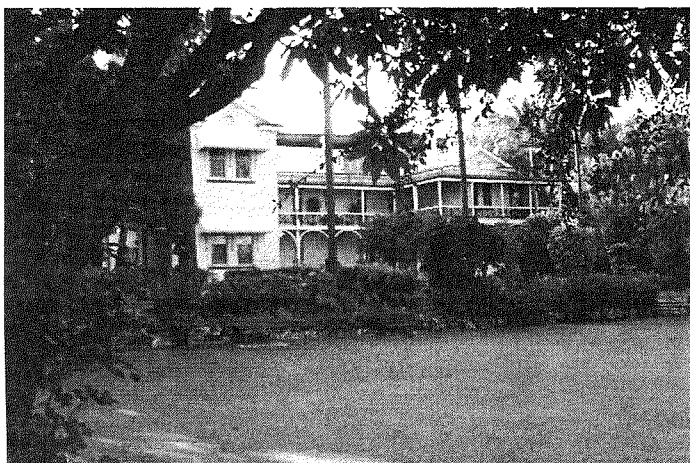
In addition to the accommodation at the PWA-village, there is also retirement accommodation available at the Wishart Christian Village. Residents of Dutch origin predominantly use that village and the number of independent living units there is increasing. The village is set in beautifully landscaped gardens at Brisbane's south-side suburb of Wishart.

The Dutch Australian Community Action Federation - Qld Inc. (commonly abbreviated to DACA) was established in 1996, when it was realised that a section of the Dutch elderly had a need for social contact in their first language and to reminisce about familiar topics from their home-country. This led to the integrated program 'Dutch Helpline' and 'Friendly Visiting Scheme' (FVS). The aim of the program is to minimise and prevent loneliness and to provide information and assistance where needed. DACA's postal address is: PO Box 235, Ashgrove Qld 4060. DACA is an umbrella-organisation to which 16 member-groups are currently associated (it is structured in the same way and runs parallel to, the above mentioned Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland). DACA's activities, which are organised for and by the Dutch community, will be discussed in the next section.

DACA ACTIVITIES: DUTCH HELPLINE / FRIENDLY VISITING SCHEME / RESOURCE CENTRE

The 'Dutch Helpline' was initiated to register requests for visits to the aged and sick. It also makes it possible for potential visitors to take part in the visiting program. The telephone-service functions also as a community service for Dutch-specific information in general. In case of emergency the 'Dutch Helpline' (phone: 07-3393 0079) can be contacted on a 24 hours a day basis. For normal cases, customary office hours should be observed. The FVS-Coordinator attempts to match requests for a regular pleasant visit [gezellig bezoekje] with the available Dutch-speaking volunteer visitors. Visits may be requested whether people are living at home, residing in an aged care facility or when hospitalised. The FVS is operating in the Greater Brisbane area while there also have been small branches at the Sunshine Coast and Gold Coast. The 'Dutch Helpline' has basic office space, known as the 'Resource Centre', at 'Yungaba'. The Queensland Government, Department of Multicultural Affairs owns that building, which is located under the Storey Bridge at Kangaroo Point, Brisbane. DACAs Resource Centre is also used as 'archive' for Dutch-Australian historical material for the benefit of future generations. Newsletters and magazines of community-groups, as well as contributions and 'memoirs' by individuals, are stored there. Since 1999, DACA has invited people in the Dutch community to write about their departure and resettlement in Queensland, leading to the compilation of those articles in this publication: 'Our Story - Experiences of the Dutch in Queensland'.

Source: 'Multicultural Queensland 2001' (adapted from the chapter: The Dutch in Queensland by A. Zeissink).



'Yungaba' - used by the Queensland Department of Multicultural Affairs. In the early fifties, 'Yungaba' was a Migrant reception centre, remembered by many new arrivals in that period. At the present it houses offices and facilities of various ethnic groups. The DACA office is located in the central section of the building. This photograph shows a view of the buildings over the extensive lawns as seen from the Brisbane river.

