

Later in Australia, we would realize that this was the best 10 quid we ever spent. I still firmly believe this to this day.

The ship docked in Melbourne on Friday, 12th February 1965, and with a suitcase, 400 quid, and nothing else except a determination to succeed, I began my journey. Once again, my guardian angel intervened, and I was interviewed at the RACV Club in Melbourne the very next day, Saturday and started work on Monday, just three days in a strange country.

I still remember my first introduction to Aussie lingo when the chef said, “Okay, be here at *f\*\*\*ing 9 AM, and if you’re still f\*\*\*ing* here at 10, you can stay all *f\*\*\*ing* day.”

I came from a very different, structured kitchen culture. At the time, I was reasonably skilled in basic cookery, yet undereducated, but fairly intelligent. It was a huge culture shock, coming from a very rigid, classical large kitchen where the menu was classical French, to an Australian foodservice culture and to my horror serving tinned Heinz Tomato soup in what was supposedly a fine dining room.

Initially, I was assigned as a “chef de partie - sauce,” responsible for the preparation of the main courses, and soon established a reputation with the apprentices who all wanted to work with me.

Then, in 1969, my guardian angel stepped in again, and I was contacted by William Angliss College when the administration heard comments from apprentices attending the college about this ‘pommie’ cook. Receiving an offer, Jean and I decided it was time for a change to a job where my three kids stopped wondering who this strange man was who appeared only on Sundays.

This move was even more of a culture shock, as I literally halved my salary, which was compensated by the halving of my working week—from 65 to 35 hours. I began a new career as a commercial cookery teacher and soon realized that while I was somewhat skilled in cookery, to have any hope of progress, I would have to do something about my lack of tertiary qualifications. So, I returned to evening classes at Box Hill TAFE at 27 years old.

I remember the first words from a much younger teacher on the first evening class, who set an assignment to submit two hundred words about themselves due the following week. I thought at the time, who in their right mind would ask anyone, or could expect anyone, to write two hundred words about anything? I actually did this, but with about 150 “and’s” in the narration.

This move eventually led to achieving Matriculation, a Certificate of Catering, a Diploma in Hospitality Management, and finally, a Graduate degree in Applied Science at RMIT in Food and Food Service, but it took many years of evening classes and many weekends of blood, sweat, and tears.

All throughout this time, my angel was hard at work. Between 1970 and 1979, every time a promotion came up, everyone else would take a step backward, and being slow, I stood still and progressed up the ladder from Teacher to Senior Teacher, Program Coordinator, Deputy Head of Department, and finally, Head of a Foods Department with 37 teachers and about 1500 students attending preparatory, apprenticeship, certificate, and management courses. Soon thereafter, I was appointed as one of the four program managers of the college.

In 1978, I applied to be considered to join the inaugural Australian Culinary Olympic National Team of four professional chefs to represent Australia.