Loin des yeux, pres du coeur

Cairo
13.12.56

Melbourne
30.6.58

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Well, when I finished scribbling “Snippets” about my twenty years in Egypt I thought about making some notes about my first twenty months in Australia. This is the period between my departure from Egypt up to your Mother’s arrival in Australia. The saying in French is “loin des yeux, loin du coeur” (Far from the eyes, far from the heart) these few pages demonstrate how wrong it was in our case!

We have now been married over 40 years and I feel like writing about the young man (or was he a boy?) who landed in Australia and found himself in a new country with such a completely different sense of values and history.

A friend of my Tante Lucienne married an Australian soldier during World War II and came to settle in Australia, this was probably before the mass migration programs of the early post war years. Your Mother and I visited them in Canberra during the first year of our marriage. When we asked about her thoughts and her impressions of Australia she simply commented: "c'est un pays de negres blancs" (it is a country of white Negroes). In those days, in Egypt, if something was non-European involving black/coloured/Arabs, it was considered as inferior. In this simple sentence, that was said, I believe without any malice, she encapsulated the cultural shock that was experienced by me and by so many migrants. I did not relate to football, cricket or beer! The whole nation stopped after 6 p.m. when pubs closed (a colleague of mine told his boss who wanted to talk shop at 5:05 p.m. that he was interfering with his drinking time); hospital admissions caused by drink/drive accidents went through the roof after 6 p.m. every day. It was a common sight to see people visibly under the influence walking out of pubs after the words "Its time gentlemen" were said inviting all patrons to leave after the last round was consumed. People would go to a restaurant and bring wine with them! From 1 p.m. Saturday you could not buy petrol for the rest of the weekend.

Bread was available as white or brown, sliced or unsliced, Vienna, rye or pipe loaf, no “baguette”, no “pita”, no “bagels” no focacia, no pizza etc.... No fresh bread on Sunday! (Later some smart bakeries added a couple of raisins to the bread and sold it on Sunday under the label of “cake”, this was legal). During the weekends, milk bars that sold cold meats, tins of food, eggs,.... had to draw a curtain or shutters over the shelves containing such items, as the weekend trading laws did not allow the sale of these commodities. Cheese was virtually a Kraft monopoly and available as either tasty or mild.

Outside the rigidly controlled trading hours you had to be a bona fide traveler, away from the Melbourne metropolitan area, to be able to buy a beer. Not that I needed it. Wine was "plonk" to be consumed by wogs;
although a sherry was OK for the ladies. No cinemas opened on Sundays. All shops closed at 12 noon on Saturday and at 5:30 p.m. on weekdays. A cheque drawn outside the metropolitan area incurred a special fee, called “exchange”, this meant that to process a cheque drawn in, say Lilydale, or Frankstone attracted an extra fee to offset the costs associated with the transfer of the cheque. The outer periphery of Melbourne was not sewered and required the installation of septic tanks in the backyard or the emptying of the “thunder box” in the older areas. At times the smell was less then pleasant.

On the other hands all banks, insurance companies opened on Saturday mornings. On that day we received one mail delivery; instead of the usual two deliveries during weekdays. Milk and bread were commonly sold door-to-door every weekday, eggs appeared in a similar manner weekly. Housewives talked to merchants calling on homes.

Importantly jobs and overtime were plentiful and anybody who wanted to work could do so. The mentality of “the state will provide” had not permeated through the fabric of our society.

The independence of women had not manifested itself. They worked in factories in unskilled jobs or in offices as typists and comptometrists. Some office duties were considered as man’s job and you would not see a female working as a bank teller; this was deemed to be a responsible job reserved for the male of the species. Once the first child was born the wife’s place was at home looking after the house chores and raising children. The term “home duties” applied to non-working wives. In practice superannuation benefits were not available to women. Career was a male concept. Some benches in the city, opposite Flinders Street railway station were marked “ladies only” this would give them a formal security zone free of male interference.

You would have difficulties in comprehending the cultural difference between the sophisticated life in Egypt (or did we live in France?) and what was, at the time, an unsophisticated and simple Australia. I guess I felt doubly lost because I was foreign to Australia and I was foreign to the virtually completely Ashkenazi Jewish Community. Unlike Greek, Italian, and other migrant groups French was just a language to learn at school and forget. In Australia it was virtually an unspoken language.

A lot of Australians felt somehow threatened by the massive change that took place during my first twenty years in Oz.

The start of television was brought about with the Olympic Games. Television receivers appeared during 1956, the year prior to my arrival. Few people owned TV sets, they were expensive. It was not uncommon for us to be invited by friends to watch television. “In Melbourne Tonight” (IMT) was probably the most popular show.
Picture theatres abounded during my early years. Each suburb had at least one picture theatre. I regularly went to the pictures. We had either two main films or one main film with a documentary and cartoons. Newsreels were regularly and belatedly screened at all theatres. With the proliferation of televisions sets the number of theatres dwindled. Russell Street had a theatre that specialised in foreign films that at times were considered as risqué. In Brighton, Church Street boasted a theatre that also regularly screened French and other foreign films, it provided at the back of the theatre a few rows of comfortable wide seats suitable for two. Very cozy to take a girl friend to the pictures! Sadly it was eventually pulled down and replaced by a Safeway store. In Bentleigh, Centre Road had its theatre just next to the rail track; it was pulled down and replaced by shops. Caulfield, Hawthorn Road, had a theatre. Its location was very convenient when we lived in Jupiter Street; we could walk to the theatre. It was eventually replaced by a bowling alley. Elsternwick had two theatres, one was sited in Glenhuntley Road. It was converted into retail shops. At the corner of Dandenong Road and Glenferry Road a theatre was located; it was part of the Metro (MGM) chain. It was pulled down and eventually replaced by a Borral office building.

During my early days in this country I experienced a time with virtually little or no family and consequently my strongest desire is that my children should maintain amongst themselves a strong family bond. I believe that our Shabbat Friday nights at home are an important link for our family and I am immensely thankful to your Mother for being the lynch pin of our family; she strongly contributes to our family life.

These notes have been started in 1999 and completed in 2001; they are based on a diary that I kept during 1956-1958. At times the material may appear lively, particularly in the early days following the departure from Egypt; at other times it reflects a measure of desperation trying to adapt to a foreign environment seeking some job satisfaction and awaiting for your Mother.

Dad

P.S. From time to time I have referred in the following pages to the prices of various items. They are expressed in pounds (£); just be aware that when the £ was converted to dollars in February 1966 the relativity was £1 = $2.
Cairo - Thursday 13th December 1956

The End of my life in Egypt is nearing. Goodbye darling, we will meet again; and I force myself to whistle “A little love that slowly grows and grows....” but my heart is not in it. We then went to Tante Odette for dinner and also to say goodbye to Mario. When he left he whistled the scout farewell tune. Finally we bid a goodbye to the neighbors. Alone at last; in my head many thoughts are spinning around; in a couple of days my whole world will change. I really need to be alone. Should I be ashamed, my eyes are wet?

Alexandria - Friday 14th December 1956 (1st letter)

I board the train with my Parents and my brother. It is six o’clock in the morning the train slowly moves away from the Bab-el-Hadid (Iron Gates) railway station in Cairo. The long voyage starts, we are on our way to Alexandria and. We will arrive in Melbourne on 13th February next year.

On the platform, our servant Abdou is standing like a statue in his white robe and he too is crying. Obviously we are leaving some people behind us that regret our departure.

On the train we find Remy Akerib, the nephew of my ex-boss at the S.E.U.P.I. This stood for “Societe d’Entreprises d’Utilite Publique et d’Importation”, a business founded by my Uncle Ibram Israel. He was the major stakeholder but the front man was Mohamed Amin Bey Hafez who was a career public servant with a title of nobility that was useful in business. The purpose of the business was the handling of tenders for the provision of railway rolling stock for the Egyptian Government Railways. Our main suppliers were Mitsubishi Shoji Kaisha in Japan and other suppliers of heavy equipment from Eastern Block countries. Remy is leaving Cairo and will be a travelling companion from Egypt to Italy. We cross flat, fertile, green fields and occasionally the train stops in small townships: Benha, Tanta, Kafr-el-Zayat, Damanhour, Kafr-el-Dawar, we are nearly there, we arrive at Sidi-Gaber the main Alexandria railway station.

We proceed to Oncle Michele and Tante Anna; we are at Zizinya. The villa is large and luxurious. We are warmly greeted and comments and advice are generously provided. “Lucky you young people, you are living the mess behind you”. My brother having already traveled and being older than “un quart de siecle” is given advice and specific instructions from Oncle Michele about some financial matters that can’t be in trusted to the post office as the mail is regularly opened by the censorship authorities. I suppose if your name is Israel, your mail may attract more than the usual level of suspicion.

We meet Mme Poppel, Tante Anna’s mother. She tells us that late last century, as a young girl she had spent some time in Australia. She traveled, probably from Europe, to Australia to attend a family wedding.

Alexandria / Mediterranean Sea Saturday – 15th December 1957
We arrive at the port at 9am. Mum and Dad are not allowed in the harbor area. A magnificent weather and beautiful sunshine provides a suitable farewell for this last day in the land of our birth.