'BIRDS OF A FEATHER FLOCK TOGETHER'

People of similar tastes or interests will seek out each other's company, often in groups

Bambu Magazine

In April 1995 a small group of 'Indische mensen' (people born in Indonesia), such as Rob Elstak, Eric & Rob Marcus, Leo Vandersar, Jan Schmieman and Andreas Flach, came together in Cairns and founded the 'Dutch Indonesian Association - Melati' (Jasmine). Andreas Flach became the editor of the club's newsletter 'Melati'. In January 1997, Andreas moved to the Sunshine Coast and expanded the Melati club from a Cairns-based to a broader Queensland-based association while the name changed from 'Melati' to 'Bunga Melati' (Jasmine Flower). When a further distribution of the magazine over the whole of Australia was required, the name of the magazine changed again. It was now no longer a newsletter but had matured into an independent magazine for everyone interested in the former Dutch East Indies, which became later independent Indonesia. The first issue was published in 1997 under the new name 'Bambu', suggesting flexible strength as in 'bambu buigt, maar breekt niet,' (Bamboo bends, but does not break).

After coming to Australia, the 'Indische' migrants settled quickly and assimilated into most areas of Australian society. Like their Dutch 'cousins', this ethnic group quickly and industriously set about creating a worthwhile existence for themselves and their families. Overcoming the many challenges involved in this process left little time to dwell upon their ethnic background and former culture. The first generation of the 'Indische' migrants has now settled and consequently has time to reflect on the less prosaic issues of life. As they get older, these people have a natural desire to meet and converse with people of similar background and to re-connect with issues of the past. This is of course a normal aspect of the ageing process for people of all backgrounds.

One of the ways to connect to others interested in an 'Indische' background is through the magazine 'Bambu.' which is not connected to any club. Bambu has now almost 300 subscribers Australia-wide and in nine other countries: New Zealand, Canada, USA, South Africa, the Netherlands, Spain, Indonesia, Malaysia and Venezuela. The bi-monthly magazine (subscription currently \$15.00 p.a.) increased from a 12-page newsletter to a 44-page magazine. The aim of the magazine is "to bring together the diverse group of the 'Indische' people and to increase human understanding to enrich the Australian ethnic mosaic". This helps to maintain and rejuvenate the ethnic and cultural issues, which become increasingly important to these people as they are ageing. 'Bambu' organises activities such as: monthly coffee mornings, traditional Indonesian kite flying, car-rallies, picnics, outings and library services. These activities are extremely well received by all. The coffee mornings are the most important method to bring the 'Indische' people in contact with one another. They started in February 1998 and up to 70 people have attended. The 'Indische' library has over 200 books about the former Dutch East Indies and modern Indonesia. Ninette Floris does all library work.

It must be emphasised that 'Bambu', being an independent magazine, is not connected to a club, association or organisation. Volunteers do the work and organise all activities.

Andreas Flag, editor, September 2000

The Brisbane Borrelclub

The Borrelclub (a club of Dutch gin drinkers) had its foundation in 1964, when the Officer-in-Charge of the local Dutch Emigration Service, Mr Cees Mossel, invited a few prominent expatriate Dutch businessmen for an after work 'borrel' at his office. Business problems and experiences of Dutch immigrants became the topic of discussion and it was found that these exchanges could be beneficial for other expatriates. This first meeting, fuelled by the 'borrels' was such a success that a repeat was called for with a few more people.

These functions soon became regular events and thus the 'Brisbane Borrelclub' was born. As the number of members increased, a bigger venue had to be found, a contribution to the costs was levied, a constitution adopted and a committee elected with Mr Sjaak Timmermans as first chairman.

Participation was initially possible only by invitation of Mr Cees Mossel and later only by nomination and subsequent approval of the members - primarily, one had to be able to speak the Dutch language. This, sometimes criticised, selective membership has, however, assured the club of a mostly harmonious group of individuals.

A 'Borrelclub' meeting are held on every first Wednesday of the month. The members enjoy the opportunity to speak in Dutch, exchange information, be friends to each other and, as the name implies, enjoy a social drink together. Members and their partners also enjoy several organised outings throughout the year.

With the 'ageing' of the club-members and the introduction of second generation 'borrelaars' as well as the fact that some members are married to 'foreigners', Dutch is spoken less frequently during the meetings. It should be noted however, that as a condition of membership a certain amount of understanding of the Dutch language is still demanded. The club continues to hold on to most of the Dutch traditions and above all to the typical Dutch 'gezelligheid'.

Ad van der Syde (Secretary). September 2000

Catholic Dutch Migrant Association (CDMA) - Qld

In the early sixties the Dutch Catholic immigrants started to form associations in the larger cities of Australia. The Dutch Chaplains assisted those migrants spiritually and practical assistance was provided where possible. The objectives of the associations were to carry out work of a practical or spiritual nature for the benefit and assistance of migrants in general and of the Dutch Catholic migrants in particular. The associations assisted with integration into the Australian way of life and committees were set up in relation to social and cultural welfare.

