

The forgotten bag

In 1964, my emigrated older brother Tenne and his wife came over from Australia for a holiday in our familiar Brabant. Our parents lived in Eindhoven, but staying with his brother in Boxtel was his preference. Before emigrating to Australia, my brother had been a gamekeeper in the Bata forests near Best, so he knew the whole area well. In Australia he became a surveyor, helping to plan the great highways of Western Australia.

After four wonderful weeks wandering through Boxtel and the surrounding countryside, their holiday came to an end and they returned home to Perth in Western Australia. When we began tidying up the guest room after their departure, we found a large bag under their bed. Sending it by post was an option, but it was expensive—and the bag only contained personal belongings.

At the time, I was working as a head chef at a hotel on the station square, where Janny Voets also worked. As a former seaman, I often asked about her brothers, Ad and Henk. “How’s your brother doing? He’s still sailing with the VNS, isn’t he?” Janny told me that Ad was due home that week, but would soon be leaving again on a long voyage to the Middle East. “Ask him if he can stop by before he departs,” I said.

I was lucky—Ad was indeed heading toward Australia, though first to Port Said and then through the Suez Canal on an oil tanker. It seemed worth the effort to send the bag with him. The voyage went smoothly, and sure enough, he continued all the way to Australia.

It was early morning when the *Koudekerk* docked in Fremantle Harbour. My brother was already waiting for him on the quay. Ad still had some work to finish on board before he could go ashore, but when they finally met, my brother could hardly believe it: “Unbelievable—a friend of our Bert from Boxtel has come all this way to bring back my forgotten bag!” They spent a few joyful days together, as my brother insisted on showing his gratitude.

Whenever Ad and I run into each other back in our village, we always laugh and call out: “Hey Ad—just off to deliver a bag to my brother again!”

Bert Broekman