We meet Ninette Eskinazi, my brother’s girlfriend for a last farewell. At that time they do not know that it will take about 40 years before they meet again. They will meet purely by accident when Ninette meets my brother in Manchester. Ninette knows the mother of a David Bentata, a distant cousin of ours whose parents migrated to Britain from Morocco or Casablanca in the early years of the century.

We and hundreds of others are starting our individual exodus that will take us to the four corners of the world. We are all gathered in a large Customs shed. Two of our eight suitcases are opened and checked. We too are searched. Our brand new deluxe white thick-soled shoes attract attention, they are very thoroughly inspected as it has been known for departing refugees to hide small valuable items of jewelry in shoes. A customs officer checks our passports; for a moment his eyes stop on the full page Australians landing permit. We are carrying passports that give us access to Australia, a nation deemed to be unfriendly. Mr. Menzies, our then Prime Minister was recently in Cairo heading a delegation of nations using the Suez Canal. This has lead to Egypt breaking diplomatic relations with Australia. Will this “enemy” visa give us problems? Well no, no problems today; it I probably our youthful faces or maybe an official with an I couldn’t care less attitude or perhaps simply it does not matter. Well we are now walking towards the renamed SS Nefertiti, the ex SS Malek (king) Fouad. As we are ready to step off the land of Egypt onto the gangway we are stopped by a zealous customs official, “remove your shoes”, once more they are thoroughly inspected. We step off Egypt and onto the bridge of the Egyptian ship. Over our heads the cranes are unloading on the deck large nets full of suitcases, baskets, boxes, crates,..... The bridge is littered with hundreds of precious possessions. What is Varvias Tours, (the travel agency looking after our trip) doing to earn its commission? The crew looks at us, smiling, they don’t lift a finger to help, they know that all this crowd is leaving with virtually no money and therefore they do not expect any tips if they help. We have youth on our side and can manhandle our luggage; it is sad to see the older generation facing the mess.

On board we again meet Remy, he appears more interesting that I initially thought. He has an enormous, fur lined, warm, leather jacket for his new life in Canada. Later on he tells us that he has a lighter Summer jacket in his luggage. Remy is due to spend about a month with family in Italy before the second leg of his trip to Canada.

We also meet Loulou Suarez (sea scout of the “Troupe Surcouf”) he travels with his mother, on a Libyan “Laissez-Passer” valid for one month in Italy; it is a Libyan document that confers no nationality but merely introduces them to the authorities and requests such authorities “let them pass”. They
hope to obtain an Italian citizenship! Will they succeed? You may well ask what do French Sea scouts do in landlocked Cairo? This is another story.

Ginette Palachi (ex-secretary in the Company where my brother worked) with her brother Clement and her mother are going to settle in Italy. They have an Italian passport but are anxious as the father was left behind them in Egypt.

It is one o’clock in the afternoon, lunchtime. Mr. Nicholas (the Maitre D) who remembers my brother from previous trips sits the "Five Musketeers" (Remy, Clement, Loulou, my brother and I) at the same table. For the duration of the trip we will have all our meals together, except when Remy is a "bit tired" (read seasick).

At last 4:30 p.m. the SS Nefertiti (4000 tones) departs. We are a bit late, the schedule time was midday. So what? Egypt is in the timeless Orient, What’s the hurry? Little by little the land of Egypt behind us becomes but a haze. Egypt, land where many of our loved ones remain. Egypt, land cursed for the intolerance of its leaders.

Already the sale of duty-free American and Egyptian cigarettes starts. On the bridge we sing, the voices are poor and the heart is not there. Our tickets are as deck passengers; but somehow somebody in charge has simply refused to let us sleep on the deck. In the Second Class Lounge 19 mattresses are placed on the floor. During the trip the First Class passengers are placed in a few luxurious cabins, Second Class passengers are in First Class and Deck Passengers have full access to the various lounges!

Sunday – 16th December 1956 (2nd letter)
Happy Birthday old boy! Today I am twenty years old and I am not particularly cheerful however I become imbued by the atmosphere around me. Everybody has a relatively high morale. We have in common the breaking of the bond with a birth land and the hopes of better times in Australia, Italy, Brazil, France, England and even Monaco. We find Ibram Cohen and his family (20 suitcases) he is Gerard’s brother (my old scoutmaster) and they are hoping to go to Brazil. In the evening during the screening of Blackboard Jungle, Loulou and I fall asleep next to each other. The ship is beginning to sway, we are not far from the island of Crete.

Monday – 17th December 1956
We meet the ships’ hairdresser and buy from him two nylon shirts. For this we spend two of our twenty Egyptian pounds. To spend ten per cent of our total cash resources sounds crazy. He is doing a roaring trade. With hindsight it was a good investment; they must have saved us hours of "irrrroning". We see Captain Rashad who appears to have difficulty to fill the boots of his predecessor a British sailor.

In the evening we watch "Rhapsody"; it would have been magnificent if the
acoustic was not so atrocious. We are sailing through the Straight of Messina. It is beautiful, we are sailing between Sicily on our left and the tip of the Italian boot on our right. It is like sailing through a sea of luminous dots. We are singing and singing as if the world will soon end and as if our songs are an attempt to somehow send a message.

Naples Tuesday – 18th December 1956
In the morning the Isle of Capri becomes visible, the Bay of Naples, the Vesuvius,... everybody is exited, some will soon leave us. Remy realises that his beautiful fur lined jacket has been stolen, it cost a fortune, forty Egyptian pounds! The Captain refuses to interrogate or search the crew. Goodbye Remy, you leave without your winter jacket, you leave with the summer jacket and our best wishes for a new life in Canada.

In front of us, at anchor an Israeli ship; painted snow with two blue bands and golden stars on the funnel. At its mast the Blue Peter pavilion tells us it will soon depart as if it is not prepared to share the same wharf as our little black hull! This ship is the first tangible presence that Israel does exist!

We dock and step on the land of old Europe, so different from old Egypt. I am looking for a money changer. We get 1350 lire per Egyptian pound; I think it was a good deal, other have changed at 1200. The official rate is 1700! The bank notes are so big! Is this real money or Monopoly notes? We stop and ask a carabiniere; he looks at the bank note, inspects it, appears to check the watermark against the light, no problem, it is fair dinkum! I breath a sigh of relief. During this exercise I soon realise that my schoolboy Italian is not up to scratch. Now I know that the Naples accent is different from the Roman accent I had been taught.

We leave Naples around 6:30 p.m. With so many people having left we are afforded the luxury of a night in a four-birth cabin. The Five Musketeers have lost their D’Artagnan.

Genoa - Wednesday 19th December 1956
All day long passengers reorganise, lock up suitcases and make themselves ready for disembarkation. We are close to Corsica. At 7 p.m. we arrive at the port of Genoa. It is no great fun to arrive at night in winter in a foreign land not knowing were we will spend the night with umpteen suitcases.

The consuls of France and UK are on the dock, greeting there nationals. Jews on board huddle around representatives of a Jewish Organisation. At 10 p.m. we are driven to “L’Albergo Torinese”. Completely lost! At the hotel we meet Gerard Cohen (my old scout leader) who has arrived to greet and pickup his parents.

Thursday 20th December 1956 (3rd letter)
We go to the Lloyd Triestino’s office to check the status of our tickets for the second leg of our trip from Italy to Australia. Well the price of the tickets has increased! After some debate we convince them to send the bill to the Parents back home in Egypt. I guess if we don’t have the money what are
the options. Of more immediate concern we find that the departure date has been postponed to 5th January.
Small world, in the bus I meet the ex-headmaster of the technical school (l’Ecole Cicurel was a trade school for Jewish Students) I attended for a while. His wife used to work with Oncle Moise. They have been expelled from Egypt and are planning to go and settle in Brazil. Working for a Jewish organisation was not a good reference.
We would like to go to Marseilles and spend a few days there. We go to the French consulate. Sorry we will not issue you with a visa. France has enough problems and does not wish to play host to two young guys with no recommendations and little money.
Well let us try the Spanish Consulate. How embarrassing! We try to communicate in a horrible mixture of French, English, poor Italian and worst Spanish. These people are extremely helpful. They give us a letter of recommendation to the French Consul; the same guy that we saw earlier in the day. On the strength of this letter we are granted a 24 hours transit visa.
In theory we are transiting France on our way to Spain. We are advised to immediately refer the matter to the Marseilles Prefect of Police; if he agrees we will be granted a visa for a short stay, if he does not we will need to take the train back the same day and return to Genoa. We check our money we have just enough money for the return trip by train. We take a gamble, collect our luggage and place the bulk of it in storage at the Maritime Station. At 9 p.m. we are at the railway station. We have more luggage than we can carry and we don’t want to leave them out of our sight. The only possible way to move them is for one of us to carry a suitcase for a few meters leave it on the platform, walk back up whilst the other keeps an eye on the suitcases and repeat the process until we are at the right spot. We then take it in turn to amble from platform to platform until