The first CDMA was formed in Sydney. In Brisbane, where Fr O. Riemsdag was the Dutch chaplain, a CDMA-branch started in 1962. The first President was Mr Harry Geraerts (1962-1971). A monthly newsletter called 'Horizon' was published for distribution to the members. Yearly highlights were the Christian celebrations, Mass, Annual General Meeting

and some other activities of a spiritual or recreational nature. CDMA-Qld merged in 1971 with a number of Dutch clubs and societies, while it ceased to exist as a separate entity. Ten years later, when Fr Nouwens was Chaplain, it was decided to re-start the CDMA in Queensland. A new committee was formed and it operated until 1996. As the Committee members became older and no second generation migrants or younger people could be found to take over their tasks, it was decided to de-register the association in 1996. The 'old' committee continued as an auxiliary to assist the Chaplain - at first Fr Bede Dunn (1993-97) and since 1998 Fr Joseph Oudeman. In September 2000, a small group, of mainly second generation Dutch Australians, was formed to take on the auxiliary's tasks.

It is not possible to list all the people who have been committee-members over the years in this section but an exemption should be made for Mr Wim Driessen. He joined the CDMA in Sydney in 1961 and, after coming to Brisbane in 1965, he continued to be actively involved with the CDMA in Queensland. Sadly, Wim Driessen passed away on 26 December 2000.

Finally, it should be mentioned that CDMA-members in general and the committee members in particular have been very active in the formation and running of the various 'Dutch Over Fifties' clubs, the 'Netherlands Retirement Village Association', 'The Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland' and other social welfare initiatives.

Jan C. Boon (CDMA President 1983-1996); February 2001

De Instuif

The 'Instuif' story began with an idea. In the autumn of 1988 several people gathered for a cup of coffee in Coles Family Restaurant, in the centre of Brisbane. Coles was a favourite place where people from the country, interstate and overseas, used to meet with city folk, in particular during Exhibition time in August. Likewise, an opportunity was created for anyone of Dutch descent to 'drop in' for a chat and a 'cuppa', on the second Wednesday of each month, anytime between 10 am and 12 noon.

The numbers of people attending grew steadily. Forty people have been present lately, both male and female. The location in the centre of the city is convenient as it is well serviced by public transport from all points of the compass. People travel by train, bus and car. Due to time and physical limitations, they even come by taxi at times. Some of our visitors attend medical or other appointments in combination with coming to the 'Instuif'.

Over the years, there have been several outings but never on the 'second Wednesday of the month between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon', of course! Each year in January a picnic is held on the third Wednesday, between 10 am and 1 pm, at a lovely spot at the higher level of the riverbank of the City Botanical Gardens, accessing the gardens at the Edward Street Gate.

In July 1998, the 'Instuif' celebrated its 10th anniversary with a luncheon organised by Coles. At this occasion it was announced that Coles was closing its doors for good and eventually we selected the Myer Cafeteria on the 4th floor at the Queen Street Mall - again a central location. We talk, share birthdays as well as arrivals and farewells when people go on a journey and welcome visitors and friends from overseas. We hope to continue as long as there is a need to meet others. Everyone will be made welcome at our coffee-mornings.

Nienke Firrell, September 2000.

The Dutch Congregation of the Uniting Church of Australia

The Dutch Congregation is a parish of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. Before church union in 1977, the Dutch Congregation was a parish of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. Other names are used too, for instance 'the Dutch Congregation of St. Paul's' referring to the early period when church services were held in St. Paul's Presbyterian Church, St. Pauls Terrace. In some documents of the Uniting Church the name 'Dutch Uniting Church' appears.

When, after the Second World War, many Dutch migrants settled in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia, the 'Nederlands Hervormde Kerk' set up a special committee to provide pastoral care for them in their new country. This church came to an agreement with the Presbyterian Church of Australia. The result was that the home church in the Netherlands encouraged its migrating members to join the Presbyterian Church of Australia, while the Australian church accepted ministers from the Dutch church as ministers in full standing. One of these was Rev J.W. van de Meene. In 1952, he left a busy city parish in Utrecht, accompanied by his wife and six children, to commence a new ministry in Queensland. He was called to be the parish minister of the Toowong Presbyterian Church. In addition, Rev van de Meene conducted regular services in the Dutch language while Mrs van de Meene laid the foundation for the Dutch Presbyterian (later Uniting) Ladies Guild. Rev van de Meene gave not only pastoral care to newcomers from the Netherlands but also acted as interpreter and social worker, helping people to find a home and employment. The task became so big that the Presbyterian Church decided to relieve Rev van de Meene from his ministry in Toowong and to establish the Dutch Congregation in 1954. In the following years the congregation was very active. Many children were baptised and many marriage ceremonies were conducted. Even a film was produced to describe the life of Dutch immigrants for parents and relatives at home and to provide information of life in a new country to prospective emigrants.

