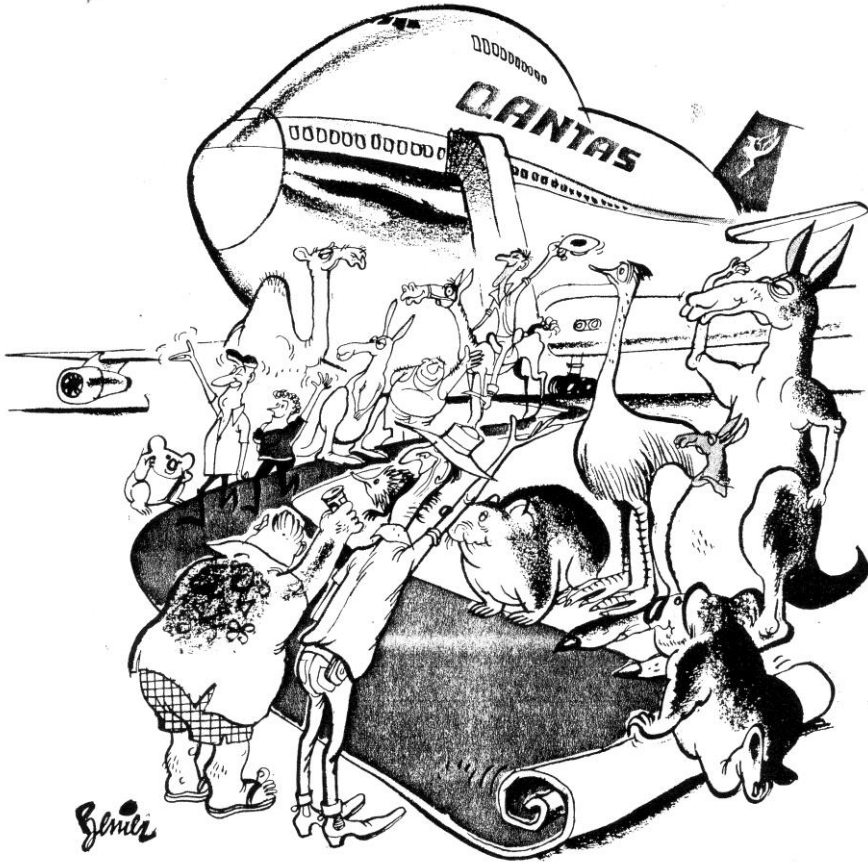


## Across Australia to Perth

Following is an excerpt from an article about Australia which appeared in the *Rodney Mercury*, December 23, 1980:

As our plane approached Kingsford-Smith International Airport at Botany Bay, we saw Sydney, sprawled before us as far as we could see.



Arriving in Australia by Qantas Airways.

What a difference to the Botany Bay of 1770 when Captain Cook arrived on the Endeavour!

The Fishers were ready to begin their Australian adventure but when we tried to use our Austrailpasses (unlimited rail travel for three weeks) we ran into a booking problem. It took 3 hours in a state travel agency to get everything straightened out. Then we relaxed and enjoyed the sights and sounds of Sydney with a population of three million.

The beaches and sea foods impressed us but we were confused by the different style of food, hours of business and the money.

The first stop on our continental crossing was the capital, Canberra. We were disappointed we did not see more of the Australian Alps but during our two days in Melbourne we met a former exchange teacher to Canada and the Sansoms proudly showed us their city.

Australia is a land of opposites. It's not the Big Dipper but the Southern Cross you see in the night sky. Not only do you drive on the opposite side of the road but on January 20<sup>th</sup> the temperature in Melbourne was 35°C with the sun always in the north and shadows always in the south.

Alice Springs (population 15,000) was one of several exciting Australian highlights, including getting to and from "The Alice". It was an hour and 50 minute flight from Adelaide over the wheat fields of the York Peninsula, the bright red chemical deposits of Lake Eyre, the sand dunes and dry rivers of the interior.