Genoa - France Friday 21st December 1998
1:30 a.m. We meet some Nefertiti fellow passengers. They are Spaniards and would like a visa for a month stay in France. A situation similar to ours. The train arrives at Milan; we eventually depart at 2:15 a.m. with a 45 minutes delay.
We try and make ourselves comfortable in our compartment. Our travelling companions are an old lady and a ”carabinieri”; they both snore. We also meet a French priest, a nice man, by the end of the trip we made sure that he was knowledgeable about the Israeli-Egyptian situation.
We manage to sleep until we reach Vintimillio on the border. A French sailor joins us; he is just returning from being called back from national service. He was in Egypt with the French and British forces. He comments: “we only had to walk to takeover the place”.
We pass through a number of small train stations in the pale light at dawn: Menton, Monaco, Nice, Cannes, Dragignan, and through Toulon I give a kind thought to Francoise a “real French” girl-guide that we knew in Egypt; it would be nice if we could see her.
At last the train slows down we are at Marseilles; it is 11:30 am. We check our luggage at the Gare St Charles. How pleasant, we understand everything, everybody speaks French!
We go to 20 Rue Curiol, at the Ferraud's apartment. My brother was a border with them for about three years. In the street an old neighbour greets my brother: "Eh, Farouk, vous revenez?" (Eh, Farouk, you are back?). We are warmly welcomed by Mme Ferraud; but we need to rapidly proceed to the Spanish Embassy with a view to obtain a letter of reference for the French Police. We arrive at the station and are faced with a notice informing us that closing time is 12 noon; they do not open before next Monday. We visualise ourselves back on the train to Genoa! We go and see the Roux (university friends of my brother) to try and find out if they have received our letter from Naples. They are not in Marseilles. Their son Henri promises that he will try to help us. We go back to the Ferraud's flat. Mr. Ferraud greets us; no we are not allowed to go anywhere we must stay at his place. We sit down for a most welcome late lunch. We are being billeted in my brothers' old student room. He still has some clothing from his student days and in a pocket a sum of money, I cant' remember why the money was left in France, or what was the amount but it was nice to have some cash. The phone rings, it is Henri who asks us to go and see Mr. Bonnel, the father of one of his mates. He is a director of a large corporation. We go to his office. In a very friendly manner he enquires about our circumstances. He picks up the phone and talks to one of his friends, a Mr. Tibal, who is the Director of the Foreigners Police. He in turn talks to the Police Prefect. Tough talking indeed, the Moroccan passport is a hindrance! Finally we are to see Mr. Tibal tomorrow at the Prefecture. At last in bed; this was a long day.

Saturday 22\textsuperscript{nd} December 1956
We go and see Mr. Tibal, the matter is rapidly settled and we are the proud holders of a passport with a visa allowing us to stay in France up to 5th January 1957. We breath a sigh of relief. I guess there must have been some buck-passing as the passport is stamped "by authority of the Prefect - the Divisional Chief", "for the 1st Division Chief, by authority the Chief of the 1st Bureau".
We then go and see a Mr. Cocan (Alain Casset's father in law, Alain is my brother university friend), he is a Director of Nestles. We are received in a magnificent office. He is a charming person. No worry, if you did not get the visa I could have obtained one through my friend who is the Director of the "Provencal" newspaper and is a good friend of the Office Chief in the Prefect's office. Every body seems to know somebody who is close to somebody important. We are invited at the Cocan's tomorrow.

Sunday 23\textsuperscript{rd} December 1956
During the morning we amble in the streets. A fine lunch at the Cocan's home with Alain and Jacqueline. We go and see some friends (Nenette) they have a TV set, not so hot. We go for a drive on the beach and stop for a cup of tea at a cafe.

Monday 24\textsuperscript{th} December 1956 \textsuperscript{ (4th letter)}
In the morning we relax. We have lunch with an old lady, Mademoiselle Sinai. In the afternoon we see a film "Till I'espiegle" (subject:
independence of Belgium from the Spanish domination). The French mentality is: if you pinch from the government no harm is done! Mr. Ferraud and his upstairs neighbors share one telephone line. They have an illegal extra hand-set. Whoever picks up the phone first answers; if the call is not for you, you simply take a broom and hit the ceiling if you are on the lower floor, or stomp on the floor if you are on the upper floor and the neighbor picks up the phone.

In the evening I help decorate the Christmas tree. As a good Frenchman, Mr. Ferraud has "borrowed" it from a state forest. It is beautiful, small lights, silver threads, stars, the manger and the little "santons" (the small terra cotta figurines representing the nativity characters, they are typically from Provence) and 15,000 francs worth of other toys! Mr. and Mrs. Ferraud go out for the evening and I spend this Christmas eve with the young son Gerard and an album of comics "Vaillant". I am so far from last years Christmas eve that was spent at Vova's home with so many friends.

At the time I was reading the book "Veillee en Australie". I don’t know why but Gerard (aged 4 or 5) only calls me "Jean Claude" with this so distinctive southern accent. He is a lovely little boy. Many years later, his parents had passed away, he occasionally rings my brother in Australia.

**Tuesday 25th December 1956**

Strolling aimlessly in the morning. We have a Christmas lunch at the Cocan's home. Stuffed turkey, liver pate, ... and thirteen desserts! Yummy.

In the afternoon, with Alain and Jacqueline we go for drive along the magnificent coastline. We travel up to Carry and see Fernadel's villa. He was a well known actor from the Midi. Amongst others he played and immortalised the country priest, Don Camillo in perpetual conflict with his friend Pepone, the communist mayor of the poor village. Naturally the house is situated at the corner of Don Camillo and Pepone Streets.

**Wednesday 26th December 1956**

Huge laundry exercise, this is well before the washing machine era. It is also worth describing the shower process in a cold bathroom in winter. No central heating is available, so one pours some methylated spirit in a flat metal dish and sets fire to it. A big flame, an audible "wosh" and for few moments you feel the heat. If the shower is not completed well you simply repeat the process. In the afternoon we go for a walk along the road edging the coast line. We see the Fort St Jean, the Chateau d'If where the Count of Montechristo was imprisoned for years. The coastline is jagged with many "calanques" (small rocky inlets); traditionally they have been refuges for smugglers of a range of goods; apparently today they are used by cigarette smugglers.

**Thursday 27th December 1956**

We go to the Westminster Bank and are informed that our travelers cheques can be cashed in Australia (this is the good news). We then go to the Credit Lyonnais and are advised that the transfer of the 140,000 francs is practically impossible (this is the bad news). We will need to contact Valdi to inform him. We proceed to the University to collect Jou's degree;
unfortunately they are closed for the holidays and he will have to wait for a subsequent trip (I guess about twenty years later) to collect it. In the afternoon we stroll on the famous main street of Marseilles the Canebiere. I start drafting these notes.

Friday 28th December 1956
We visit the Lloyd Triestino, our shipping line, to confirm our departure date. Purchase an electric iron, at the time it must have had some mystic power as I had never used an iron before, electric or otherwise. Francoise, to whom we had written, rings us. It is so nice to hear the voice of a friend; she is a lovely girl. We go the synagogue (or the "Temple" as we referred to it) and light candles. Now we are at the pictures and watch the Pathe newsreels. I can still hear the signature tune that announces this program. The situation in Hungary is depicted and we see refugees crossing the border before the USSR invasion force locks the population them in there own country. At the time I thought “why not us on the news, we too are refugees from Egypt?”
You may say “what do you mean: you saw the news?” World events up to the early years of TV were filmed and screened at picture theatres before the main features. The news we saw in Egypt where filmed in UK or France and would take about a week or so to reach us. The film "Michel Strogoff" was good; the Jules Verne book is respected but a bit truncated.

Saturday 29th December 1956
We go to the bank to collect a cheque book and learn that in France banks are closed on Saturdays! We proceed to the railway station for our tickets and investigate the situation re excess luggage. A large number of soldiers are present. We have lunch with the Casset family. Back to the apartment and another huge laundry exercise. For dinner “tomates-a-la-Provencale”; they are lovely and we wash them down with a bottle of Rousillion Muscat(!!!).

Sunday 30th December 1956
I write to Mario and to my ex boss Mr. Akerib who should be in UK. I iron ONE shirt, not funny, it takes 25 minutes. As the Ferraud’s are not home we buy 100g of cheese, as much “saucisson” and half a loaf of bread and some of this lovely yellow butter. What a difference with the Egyptian whitish butter. What a lovely lunch that was! On the radio we listen to the "chansonniers", they are a peculiar breed of sarcastic French singers, they specialise in picking on and making fun of politicians and other typecast people. I have tears of laughter rolling down my cheeks. Later on I listen to "le Chant des Adieu" (old lang. syne) and a broadcast reminding us of all who are uprooted from their homes. I know they are referring to the Hungarian refugees, the conscripts being sent to Algeria…. but are they also talking to me?
In the evening we yet again amble on the Canebiere and yet again go to the pictures; we see “Honore de Marseille”, I can feel the taste of Provence in this film. And as I think about it again how can I be so affected by this culture that is not the culture of my birth country? We have a meal in a
small restaurant, they know how to charge, highway robbery.