The Dutch Congregation remained a parish with a full-time minister for about ten years. Rev van de Meene remained for eight years, after which Rev R. Versloot took his place for three years. The decision was made, mainly due to financial reasons, to continue with a Dutch speaking minister, who was making his living as a full-time worker elsewhere. Rev H. Fischer, who was the Director of the Marriage Guidance Council of Queensland, served as minister of the Dutch Congregation for three years. Since Rev Fischer's return to the Netherlands in 1968 Rev H. Spykerboer, Professor of Old Testament Studies and now retired, has been the minister until the present time.

The Dutch Congregation has played a vital role in Queensland as an agent of help and care. For many years, in fact for more than three decades, we have expected its demise or rather its fulfilment and anticipate that there are not many years left. Yet at present an active community, with several of the remaining original members still associated with the church, meets regularly for worship and fellowship at the YWCA Building in Wharf Street, on the second, fourth and fifth Sunday of each month. At times, services are conducted at the PWA village. The Dutch congregation has provided a safe harbour over a period of almost 50 years for people whose life journey was often uncertain, even very difficult. We are proud to have been, and continue to be, an important participant in the process of Dutch immigration in Queensland.

Rev Han Spykerboer, December 2000.

Ladies Guild of the Dutch Congregation Uniting Church

In October 1998, the Uniting Church Ladies Club celebrated its 45th anniversary with an Indonesian-style lunch in the Prins Willem Alexander Village. Our small group of 'active' members was joined by many past members, some in wheelchairs.

Our group started in 1953 and consisted of ladies from the 'Hervormde Gemeente' (Dutch Presbyterian). The Toowong Presbyterian Church had a recently arrived Dutch Minister and quite a few Dutch women found their way there from Wacol Migrant camp. Truus van de Meene (the minister's wife) poured many cups of coffee whilst the ladies discussed various problems associated with life 'in a strange land' or tried to forget their difficulties briefly. Support also came from the Toowong Presbyterian Women's Guild - our members were welcomed at their Sherwood Road hall. This friendliness was much appreciated by our early members. Little did anyone dream that the club would still be going 45 years later!

Numbers became so large that we decided to formalise into a regular church-affiliated club. Meetings were subsequently held at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church in Brisbane City on the first Wednesday of every month. We developed a format: coffee, chats, followed by Bible study. Presidents and committees worked hard to provide a monthly programme and other activities, while contact was maintained with sick or troubled members. Friendships, which lasted a lifetime, were formed in St. Andrews.

There were all kinds of activities. We recognised our common Dutch culture in our annual celebration of 'Sinterklaas' (St. Nicholas Day) and our August 'snerf' (pea-soup) mornings. The highlight of our year was probably the Christmas Service, organised and conducted by our members, first in Warner Street Presbyterian Church in Fortitude Valley and later in the Uniting Church, Merthyr Road, New Farm. These services were attended not only by our own group but also by Dutch people from all around Brisbane. For some, this was probably their major contact with the Dutch community. We continue to hold these services each year. Another activity, which involved us with the wider community, was the annual street stall, initially held in the City and later in Inala. Here our ladies sold small items of handcraft, cakes and pot plants. The money raised went mostly to charities of our choice.

Many women came to our meetings over those 45 years, some only once or twice, others many times; some from our own Congregation, others attending Australian congregations. What we all had in common was our Dutch heritage. For many years, we had thirty to forty people at meetings but in the mid-nineties, numbers started to dwindle. None of our original members are with us now. Our 45th anniversary represented the end of the 'active' phase of our guild. In common with many Dutch organisations, the assimilation policies of earlier years have left us without a younger generation to take over and the ultimate aim of the Dutch congregation always was: 'to merge with the wider community'. A few of us are still meeting on an informal basis at the Prins Willem Alexander Village. We hope to continue this as long as possible.

Hanny van der Mark, December 2000.