As it turned out it was too costly to fly the 600 km from Alice Springs to Ayres Rock so we rented a small vehicle called a Moke and explored the nearby mountains, historic sites, the flying doctor station, camel farms and other attractions near Alice Springs.

Alice Springs is almost in the middle of a country only slightly smaller than Canada and we were beginning to appreciate how big and empty Australia really is. Once you leave the large coastal capital cities which dominate each state you see few people and very little traffic.

Many Aboriginals or Blacks congregate in Alice to get their welfare and liquor. The lifestyle of the aboriginal is so different from the white Australian the solutions to the problem will certainly test the Australians for many years to come.

The Ghan is a train which gets its name from the Afghans who years ago led camel caravans over the Simpson, Gibson and Great Victorian Deserts. This train moves about the same speed as a camel which is about 20 miles per hour. After the traditional Aussie farewell party outside each car, which usually includes champagne, the train begins its two day, 1500 km trip to Adelaide. The narrow gauge line to Alice Springs often buckles in the heat which reached 47°C just the day before and was one reason for the slow speed. Ghan rails are being replaced with standard gauge.

Life aboard the Ghan, the Indian Pacific and other trains is like a hotel on wheels. The family had a cabin with shower and toilet to ourselves. We also had table reservations in the dining car. For a change

of pace passengers might play cards or have a singsong around the piano in the lounge car. Always there was passing scenery and Mark and Susan kept a sharp eye out for kangaroos, emus and other wildlife.

## **Western Australia**

We arrived in Perth on January 29, giving us just two days to settle down before school began. Our adjustment was made easier by the members of the Western Australia Exchange Club and the friends of our exchanges, the Donovans.

My teaching year was both rewarding and challenging. I was assigned grades eight, nine and 10 classes at Swan (River) View High School. Swan View had a great staff whose help was appreciated (See Appendix 9). I was even fortunate to have the experience of teaching a few Aboriginal students (See Appendix 10). Like Graham in Ontario at West Elgin Secondary School, I faced new students and curriculum but unlike Graham I was fortunate to start at the beginning of the school year (February) and not in the middle.

Australians are different, and Western Australians are somewhat different than those living in the East, just as there are differences among Canadians living in different parts of Canada. Boni and I were not expecting Australia to be so different, and it was well into 1979 before we realized we were having a ‘culture shock.’

Western Australia is somewhat isolated from the rest of Australia and from the world by geography but this is changing. As the Sandgropers (Western Australians) find and sell more iron ore, nickel, bauxite, gold, diamonds etc, capital and workers from all over the world but especially Japan and the USA are finding WA attractive. Whether it is right or wrong most Aussies don’t have a hang up about selling their

raw materials to the world and this is one reason why their dollar was \$1.30 Canadian at the time.

The occasional disappointment with life in WA did not dampen our enthusiasm to find out more about the state. On most excursions like the one into the Outback we camped and barbecued along with other Aussies.

At Albany on what the Aussies call the Southern Ocean we toured an abandoned whaling station and climbed the giant Gloucster Tree (192 ft.). In the southwest, where the heaviest rainfall occurs, forests of Karri, Tingle and Jarrah (all eucalyptus trees) cover the land and trees 300 to 400 years old may stretch upwards over 200 feet.

The Perth metropolitan area, only 50 km away from the Donovan home, provided unlimited attractions throughout the year. Footy (Aussie Rules Football), the Fremantle market, wine tours in the Swan Valley, the ever popular quiz night and the Indian Ocean beaches were our entertainment. I even escaped a deadly diamond-backed spider while rummaging in the Donovan garage.

As we flew westward on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1979 we thought of the many pleasant times and experiences we had in that vast land – ‘Down Under!’



Susan and Mark with kangaroo (and baby),  
Millendon.



Our trip north – Mark,  
Boni, Susan.



Susan and Mark on Wave  
Rock.



Mark and Susan with blackboys,  
*Xanthorrhoea*.



The Fisher family inside a burned-out tingle  
eucalyptus near Manjimup.



Vermin (rabbit) fence.



Outback campsite in Western Australia.  
Note tent over car.