Monday 31st December 1956 (5th letter)
We receive a letter from the Lloyd Triestino shipping line in Italy; due to a strike the trip has been delayed up to 7th January. We also receive a letter from the Coencas, good family friends from Egypt who have now settled in Italy.
My brother had two good friends from university at Marseilles, one was Roux and the other Casset. Nono had coined a small expression "B'en t'as ta roue cassee" (meaning: well, your wheel is broken), this sounds like "Bentata Roux Casset"! Now you know where the Bentata humor comes from, don’t blame me. We spend some time at Joel Roux’s home and have "un aperitif".
Nice meal at a restaurant named "Chez Soi".
We meet Mr. & Mrs. Casset at home and are given a letter from our Parents; it looks like thing are o.k. Once again we see "Michel Strogoff". Joujou is tired and starts to sleep. I celebrate New Year’s eve alone. Viv, tonight we are far from each other and when we tell the children about it they will shrug their shoulders. When I see in the street young couples kissing (they do this here) I know that something is not right. During this last night of 1956 I review the balance sheet of the year. On the debit side a temporary (for how long?) separation on the credit side we have realised that we love each other and wish to be together for the rest of our lives. May 1957 see the realisation of 1956 wishes. With God’s help.

Tuesday 1st January 1957
0:35 a.m., I go to bed, I am sad. Wake up at 10:30 a.m. Waste time until midday; eat a bit of bread with cheese and "saucisson". Received a telegram from the Parents; "Triestino responsable pour votre hebergement j’usqu’au depart definitif Oceania"; the shipping line is responsible for your accommodation until the Oceania’s departure. We breath a sigh of relief as our cash resources are finite. In those days telegrams were composed in "telegraphic style" as the charge was on a per word basis. Usually a reduced rate applied for telegrams of 21 words or less. The 21 words had to include as the first word the letters "LT" meaning "late telegram", denoting that it would be held up until after the transmission of full paid longer telegrams during the day and be sent at night.

Wednesday 2nd January 1957
We go to see Mme Akerib to pass on Remy’s greetings. He did not send the photos he promised us. Valdi has sent a reply: eventually he will look into our money matters. Long lonely walk. We say goodbye to Alain who is leaving for Paris.

Thursday 3rd January 1957 (6th letter)
Went to have a hair cut - 220 francs! Collected the train tickets for Genoa. Picked up the balance of the money at the bank. Sent a transfer to Valdi. Read "Combattants Allemands a Verdun".

Friday 4th January 1957 Marseilles France - Italy
We are at the Customs area of the Gare St Charles and check-in three pieces of luggage. We have a last fantastic meal with the Ferraud’s. Once again we say goodbye and the train departs at 6:30pm. A bit further down the track the train slows down as we arrive at the city/port of Toulon. True to her word Francoise is waiting for us on the platform with her parents. We have great pleasure in greeting her if only for ten minutes; nobody had called me “Bison” for a long time! Goodbye friend. Sixteen soldiers join us on board the train under the command of a black Sargent. Ventimillio, the train stops at the first township in Italy, we prepare ourselves to go through customs. We alight and madly search for our luggage however there is no sign of our suitcases. Eventually and with a sight of relief we understand that they are still in a special wagon and will only be checked by customs once we arrive in Genoa.

Saturday 5th January 1957 Italy Genoa
We arrive at Genoa at 4:50am and decide to stay at the railway station up to 7:30am before going to the Lloyd Triestino. Well the strike is still on and the departure has been postponed from the 7th to the 10th. We suddenly and urgently need to find a roof for a few more days without exhausting our meager cash reserves. We go to the offices of the Jewish Community and for a few moments to the Synagogue. We will be staying in the same hotel as when we first arrived from Egypt. Let no one say that the Jewish Community does not look after its own; we owe them a debt of gratitude. We go to the railway station to collect our luggage and surprise surprise we meet Frida Lagnado (ex Roshtein - she is an ex cub leader) with her husband they are billeted in the same hotel as us. Again surprise surprise we meet Mme Palacci at the hotel. Her daughter Ginette is looking for work and her son Clement is at Montpellier in France trying to obtain a scholarship. It is dark, cold and rainy, I am homesick.

Sunday 6th January 1957 (7th letter)
We get up late, at 8:30am. I slept twelve hours to compensate for last nights’ lack of sleep. We go to the Lloyds office to give them our address. Its Sunday they are closed. We then go to the railway station to meet the Cohenca and we wait for all the Milan train; no luck they do not come. We take a walk in the old city and in the new city. We have a meal with Frida. We watch a TV program on the Epiphany; on this day the custom is for motorists and pedestrians to give point duty policeman small presents. We meet a Hungarian refugee at the hotel; he is a complete destitute; how can we call ourselves refugees?

Monday 7th January 1957
Once again to the offices of the Lloyd Triestino to let them know of our whereabouts then we seek the best possible exchange rate to convert our francs to liras. Early in the afternoon we take the cable car to Nervi, with Frida and Marcel. We are high over this gray and horrible Genoa. The view is beautiful. For a few hours the four of us tire ourselves walking. We talk
and for a little while we are again in our French speaking world, without worries, throwing handfuls of that white stuff they call snow, we are amongst friends....... 

Back at the hotel, the number of Hungarian refugees has increased. Because of the lack of a common language and in spite of our common Jewishness, there is no fraternisation, what a pity! We are perceived by them to be rich refugees; we have luggage full of clothing, they have no money, no luggage, nothing!

Tuesday 8th January 1957
All morning we are on the docks waiting for the "Yugoslavia" arriving from Egypt with Frida's in-laws. Later on I am walking in the street, alone, window-shopping, not far from our hotel. I am looking at the shop display and suddenly I focus on an object; in my mind I am brought back to Egypt, to the little red key ring / sewing kit that I gave you such a long time ago in a different world. I am now staring at the blue twin to the red key ring! It is surprising how such an insignificant little happening can stir me up. I have to step in the shop and buy it; I do hope that I will be able to give it to you in times as happy as the first one.

Wednesday 9th January 1957
Back to Lloyd's Triestino to get confirmation of our tickets; by now I am sure I could go to their office in my sleep. We take another walk in the harbor area. We see the Estria arriving from Egypt. Another last walk with Frida and Marcel, we dine together at the hotel and are given the traditional choice of "suppe o pesca" (soup or fish) and "carne o ove" (meat or eggs). To complement this last supper amongst friends we open a bottle of white Muscat. We decide that when we are rich we will meet in Cape Town, between Australia and the Uruguay. We say goodbye to them and to Mrs. Palacci and once again it is old lang syne.

Thursday 10th January 1957 - Genoa m/n Oceania Mediterranean 
Seven in the morning, we are up bright and early. We wait up to 9:30 a.m. for the arrival of the representative of the HIAS (the Jewish agency that looks after refugees from Egypt and Hungary) and the representative of Espresso Baggagli (the luggage people). The customs and shipping formalities are very smooth, it is a blessing after the tragicomedy at Alexandria. We are on board the "Motor Nave Oceania" this will be our home for 35 days until we land in Melbourne. We wave a final goodbye to Frida and Marcel. We have lunch at the same table as two young Italians, not very loquacious. The ship departs slowly from the dock, the sea voyage has started. At 4 p.m. we enjoy a cup of tea with a Hungarian Jew and his wife; he is, I think the first person that I meet that comes out of a Nazi concentration camp. A light orchestra plays in the background; two violins, a piano and a cello, very civilised. The film tonight is "The Student Prince". We meet two French speaking people, a Swiss and a Belgian. The sea sickness pill I took (Dramamine) makes me sleepy and I am in bed at 9 p.m.
Friday 11th January 1957 - Naples (8th letter)
Within the one dormitory the noise of 14 Italians “talking” in is enough to wake up anybody, so I wake up. We are cruising close to group of small islands. In the distance the Vesuvius is visible, we arrive at Naples. In the harbor a naval armada is at anchor; an aircraft carrier, two destroyers, an American refueling ship, HMS Barossa, HMS Corona, HMS Surprise, and an Israeli corvette. We go for a walk around Naples and we buy some writing paper, ink, eight clothe pegs, a book “The long swords”. Masses of Italians passengers join us on board. At 7 a.m. the ship sails; the cries and tears of so many people living homes and families emulate the great floods. Am I getting immune? I feel little empathy towards them. At night an Australian Immigration Officer starts formalities.

Saturday 12th January 1957 - Mesinna
We arrive at Mesinna at 6 a.m., it is still pitch dark. We disembark at 7:30 a.m. The capital of Sicily is a provincial town. As we look at the monuments to the Italian war dead in Abyssinia the rain starts falling. We are drenched. As our ship departs we cruise next to the British carrier HMS Albion. Suddenly somebody starts strumming a guitar and a melancholic tunes is heard whilst the outline of the mountains slowly disappears. A lone voice sings a few bar before being accompanied by others and the simple tune brings tears to the eyes, “Quando deviamo allar al lavoro, e vola vola vola columba …… “
Italians, Italians, Italians, nothing but Italians; how will they manage in Australia? We are at a distance from the coast and the singing has now stopped. I amble in the ships corridors and I can see a sea of spaghetti and tomato sauce that has been “expelled” by my fellow passengers. Poor people, this will not happen to me, I am an experienced traveler. Later in the afternoon I don’t feel very well.

Sunday 13th January 1957
Sea sick.