The Christian Reformed Churches of Australia

After WWII, the influx of Dutch migrants to Australia started in earnest and they came by shiploads. If no one was there to help a family with housing and work, they would be directed to migrant reception centres but conditions were not ideal there. Therefore, Dutch migrants who had already settled in Australia were called upon to 'sponsor' the newcomers. The churches soon encouraged members of their congregations to participate in such sponsorships.

Many Dutch migrants found established churches in Australia where they could readily go - Roman Catholic and Presbyterian churches mainly. The more conservative people of Presbyterian signature, also called 'Reformed', since they took their roots to be in the Calvinist Reformation of the 16th century, wanted a church more rigidly adhering to the confessions they grew up with. Some attempts were made to join existing denominations but this was found dogmatically undesirable. Therefore the Reformed Churches of Australia (RCA) was founded. That name was recently changed to 'Christian Reformed Churches of Australia'.

The first of the reformed churches was established in Penguin, Tasmania, in October 1951, and the second one was established in Brisbane, Queensland, on 25 November 1951. The aim of the churches is to be Australian and to discard its Dutch connotations. Whilst the Presbyterian Church had Dutch congregations holding services in the Dutch language for quite a number of decades, the RCA on the other hand, immediately adopted liturgy and song-book in the English language and used the English Bible translation. Soon after the establishment of the RCA churches, the English language was used at all official gatherings. Therefore, right from the start there was a small influx of Australian-born members, mainly through marriage.

The RCA congregation in Brisbane used to meet in the YMCA building at Edward Street. Not until 1960 did they acquire their own building in Toowong - a church they bought from the Presbyterian Church. The first RCA minister, the Rev Pieter Pellicaan, arrived in 1951 but he had to leave to serve a rather struggling fellowship in Melbourne. His successor, the Rev J.J.C Westera, arrived in 1954 and he served the church in Brisbane for more than 25 years!

The second congregation, which was part of the RCA in Brisbane for many years, was established in the housing commission area of Inala, where many migrants had settled and this congregation became independent in 1965. The third congregation was formed in Toowoomba. Many people remember how its first building was acquired - they bought a wooden Anglican Church building in Gatton and had it hauled on a big truck right 'up the Darling Downs!' There are currently seven congregations in Queensland.

In the middle of the 1960s, the RCA commenced building the first of several Christian Schools in Queensland and again, by no stretch of the imagination can they be called Dutch.

When people grow older, the need for the language and customs of one's youth tends to be felt more keenly and villages for older folk have been established since the middle of the 1980s. The Reformed Church in Queensland built a retirement village called the 'Wishart Christian Village' on the southside of Brisbane. That retirement village is accessible to all Christians who share their faith in the Gospel, no matter what background.

Summarised from information provided by Arent de Graaf, February 2001

Holland House Bridge Club

Bridge is a popular card game in the Netherlands. It is therefore not surprising that Dutch people, who enjoyed playing bridge would, in the late 1950s, get together and play the game in Brisbane. After more than 40 years the members are still playing at least once every fortnight.

Every group or club needs an organiser or leader to keep the purpose going. Whilst not mentioning any names, there has always been such a motivated person to keep us on an even keel. Some of them have left us and some still attend to that onerous task from time to time.

First, we were playing in Yungaba, Kangaroo Point, once a week. Later we played in premises let to us by the NAQ in Mary Street in the City, followed by sessions at the residence of a NAQ committee-member; we used six to seven tables and there was space for it at his place. We are still thankful for this person's gesture to open his house to our bridge club. After some time, we moved to Milton for a number of years.

When the Dutch Club at Annerley was built, we played bridge in a separate section of that building. After a while it became apparent that we were squeezed out because of other bookings. This was quite understandable of course as we did not pay any rent and we complained bitterly if the coffee was not ready on time. Besides, most of us were not even a member of the 'Holland House club'! (the 'Holland House Club' does no longer exist).

From that location came the name 'Holland House Bridge Club'. At the end of each year, there would be sufficient money to organise a dinner party around Christmas time. The winning players were presented with a prize in the form of a cup inscribed with the winner's names. The prizes were usually donated by some of the dedicated bridge supporters.

After the time at 'Holland House' we started playing at the homes of club-members; each of us taking it in turn to be host. There are now only eight players left but we are still having the same fun as in the early days of our club.

John van Riel, August 2000



L K C The Stirrers (*The Limburger Karnavals Club 'The Stirrers'*)

As the name suggest the majority of the members in the early days were Limburgers and most of the others came from Brabant with a few coming from other parts of the Netherlands, mostly from places where they had enjoyed the very humorous Carnival celebrations.