Monday 14th January 1957
At last I am not sea sick! A beautiful sun shine all day long. During the afternoon we sail along the Spanish coast line. We have formed a small Foreign Colony that does not wish to be swamped by the Italian masses. With what I can only qualify as “chutzpah” we decide that we can’t accept the noisy Italian masses and consequently we petition the Captain to give us access to the first class bridge and lounge.
Our Foreign Colony is composed of:
Mr. Marius Du Jacquet. He is returning home to Australia after a holiday in his native Belgium. He was home sick and after spending three years in Australia he returned to Belgium to see his family. He was home sick and had to return to “ma petite Belgique”. In his luggage he brings back for his wife a china set with “round” plates. Apparently in Australia they are all squarish!!!
Mr. Mauser - a Swiss journalist
Erwin - an Israeli of German origin
Bella - an Israeli from Europe
Mr. & Mrs. Braunstein and their children Lucien and Jacky - from Egypt.
They are friends of Tante Lucienne.
Mr. & Mrs. Hornestein and daughter Jeanine - from Egypt.
Four Germans
Two French people
A Polish Jew
Four Hungarian Jews
Two Italians from Syria
Two ladies from Trieste - at the time it was still an independent free port and
did not belong to either Italy or Yugoslavia.
During the night we pass through the straight of Gibraltar. We can see the
lights of Europe on our right and the lights of Africa on our left. A last good
bye to the old world as we enter the Atlantic Ocean.

Tuesday 15th January 1957 - Atlantic Ocean
Today we have a ship evacuation drill; we assemble next to our allocated
boat. The passengers treat the whole process as a bit of a joke. We have
dubbed our drill officer “Jonas” because we perceive his large size as
resembling that of a whale. All the members of our “colony” having signed
the petition are requested to see the Captain. We walk through the
luxurious and practically deserted first class lounge and bridge. We are
ushered to the captain’s quarters – a bit nicer than ours – he listens to our
tales of woes and in a firm and polite manner declines our request. The only
compensation that our petition receives is an aperitif with the Captain! It is
still impossible to find an empty seat amongst the 700 Italian migrants.
Think of this for a moment; a couple dozen foreigners petitioning the Italian
captain of an Italian ship, complaining about the majority Italian
passengers!!! We are cruising down the African coastline. I realise that
Miss Jeanine Hornstein knows you, we talk a bit about you and the “Toy
Dance”.

Wednesday 16th January 1957
More formalities for the Australian Customs Office. I write a few letters and
start preparing these notes. We buy bus tickets to go from the harbor to the
city of Dakar.

Thursday 17th January 1957
Magnificent sunshine, we are sailing into “summer”. Our colony has
annexed a part of the bridge. Our anti-magnetism seems to repel the Italian
passengers. We talk about Dakar, the rumors abound, yellow fever etc.…
Next to me Mrs. Braunstein threatens her young son Jacky, if he keeps
misbehaving she will give him to Mr. Jonas; I don’t think he is too worried
about it. We enjoy a pleasant afternoon swapping jokes from around the
world. In the evening we have a magnificent sky filled with an infinity of
brilliant stars. Had a long discussion with Mr. Marius about life in Australia.

Friday 18th January 1957 - Dakar (9th letter)
I am on the bridge at 7 a.m. and in the sunrise I have a magnificent view of
the whole skyline. We can see on the horizon the outline of the hills surrounding Dakar. A shark is swimming along the side of our ship. All the passengers are crammed on the shore side to observe in a tiny shallow boat a giant Negro giving a first greeting from Dakar. With his hands and feet he holds a triangular cloth that acts as a sail; he manages to move at a fair speed. Dakar is getting bigger and bigger, we sail into the harbor that is full of huge fuel tankers. No doubt the blockage of the Suez Canal has rerouted shipping to this African port. Because of the blocked Suez Canal we had to come to Dakar instead merely taking the train from Cairo to Suez or Port Said. From 10 a.m. up to 12:30 p.m. the passengers are behaving like trapped cattle, anxious to step down and simply walk on a stable surface. We take a bus with Mr. Marius it takes us to the heart of the Dakar. The town feels like a colonial outpost with its wide streets and low buildings. In general the place is filthy. All the shops are shut, siesta time. Public transports are nonexistent. We stop in a small café for a drink. No way will we buy souvenirs! Everything is so expensive. All currencies appear to be legal tender. We take a few photos. My camera is the subject of a few cash offers and my leather jacket attracts the eyes of a black chap who offers me to buy it for dollars or escudos. I must be a sight: pipe smoking, dirty jeans, leather jacket and the famous green beret with two short black ribbons fluttering.

We see the war memorial, the wording on it has been changed but the initial inscription is still visible under the patching up. For the sake of political correctness the words now read: “Aux morts de la Grande Guerre, a tous les combattants, Europeens et “Africains” (in stead of “Indigenous”) partis de l’Ouest Africain”. Life must be monotonous in this part of the world. Back on board the siren is howling recalling late passengers: “La nave Oceania e in partenza”. In the dormitory no mail, I was so much hoping for a letter from you. I am hoping for better luck in nine days in Cape Town. What impressions does one form after three hours in this French colony? Poor hygiene, twenty languages spoken, a doubling of maritime traffic in the last few weeks, lack of qualified people, poor educational level, racism, strong Lebanese/Syrian presence running small business and commerce. Peanuts are the major and virtually only export!

Saturday 19th January 1957
Heat! Heat! Heat! Read a little, wrote a little, smoked a pipe a little, bored a lot. I guess I should try and prepare myself a bit for my new country and open up Dad’s letter that includes a page full of conversion between the metric and imperial system. Inches, feet, yards, furlong, miles, pound weight, quarters, hundredweight, long tons, short tons, bushels, pounds, shillings, pence, guineas, gallons, degrees Fahrenheit…. after a while it all become a mixture in my head, the heat does not help. They must be mad to concoct such a system! With a bit of luck I will learn it or they will change it.

Sunday 20th January 1957
Nothing special today. Far away I can observe the rain falling whilst we remain in full sunshine. The rain is rapidly on us and in the space of a few
seconds the deck is inundated. Shortly after the storm a magnificent rainbow is superimposed on the grey skies like a divine signature. A school of flying fish escorts us for a long moment than disappears.

A Catholic priest provided by the shipping line is charged with the responsibility of looking after the spiritual needs of the passengers. He conducts the Sunday mass in a dedicated section of the lounge. He also has a number of more mundane duties. He regularly delivers English lessons that are poorly attended. I would have thought that migrants would have been keen to attend! He also looks after the children, I can still hear the kids singing: “aprite les porte che passa che passa, aprite les porte che passa la joventu”.

We are consuming a regular diet of Australian newsreels invariably heralded by the laughing kookaburra. We see millions of sheep being shorn, immense wheat fields, healthy smiling young people playing on the beaches, .........

Monday 21st January 1957
At 3 a.m. we cross the equator. The Purser suggests to the Foreign Colony, not to participate in this ritual. Still I am curious and observe the proceedings. People are thrown in the swimming pool, flour is used or should I say misused. In the evening we have a special dinner on this special day. Chicken is served: yuk! The Captain is honoring us with his presence; he is at the Purser’s table. At 9:30 p.m. the Grand Ball starts; suddenly as if by miracle the crowds have diminished. The Purser’s edict requiring collar and tie has caused this exodus. The full Foreign Colony is present and all dressed up. Four officers carry out their duty; they ensure that old ladies and not so pretty girls are invited to dance. The atmosphere is definitely happy, party hats and streamers are distributed. I sport a lovely Mexican hat that reminds me of the “Mardi Gras” party at Sam Cattan’s home; but as you are not with me ........... At 1:15 a.m. we are evicted and we have to rejoin the dormitory and remove our nice clothing.

Tuesday 22nd January 1957
No sun, I dose on the bridge. When I awake I feel as if I had been doing heavy manual work for hours. For the last few days I haven’t stopped thinking about you. Read “The idle thoughts of an idle man” by Jerome K Jerome, very good. In the evening we see “Tanganyika” with Van Hefflin.

Wednesday 23rd January 1957
Attended the Padre’s English lesson. Had a chat with the Australian Father. He is a nice person. Saw the photos of the Equator Ball.

Thursday 24th January 1957
Nothing special. The sea is getting rough.

Friday 25th January 1957
Nothing special. The sea is getting rougher.

Saturday 26th January 1957
Nothing special. The sea is getting rougher than yesterday.

**Sunday 27th January 1957 (10th letter) Cape Town**
The sea is getting quieter, at about 8am the coast line becomes visible. Seals accompany the ship, we see a sperm whale. We are in the harbor at 12:30pm. Mrs. Hornstein comes from below deck and takes it easy on the bridge, she has been seasick since our departure from Italy.

Unfortunately on Sunday the city is shut. Everything is clean and tidy, nothing to compare with Dakar! Our group boards a buss and for about half an hour we are cruising up and down the coastal suburbs; we end at a beautiful beach. After nine days at sea we have found nothing better then a view of the sea. We sit in a café, it is very hot, the view is splendid, in the background the Table Mountain, the sea, the greenery,.....

On the way back we sit at the rear of the bus but we are required to move forward and sit at the front as the back is reserved for coloured people. Similarly I notice park benches that are labeled for white or coloured people!

Even in old backward Egypt we did not practice this blatant state sanctioned racism.

Well its time to regain our floating box. At 9:30 p.m. we cast off and leave behind us this piece of paradise for some hell for others.

The mail is delivered, I am given two envelopes; on one of them I recognise your hand writing; the heart skips a beat, I try to read in the lounge, my eyes are watery, the whole page is hazy and I need to be alone so I go to the dormitory. A perfumed kiss is waiting for me and I dream. News from you after more then a month, I am happy.

Received letters from the Parents, Mario and the Bassats.

**Monday 28th January 1957 – Indian Ocean**
I see a school of porpoise following the ship and jumping out of the water.

**Tuesday 29th January 1957 – to Sunday 3rd February 1957**
The days follow each other, monotonous, reading, thinking, dozing .........

**Sunday 3rd February 1957**
“Gran Ballo”. I scribble on my party hat.

**Tuesday 5th February 1957**
The ship suddenly and unexpectedly stops at 10 p.m. The ship is quiet, the continuous background thumping of the engines has gone, the silence is eerie. What is happening? A few moments later the engines restart but at a much slower beat. All sorts of rumors circulate: we will be 24 hours late arriving Freemantle, and we will not be able to make up time to reach Melbourne on the scheduled date. The rough sea has caused this situation (for the last few days the sea has been perfectly calm!) But the most frequently repeated rumor is the poor state of the engine room; that apparently was the reason for the delay in our departure date, nothing to do with industrial strikes!!!! We will eventually find out the reason; it is simply a measure of economy to save fuel, we are only using one of the engines.
**Wednesday 6th February 1957**
The ship is still travelling at reduced speed. At 1pm we receive confirmation that our arrival in Fremantle will be one day late and two days late by the time we reach Melbourne. A film with Jeff Chandler “All boats away” is screened.

**Thursday 7th February 1957**
Another ball tonight, this is the farewell ball. It is a very similar to the two previous ones.

**Friday 8th February 1957**
At the start of the trip we have deposited our cash with the Purser and it is time to recover our money before reaching Freemantle. The Purser pushes the panic button as he has this very day handed to another passenger the envelope containing our cash! A message on the loudspeaker invites all passengers having collected envelopes from the Purser to urgently contact the office. Well it was returned! The Purser was just as concerned as us. At 11:30 p.m. we find ourselves at about 500 meters from the city and we will only birth at 5 a.m. We strike a conversation with the Purser; he has made this trip many times, he is not complimentary about our new country. He tells us that he can smell the Australian sheep 100 kilometers from shore.

**Saturday 9th February 1957** *(11th letter)*
Freemantle
We wakeup at 4:40 a.m. we are quickly dressed, today breakfast is a sandwich. The ship has docked. We are amongst the first to queue up in front of immigration officials for the start of the formalities; medical documentation, supply X-rays, collect our Alien's Card. We must report any address change to the immigration authority for as long as we retain a foreign nationality. The stewards offer coffee and salami sandwiches to the officials; this wog food is promptly rejected and replaced by a nice cup-o-tea and cheese sandwich. For us it is over at 8:30 a.m. but for many of the late starters it is a shamble that is just starting. We leave the Oceania and at 10 a.m. we are in town. It is a nice little place with a lot of Italians in the streets. I have a glass of beer, apparently it is good and the done thing! We have finally arrived in Australia; it is a pleasure to be able to walk on a steady surface. We have completed our inspection and are back on board. Two telegrams have been received, welcome greetings from Oncle Eli and from Mr. Bassat. The loud hailer calls our name and we are given a letter from Oncle Eli, he tells us that his latest application for a Landing Permit for the Parents has been rejected; it is distressing. At noon the Oceania sails for the last leg of the long voyage. About a dozen tardy passengers missed the departing ship and rejoin the ship on board a launch. I am tired and annoyed. In a few days the struggle will start.

**Sunday 10th February 1957**
Last Sunday on board. We are now scheduled to arrive on 13th not 14th. As we had written to the Bassats, we now send them a telegram from the ship to update our arrival date.
Wednesday 13th February 1957
Since the early morning we are sailing close to the coastline. At noon the ship stops in the bay, we have nearly arrived. We see a Ferris wheel and Mr. Marius tells us it is the Luna Park, in the suburb of St Kilda. He informs us that many members of the Jewish community reside in this area. It is hot and we are all impatient and short-tempered. At last at 3:30pm we arrive at Victoria Dock; a huge and impatient crowd is waiting for us on the dock. From our deck we examine the crowd, Mr. Marius and the Braunsteins’ can see their family; we are hoping to spot the Bassats, no luck. The gangways are now in position and the crowd rushes to disembark. The port authorities only provide half a dozen porters for the 400 Melbourne bound passengers; all passengers are all attempting to take suitcases, bags and assorted paraphernalia through the now overcrowded corridors. I find myself perspiring, jammed between my suitcase and my camp stretcher in the middle of the crowd and five meters from the gangway. I see my brother on the dock, he shouts, in Arabic, telling me to leave through the first class area. It takes me a good ten minutes in reverse gear to join him. We now have a long wait at Her Majesties Customs. Everything is opened and searched, apparently this is the practice with Italian ships. At last we leave the customs shed and are promptly spotted by a man with gray hair. I have a moment of hesitation, yes it is Mr. Bassat and Roby, I nearly did not recognise them. We pile ourselves in the car and we drive “home” to … St. Vincent’s place, Albert Park. [The house and the general area is now classified by the National Trust]. I did not recognise Josette, she is no longer the little girl I knew, she is a tall thin young girl full of fun. In the evening some of the Bassat’s friends come to welcome us. They are all Jewish, apparently there is a descent size community. I drink copious quantities of something they call “cordial”, not bad. We phone Adelaide and talk to Oncle Eli and Tante Esther. The Bassat’s live in a huge house and they let rooms to various people; in spite of the impressive size the building we find that the toilets are located outside the main building, why? In winter these conveniences must not be convenient!
Two months ago today I left you.

Thursday 14th February 1957
Wake up at 8 a.m. and start looking at “Positions Vacant” up to 1pm. Mrs. Bassat tells us that we have to do some important things today:

Firstly - open an account with the State Savings Bank of Victoria so that when we wish to borrow some money to buy a house we will be established customers and have a place in the queue of customers wishing to borrow money. From the time a housing loan application is lodged a period of about three months will be required before funds are made available. This is a savings bank whose main purpose is to fund housing needs, as such the government does not allow them to provide cheqce accounts and when we need this service we will need to find another bank. Off to the City we go; at the Swanston Street branch of the Bank we open a Saving Account and are told that our famous travelers’ cheques on British funds frozen in Cairo by
the Egyptian Government are not cashable. The matter must be referred to Sydney. The bank teller told us he does not like our chances and we “should keep our fingers crossed”, this colloquialism required an explanation.

Secondly – go to the department of immigration and register our arrival. Following this administrative procedure we go to Myers to see Mr. Gamil. He is Mrs. Bassat’s brother in law. He works in a huge department store (the largest in the Southern Hemisphere) where you can buy virtually anything from kosher food and “tehina” to clothing and furniture.

Thirdly – and most importantly, we have to get a Tats ticket. This is a lottery ticket and with luck we could win £10,000. This is the hope of all Victorians, with a few pennies they buy some hope.

Over here the scheduled hours are bizarre; people stop work very early, usually by 5 p.m. Lunch is frequently a couple of sandwiches and a “soft drink”, the main meal is dinner by about 6 p.m., cups of tea are consumed at any time of the day! Roby comes home from work, he has a holiday job at the bureau of meteorology. After dinner we accompany him to the “Ajax Club”, for his basketball training. It is a Jewish club; they train on church premises. Later on we go to meet his girlfriend Nina. Mrs. Bassat calls her “his girl”.

Friday 15th February 1957
Read the paper in the morning. Went to the bank, good news, the travelers cheques are cashable, I deposit in my brand new account the sum of one hundred and twelve pounds. [at the time this would have been about five or six weeks average wages] In the afternoon we tour by car the Caulfield and Brighton area looking for houses as the Bassat’s are looking for new premises. They are due to move shortly. We have supper at Mr. Gamil’s home and following this we go for a drive with Nina.

Saturday 16th February 1957
Roby is sick. We reorganise the suitcases. In the evening we look at photos.

Sunday 17th February 1957 (12th letter)
Replied to job vacancies. I wrote seven letters.

Monday 18th February 1957
Went to six appointments, probably six knock backs - disappointed. In the evening we went to the Ajax-Hellenic basketball match. I occasionally wake with Josette to the nearest milk bar at the Albert Park shopping centre and shout her an icy cold “pineapple crush” it is ladled from a refrigerated container into a tall glass. She loves it, so do I. Josette educates me a bit about the problems generated by the local “bodgies and widgies”.
Tuesday 19th February 1957
The search for work continues, I phoned a dozen companies for jobs, nothing. Being pragmatic a clerk or a typist will never hold a well paid job; I have to look for either manual work or for a technicians’ job as there is a shortage of skilled people. I will restart my “radio” night school studies. In the evening a friend of Mr. Bassat gives me a contact name, a Mr. McGregor who is a director of Radio Corporation Pty Ltd. I do hope I will get a job. They manufacture in South Melbourne the Astor range of television and radio receivers.