In the mid seventies Jack and Truus Luyten together with Harry and Toos Vullers had organised a couple of Limburger nights. Afterwards they were approached whether they could organise a Carnival function but, not knowing too much about it, they were rather apprehensive although willing to try. February 1978 was set for a Fancy Dress Ball to be held in the hall of the Netherlands Association of Queensland (NAQ), in Sherwood. It would be

Harry Jeuken's second time to be 'Prince Carnival'. He had that honour already in 1960 at the first Carnival function in Queensland. The night went well but the cost of uniforms, hats, medals etc made it difficult to continue. Then, out of the blue, they met a couple of Germans who wanted to start a Carnival Club. They had just come back from Germany and had brought with them uniforms, hats, medals, everything, all they needed were people for the Council of Eleven, and that was no problem. It was decided with the NAQ to have the 'Prinsen Bal' (Prince's Ball) in November 1978, but then the Germans couldn't be found. This gave the organising committee only a couple of weeks to get the uniform outfits ready; there was no chance to cancel the event, tickets had already been printed, the night advertised and the hall and band booked. Bill Willems was honoured to become 'Prince' and the 'Council of Eleven' was dressed up in *scheepjes* - the official hat wear - and a white, blue and yellow sash, the colour of the Limburger flag. The night was again very successful. After the function, Frank Sluyter (secretary from the N.A.Q) advised them not to give up - they should work together and he would try to support them.

In naming the club, there were arguments and a lot of fooling around until somebody stood up and said, "you are all a bunch of stirrers," and that is how the name 'The Stirrers' was created. Then Jan Razenberg became a member, which was a lucky break because he knew all the rules about Carnival and had experience in organising Carnival functions. In 1980 Truus Luyten and Toos Vullers went to the Netherlands and brought back the first official hats, bought in Maaseick, Belgium; now they are made by some of the women in the club. It would have been difficult to continue the first years, if it had not been for the support of Hans Zwijnenberg of 'Hans Welding Works' who supplied and made a lot of the necessary equipment and props. The 'Stirrers' highlight so far has been their 1x11th - anniversary (eleventh) in 1990 when they had 25 Queensland and interstate Carnival clubs joining them in the Brisbane City Hall for their Anniversary Carnival celebrations. They hope to celebrate their 2x11th - anniversary in November 2001.

For the first generation migrants, the club was the centre of their social life with Carnival functions, rehearsals, working bees for making props and art and crafts to sell at stalls to raise the money. The next generation usually came along to these activities and grew up with the Carnival spirit, however, and sad to say, not many continued the tradition. They have their family responsibilities and other more diverse interests and naturally their priorities are entirely different compared to the older original members.

The type of people who join 'the Stirrers' should have a sense of humour, should not take things too seriously nor mind having a laugh at themselves. Their nationality does not really matter any more as long as they have the fun loving Carnival spirit and are willing to take an active part. Over the last twenty years, 'the Stirrers' have been able to entertain people at their 'Prince and Carnival Balls' as well as at smaller, well-attended functions, which suggests they brought relaxation and enjoyment to people who came to these evenings. 'The Stirrers' have often been invited by other clubs or organisations to bring a bit of colour and humour to their events. They always take an active part in the festivities at the 'Holland Festival' usually by bringing in the Official Guest and doing a show. Over the years, the 'Stirrers' visited many Carnival clubs all over Australia but now many of these clubs have closed due to the advancing age of the members and the lack of younger replacements.

Toos Vullers and Matt Theunissen, September 2000.



**Netherlands Ex-Servicemen and Women's Association in Australia
Queensland Branch, Inc.**

NESWA- Old was founded in 1973 - incorporated in 1991

NESWA is an association of men and women in Australia who, at an earlier stage in life, served their country in the Dutch Armed Forces, be it Army, Navy or Air Force, 'korps Mariniers' (Marines), or the KNIL (Royal Dutch East Indies Army). Also ex-personnel of the Merchant Navy, members of the Dutch Resistance movement, Prisoners of War and victims of the German and Japanese occupation who were interned in labour and or concentration camps. The association opted for this broad definition to enable reaching as many Dutch people or people of Dutch origin with the same or similar interests and concerns.

NESWA represents and advises its members regarding financial matters such as pensions, one-off payments and compensations that may or may not be claimed. Similarly, advice is given regarding medals of honour and other decorations.

NESWA is represented in several umbrella organisations, Dutch as well as Australian. In addition NESWA is a member of the World Veterans Federation, Veteranen Platform Nederland and the Australian Veterans and Defence Council.