Wednesday 20th February 1957
Went to see Mr McGregor, he sends me to a Mr Marks who is the Personnel Officer. [Years later at Ramset, I worked with Dick Beton, an engineer, who told me that at the time he was working in the Personnel Department of Radio Corporation and Mr Marks become a well known person within the Human Resources field.] I complete an application for employment. For the time being they have no vacancies but he asks me to ring him back of the 26th. Received two replies, a knock back and a “we are still considering” letter. In the evening I go to the Royal Melbourne Technical College and inquire about courses, they appear to be highly disorganised.

Thursday 21st February 1957
In the morning look for work in the afternoon I look for electrical fitting courses. In the evening the Choueka’s pay us a visit. Mr Choueka had shared an office with my Father for many years. We start reminiscing.

Friday 22nd February 1957
All day I looked for work—tired.

Saturday 23rd February 1957
Analysed the Age line by line and wrote letters. In the evening Joujou and Roby go to a party and I read the “Livre d’or” up to 12:30am.

Sunday 24th February 1957 (13th letter)
Organised correspondence. In the evening listened to the radio an interesting program on the life of Lord Baden Powell to commemorate the 100th anniversary of his birth. It was narrated by the Governor General of Australia.

Monday 25th February 1957
Today I was hoping so much to get a job; I had organised my “campaign” so well.
1 – Astor Radio – they now know that I would like to study radio and therefore are not prepared to offer me a clerical job.
2 – Burroughs – they show me the insides of a mechanical calculator and ask me to explain to them how it works. It is a mass of interlocked gears, springs, levers ..... Apparently if you can’t tell them, you do not have the
necessary aptitude.
3 – Nestle – they will send me a telegram tonight if they are interested. They did not.
4 – Royal Insurance – I am inexperienced and nearly 21. They are not prepared to pay, nearly an adult rate, for an inexperienced clerk.
5 – Rubber Stamp Makers – if they are interested they will contact me in a couple of days.
And this was but part of the day; it is disappointing. In the evening I go to night school; they are still in a mess. The first lesson covers some elements of electrical theory, this is o.k. the second session covers Ohm’s law.

Tuesday 26th February 1957
Rang “Astor”, they ask me to ring them on 1st March. Hooray I receive a letter from you! (No 4 – still awaiting No 3) For a moment I am in another world. Hooray again, I receive a reply from Ampol, I have to see them at 2:30 p.m. I am not too sure about my English and the work they might offer; well we will see. Interview concluded, they will write back on Thursday. I am sick and tired of this. Tante Ester’s brother pays us a visit; he has aged terribly.

Wednesday 27th February 1957
Received a letter inviting me for an interview, once again I hope. I go to the Immigration Department to collect application forms to start formalities for your Landing Permit. In the evening I go to night school. For two hours I perspire over a small rectangular block of copper that stubbornly refuses to be filed flat. I don’t believe that I will ever be able to do this. Maths course, we are shown how to extract a square root, the teacher has the fantastic ability to explain this quite simply; I never really understood this in Cairo; have I grown smarter or is the teacher better? In the evening I start reading “Moulin Rouge” in English.

Thursday 28th February 1957
No replies to any of my letters; if I do not receive a reply by tomorrow morning mail delivery at 10 a.m. and if the phone calls I make today are unsuccessful I will go to Myers to see if they have work. I go to the “Nicholas Building”, near Flinders Street railway station, at a vocational centre for some professional guidance. They note my particulars and advise me to see “Astor”; a good thing I did not wait for them! In the evening I study for college.

Friday 1st March 1957
I was hoping to have a job by tonight, but the phone calls produced nothing, the mail yielded nothing and Myers is fully staffed. My only hope is a phone call for Monday; tomorrow, once again I have to get the Age and start from scratch.

Saturday 2nd March 1957
I spend all morning reading the Age and writing letters. In the afternoon I
Monday 4th March 1957
Went to the Post Office. As a result of the ad published in the Age two hundred people are waiting. I am in the queue up to 10:30 a.m.; in Egypt we would not have a queue but a tight bunch of people pushing and shoving, over here we have the disciplined manners of the British. I am introduced to a man, and I inform him that I am 21 years old, although Mrs. Bassat had informed me that “over here you are supposed to say the truth”. I am provided with a small piece of paper that gives me an itinerary for my next appointment at a Flinders Street office. I travel to Bourke St; it feels a bit like a scout tracking game. It is one o’clock and I finally meet another chap who sends me packing up to 2 pm (lunchtime you know). From 2 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. I am given a list and asked to learn the names of all the Melbourne and Victorian post offices. I will spend six weeks at school and if meet the standard I will be hired. The pay is £14 a week, nevertheless I am a bit concerned about having given my age as 21. The work does not appear very interesting. I arrive half an hour late at night school, but its not too bad as I have already covered these grounds in Cairo. I arrive late at home, exhausted and I still have to shave!

Tuesday 5th March 1957
From 9am to 5:30pm I learn by heart names and post codes. I feel at a disadvantage as all the local men are familiar with the names. Up to know I thought that Balaclava was a city in Crimea, Ararat at mountain in Armenia, San Remo a resort in Italy, Heidelberg in Germany; and in any case names such as Murrumbeena, Nunawading and Mooroolbark are unpronounceable. Back home I receive your card (No 5) I am pleased that you are out of Egypt and hope that you will rapidly manage to go to France. A big step has been taken. In the evening I go to the movies, the first time in Australia. We see “Guy and Dolls”. At the end of the film we hear the National Anthem, nearly everybody stands at attention, we see the Queen on horseback. It reminds me a bit of the King of Egypt and the National Anthem in Cairo; except that in Egypt more people tried to leave the theatre before the end of the anthem.

Wednesday 6th March 1957
I think I will die of boredom if I keep on doing this work! For seven hours per day I am stuck on a chair with absolutely nothing to challenge to my brain! On my way back from night school, in the tram, a drunken person gives me a lecture on the religious aspects of re-incarnation. The days are tiring from the time I leave home at 8:15am up to 10pm when I return. They don’t even believe in a siesta.

Thursday 7th March 1957
Work is more and more mind numbing; from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m. I had practically nothing to do. Every evening I try and catch up with some college
work; I must also shave at night as in the morning the bathroom is overcrowded; this means that I never go to bed before midnight. I am too tired to even read a bit, luckily I can read in the tram. It is with some difficulty that I write these lines as my eyes are closing, .... Good night darling! (I am stupid, in Europe it is 3 p.m.!).

**Friday 8th March 1957**

What have I done with myself since I completed secondary schooling? I have wasted three months with the dental mechanic, ten months at the Cicurel technical school, eight months with the British Council, 14 months working for my uncle at the SEUPI. Now I have a stupid job as a “mail officer”. I have to generate enough income to start our home and help my Parents!

This morning the job is as boring as usual. At 11:30 we the trainees are mustered and we start sorting letters. The mail arrives on a series of long canvas conveyor belts; it is just a matter of placing the mail in smaller bins. Not very challenging! At 1 p.m. I am in the queue to clock off to go to lunch; I hear a couple of chaps speaking in Arabic, I turn to have a look at them. They are so surprised to see me staring at them that they talk to me in French! The first one is a Mr Harari (I find that he is Mr. Gamil’s brother-in-law). I am immediately introduced to the six or seven members of the “Egyptian Postal Community”. I must have complained because I am rapidly told that we the young ones are the lucky ones, we can select any career. For them the “oldies” it is not so easy. The old one are in their middle thirties; but I agree with them, work at the post office is not interesting. After lunch I am offered to work overtime from 6 to 9 p.m.; I am more then happy to accept and I am immediately given six shillings. For a good hour I try to calculate the purpose of this money. I know I earn so much per week, I work so many hours per week. If I am to work three hours of overtime I should have been paid more! I recalculate using different variable, I now use not a five-day week but a seven-day week, I alter the daily working hours including the lunch break. Nothing doing it does not compute! I will have to wait until 8:30 p.m. to be told that it is for “tea money”. We have morning tea, afternoon tea, evening tea, .... apparently when you work overtime you are entitled to “tea money”. Good luck to me, I don’t drink tea so I can put a few shillings in my pocket. This cash amount is to ensure that I have some funds to obtain sustenance and compensate me for not having a home meal.

Overtime starts at 6pm and we start by unloading 120 bags of mail coming from all parts of the world. It is terribly hot. Everybody is perspiring. During work a typical conversation goes something like this:

- It is really hot here.
- Yes very
- I am used to it.
- You are not from over here?
- No I come from Egypt
- So how do you find Melbourne?
- Oh, fine, fine.

The worker on my right has served in Egypt with the Australian Army at Tel-
el-Kebir; the one on my left side tells me that there are a lot of foreigners like us in Melbourne. He comes from Scotland! On my way home in the tram I sit next a uniformed employee of the Tramway Board he is reading a book in French ("classique Larousse" series) written by Emil Zola. I must have stared at him because he asks me if I read French. I show him my French book; he tells me that he is Dutch and also reads in English and German. Have received a card from Valdi in France; he has received some money from Dad and dispatched to Oncle Elli.

Saturday 9th March 1957
I go to the Emigration Office in the City to obtain information about your arrival in Australia. I don’t think I will be able to start the immigration process for you before I turn 21. This is distressing. I visit the Australian Scouts’ Head Office, it is closed on Saturdays. I spend the afternoon preparing letters of applications for employment. We saw a film in the afternoon, “Baby on the ship”, not bad.