An important link between the organisation and its members is our monthly magazine 'Wapenbroeders' ('Comrades-in-arms'); it has proven to be a valuable source of information with news from the appropriate Government departments, NESWA branches in Australia, other Veterans' organisations here and overseas etc.

Our relatively large membership covers the whole of the state of Queensland. Therefore, only members in the Southeast corner of the state can regularly visit meetings, commemoration services and social events organised in Brisbane. Several times per year, we have coffee mornings at the Sunshine Coast and the North Coast to reach people in a slightly larger area.

We embrace the, in our view very important, principle of a good relationship and solidarity between members.

NESWA, Queensland, P.O. Box 3169, Logan Hyperdome, Loganholme Qld 4129



**Algemene Vereniging Oud-personeel
van de Koninklijke Marine (AVOM)**
(Association of Ex-Royal Dutch Navy Personnel)

'AVOM' is known in Australia as the Association of Ex-Royal Dutch Navy personnel. The Australian branch has been established in 1996 and was recognised by the Chief Directorate in the Netherlands in 1997. The association as a whole has approximately 4000 members, mostly in the Netherlands with a small portion all over the world. The AVOM has existed for 20 years and has 21 branches. The Queensland Branch started after a reunion of the Dutch Royal Navy in Brisbane in 1996 when the participants asked whether this could become a yearly event. It was felt this would be easier with the parent association behind us. Though most participants belonged to another military association in Queensland, people believed that

a real need existed for a separate group. Our group has a special bond, possibly because of prolonged living at close quarters on a ship for months and sometimes years. This was discussed with the existing military association in Queensland, which did not consider the difference significant and did not propose to have a separate section.

When an advertisement was placed in two local Dutch language newspapers, the reaction was greater than expected. The Consul helped greatly in finding sponsors. The hall of the Netherlands Association of Queensland (NAQ) was made available for a meeting, a banner was designed and polo shirts printed with our logo. Of course there had to be a 'Rijsttafel' (Indonesian banquet), always an essential part of any Dutch Navy occasion. The meeting resulted in a request to the Directorate to start a branch in Australia, which was granted.

In the beginning all activities had to be organised and funded by the office bearers themselves. The first occasion was a commemoration of the 'Battle of the Java Sea' and participants contributed to the cost. In the Monument Garden of the NAQ in Richland we were able to install one of the most beautiful remembrance plaques in commemoration of the 'Battle of the Java Sea', namely the 'ABDA-fleet' in line in full sea.

The AVOM has overcome early problems and reunions are held in rotation in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Participants only pay travel costs. We remain a Dutch branch of the Netherlands umbrella association and try to keep everything as Dutch as possible as we sail happily along under the current branch management. AVOM is a member of the Federation of Netherlands Organisations of Queensland Inc.

Cees Huig, Secretary AVOM Australia branch, November 2000

The Netherlands Association of Queensland (NAQ)

It all started in 1952. Four Dutch men, recently arrived in Australia, started a 'Klaverjas' (Dutch card game-only known in the Netherlands) club. Before long, the club had increased to 28 members and we became known as 'De Hollandse Kaartclub'. We came together at people's homes. In 1962, we found clubrooms in Margaret Street, Brisbane City. The club had then 48 members. The Dutch Bridge Club shared these rooms. In 1962 we adopted 'Netherlands Association of Queensland' (NAQ) as the club's name. Our clubhouse burnt down late one night in 1965. Fortunately, no one was there at the time! It was a setback for the club but we kept going by meeting under the house of one of the committee-members.

In 1967, we found another home for the club at 48 Milton Road, Milton. This soon became too small for our needs and a couple of years later we moved to the former picture theatre at Sherwood. Membership went up to 400 and the club flourished. The club had some card clubs, three billiard tables and a choir. There was even folk dancing in national dress for the children and an in-house orchestra with piano, organ and drums. This was the time when most people had overcome the initial difficulties of migration, were becoming middle aged and wanted to have some fun. Unfortunately 'progress' caught up with the club and our building had to make way for a shopping centre.

Committees and members had to look again for a solution. We found land and a building, which we were able to purchase from the 'Lions Football Club' at Richlands, south of

Brisbane. In January 1985, we moved into our new clubhouse where we have been ever since. Over the years members worked hard to improve this building.

Much has happened at our club. Social nights, 'Sinterklaas' ('St Nicholas') parties for the children, entertainers from Holland, entertainment with local talent, fetes, mini-markets and other activities too numerous to mention. Thousands of Dutch and Australian-Dutch people, members and non-members, attended the club events. Committees and volunteers did a great deal of work over the years providing a place for 'Dutch' people to go to.

In 1997, we celebrated our 45th anniversary with a big party. This was a solid achievement - 45 years! Our members are now ageing and the future of our club depends on attracting and involving younger people in our community. To some extent, this is happening. We hope yet to continue for many years to come.

Theo Kleiberg (Past President), September 2000)

The Dutch Radio Group

The Dutch Radio Group, which started around 1919, is an integral part of Radio Station 4EB (Ethnic Broadcasting). More than 50 groups broadcast programs in their own language. The Dutch group holds its own social functions and also participates in 4EB-events such as: 'Open Day' and 'Multicultural Festivale'. Several Dutch representatives have served in various positions on the Board of the multicultural radio-station.

Studios located in Kelvin Grove and West End were used initially. In 1985, with State Government support, it became possible to move to the current purpose-built premises with well-equipped studios, offices, library etc, situated at 140 Main Street, Kangaroo Point.

Broadcasting hours allocated to the various groups do depend on the number of members. The Dutch group has currently four programs per week (Tue. 5.15 - 6 pm, Wed. 3 - 3.45 pm, Sat. 4 - 5 pm and Sun. 11 am - 12 noon). The program can be found on 1053 AM. The wavelength is expected to change to 98.1 FM in August 2001.

The broadcasters are enthusiastic volunteers who bring their own style and area of interest to the program, assisted by technical producers. The Committee of the Dutch Radio Group holds monthly meetings when future programs are discussed. The programs, aiming to provide the listeners with information and pleasure, include Dutch-specific local and overseas news, as well as music and special interviews.

Summarised from information supplied by the group, February 2001.

The Netherlands Retirement Village Association of Qld Inc.

Prins Willem Alexander Village

The village, located at 62 Collingwood Road, Birkdale, is owned and operated by the above association. There are 40 independent living units (ILUs) and 44 hostel units. The central building has a well-equipped kitchen, dining-room/lounge, offices and recreation-space.

The Dutch Community can take pride that this multimillion dollar asset is debt-free (it was never subject to mortgage). It is quite an achievement considering that the in 1986 opened bank account had an initial deposit of \$ 105 (largely a donation from one of the Dutch clubs).

Various Dutch community groups had discussed the creation of a Dutch retirement village from about 1985 onwards. On 12 February 1986, the Executive of the Federation of Netherlands Organisations in Queensland expressed its "full support for the initiative of the Over 50s-group to investigate the need and problems of the aged in the Dutch Community".

A survey was conducted, which showed a real need for a Dutch retirement village. For some of the respondents this need was immediate while for others, it was in the short to medium term. The association was founded after the Constitution, drafted by an Interim Committee, was adopted. A decision was made to look for suitable land, leading to the contract to purchase the present site for \$160,000. A concerted effort to sell debentures resulted in sufficient funds to settle at the due date. The association held the following Annual General Meeting in a large marquee on its own land!

Initially 20 ILUs were built (stage-1) and the first residents took occupancy in September 1990. Late in 1989, the Federal Government provided a \$ 1,300,000 grant towards the building of 30 hostel units, on condition that a number of units had to be available free of charge to financially disadvantaged people. At the end of 1990, the hostel-complex (stage 2) and another 20 ILUs (stage 3) were completed. On 9 November of that year, His Excellency Mr J.C.Th. Bast, the Ambassador of the Netherlands in Australia officially opened the Prins Willem Alexander Village.

Over the years, 14 more hostel-units were built. The village is currently fully occupied, and there is a waiting list for ILUs. A separate company, with full support of the association, paid a deposit on an adjacent block of land for further development of the village. It is the intention that this project will incorporate nursing-home-type accommodation. Considering the strong support demonstrated by the Dutch Community in the past, resulting in a magnificent Village, there is every reason to believe that the same community will show support again for the enormous task to build the much needed high-care facility.

The Prins Willem Alexander Village is a valuable Dutch community asset providing a good standard of accommodation at a low comparative cost. The residents live in a friendly atmosphere and receive excellent care. The 10th anniversary of the first residents moving into the village was celebrated in September 2000. Around the same time the hostel achieved 'accreditation' for a three-year period and achieved the highest possible score. Accreditation is an essential government requirement, demonstrating quality care in all respects.

Steve Flierman (past-President and current Board member-NRVAQ), November 2000