Sunday 10th March 1957
What bliss I wake up at 10 a.m. We take a walk to Albert Park lake until 1 p.m. In the afternoon I organise my correspondence and do a bit of reading.

Monday 11th March 1957
Public holiday, Moomba (Labour Day). Joujou has to go to work on this public holiday. The Bassats’ are on a picnic. Pixy (the dog) and I are at home. I am on laundry duty and mend a couple of buttons and some socks. A bit of school work. Smoked two cigarettes offered by Mrs. Bassat. We went to a basket ball match, Ajax v ???

Tuesday 12th March 1957
Work restarts, as stupid as ever. I was hoping to receive a letter, but nothing. Played Monopoly with Josette.

Wednesday 13th March 1957
Have received a letter from you (No. 6) I am concerned that you have not yet managed to obtain a visa for France.

Thursday 14th March 1957 (14th letter)
I quit the Post Master General. I am pleased because my brain was shrinking; nevertheless I will miss the £14 every week. On my last day at work I handled a letter addressed to an unhappy lover, Group Captain Peter Townsend. His life was made difficult by the British crown because he and Princess Margaret wished to get married and he was deemed an inappropriate person to join the Royals.

Friday 15th March 1957
Wasted my time. Walked all day under a heavy rain. Went to the pictures: “Twenty Three paces to Baker Street”, with Van Johnson. Very good.
Saturday 16th March 1957
I wrote letters all day long.
5 job applications,
1 Parents,
1 Cohenca
1 Cohen,
1 Oncle Henri
1 Mario
Since your last letter I am concerned, what will happen?

Sunday 17th March 1957
Studied electrical theory. Guy one of Robys’ cousin visits us. He was a French EDF Scout in Alexandria; we camped together at the Mex in 1953. Went for a walk along the beach. Went to see the Gamils. Mowed the lawn. Morale is low.

Monday 18th March 1957 (15th letter)
Went to the ANZ Bank, talked to a Mr. Lucas he is known to Mr. Bassat, will I make a career in banking? I met Jeanine in the street, she is also looking for work. Received you card (No.7), I am mightily relieved.

Tuesday 19th March 1957
Went to the French Consulate to obtain a statement as to the subjects included in my secondary school studies. I suggested I should write to the French Ministry of Education, no, I was advised to contact a Mr Jackson at Melbourne University. We went to see our travelling companions the Braunchstein and we discussed our new life.

Wednesday 20th March 1957
Received negative replies from ANZ Bank and Caltex. Went to GMH Port Melbourne, nothing.

Thursday 21st March 1957
I wait for the morning mail delivery nobody wants to give me a job interview. I will go today to the General Motors factory in Dandenong. One of the Person nel Officers is a friend of Roby, his basketball team has beaten Ajax last night. The factory and offices are superb, they opened for business the Dandenong site about four months ago. I am hired as a store-man at £11 and a few shillings per week. On my way home from the GMH Railway Station I lost my bearings and realise that the train I have taken is travelling away from Melbourne! Two stops later I realise my error and start walking back; six kilometers later I manage to hitch hike back to Dandenong and catch the train for Flinders Street.
Let me compare the two jobs:

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<th>9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.</th>
<th>60 minutes lunch in the city</th>
<th>7:50 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.</th>
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<td>GMH</td>
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Hum, not such a good deal; but things will improve.
Friday 22nd March 1957
Went with Raymond Gandour to apply for a job at KM Steel; this is where he works. He is a dynamo, and gives me a fantastic character reference. I can expect a reply by next Tuesday.

Saturday 23rd March 1957
We go to the city for some shopping and transfer £100 to my account. We will each pay the Bassats £5 per week.

Sunday 24th March 1957 (16th letter)
Today is a spring cleaning today.

Monday 25th March 1957
The alarm rings at 5 a.m., it’s tough. I take the train from Albert Park railway station at 6 a.m. and arrive at Dandenong at 8:30 a.m. Like every Monday morning a group of new employees starts. We are allowed a late start on our first day. My clock number is 13-222. The majority of employees come from Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia …. Once again the job is pretty straight forward. The job is easy, it is with the GMH - CKD plant (Completely knocked down) nothing to do with the other two operations on the site (Frigidaire and NASCO – National Automotive Spares Company). It is simply a matter of receiving all the goods required by the car division to assemble cars. Sometime during mid-morning a couple of ladies appear pushing a trolley with receptacle and a tap. Everybody congregates, wallets are opened and for the modest sum of 2 pennies you are provided with a blue plastic cup filled with tea. I am not a tea drinker but I am prepared to slow down with the best of workers. At last the nock off siren. I arrive at 5:35 p.m. at Flinders Street station, I am already late for the start of the lecture, I run to RMTC at LaTrobe Street. By the time I sit down I am exhausted; I don’t think I paid much attention. Will this job give me any pride or satisfaction? Will it allow me to sustain myself, let alone others? At last we receive a letter from the Parents. It appears that it is pretty hopeless for Oncle Moise and his family to join us.

Tuesday 26th March 1957
It is hard to get up so early in the morning! At work one of my new colleagues, George, a Greek from Sparta recites French poetry for me, It is a well known poem from Lamartine “Le Lac”. Just when I start thinking that the job is a bit of a pushover we receive a truck loaded with over 500 car rims coming from the Adelaide factory, what a mess. By the time I get home I realise that bits of brown anti rust paint have saturated my hair and clothing, right to my underwear. At home I have received your letter and as usual it whips me up in shape and improves my morale. We also have received a letter from Oncle Elli, he is optimistic and feels that eventually we will be granted the Landing Permits for the Parents and also from Oncle Moise and family.

Wednesday 27th March 1957

Thursday 28th March 1957
Work. Overtime. I receive my first pay. A Cyclone wire enclosure on casters is wheeled close to our department. It covers about $5 \text{ m}^2$ and has a door and a small opening as a window. A car is very slowly driven to this mobile enclosure. A few security guards and a pay officer lock themselves in the enclosure. A signal is given and employees line up at the opening. You present your ID badge, state your name and you are given a pay envelope. At home we find out that the Parents have been granted the Landing Permits and that this will also apply to Oncle Moïse and family. What a relief. When will it be your turn?

Friday 29th March 1957
Once again we had to unload one of the horrible trucks loaded with rims. My back is sore. In the evening we visit the Hornsteins’.

Saturday 30th March 1957
I am working overtime, but not in my dirty jeans and not in the windy goods inward store; today I work in the office, with a collar and tie in a nice comfortable office. As I now understand the administrative routine George and I become an efficient team. At last I receive a cheque for my last pay at the PMG. To the pictures “Written in the Wind” the story of a mad family.

Sunday 31st March 1957 to Tuesday 9th April 1957
Routine — (17th letter)

Wednesday 3rd April 1957
Received your letter (No.9) I am relieved. At times, on a nice sunny day, I think that I have the best job in the place. Receiving fuel is real easy; it is just a matter of taking a dipstick reading of the stock position just before the fuel tankers arrive and just after they leave. Whilst the fuel is being disgorged I simply lie on the grass and wait for the truck to empty its load. Another nice job happens when a small parcel is received and is destined for a remote part of the operation; I just jump on the stores’ departmental push bike and travel to a new world such as the beautifully designed head office or the Frigidaire assembly line.

Thursday 4th April 1957
Today is payday; in my envelope I have £13-3-6 after tax. At age 21, I can expect £17-0-0 with overtime. I have some work to do. I am pleased with the monotony of the lunch that I bring from home; two peanut butter white bread sandwiches and a piece of fruit nicely wrapped in a brown paper bag. The peanut butter is a new experience that satisfies my taste buds. When lunch is over the paper bag is neatly folded and returned home for reuse. Roby gets in trouble because he is careless and throws away his brown paper bags!
Friday 5th April 1957
The weekly truckload of rims has arrived today. I timed it. It took us two hours and six minutes to unload between 800 and 900 wheels! What a mess. We received a letter from the Parents, they sound fed-up. Also received a letter from the Cohenca in Italy.

Sunday 7th April 1957 – Tuesday 9th April 1957
Routine — (18th letter)

Wednesday 10th April 1957
A fight nearly starts in the train between a Cypriot and a Libyan. The Cypriot is outraged by insults against President/Archbishop Makarios he is upset at being referred as English by the Libyan who couldn’t care less. One way insults fly in Arabic. (Received your letter No.10)

Thursday 11th April 1957
I am unloading a truck; the boards forming the tray of the truck are obviously in poor condition. Under my weight the timber is punctured like a piece of plywood under a heavy weight. I find myself in a less than gracious position with one leg, up to mid thigh, dangling below the truck. I am quickly extracted by fellow work mates and take a break for a few minutes. The bruises don’t take long to appear.

Friday 12th April 1957
In the evening we see a French comedy. The three act play “La 3e Femme” is presented by the Alliance Francaise du Victoria. The “prompter” was an active participant and at the end of the representation lined up with the actors to the applauds of the spectators. Very pleasant atmosphere but a bit ancient. The actors come from various national backgrounds and have a variety of accents; a couple of them are French. I start a conversation with an English woman, she has a splendid French accent after spending 25 years in Paris; she wants me to send her the words of “La Pimpolaise”.

Saturday 13th April 1957
I have developed the habit of sleeping in the train and automatically wake up at Noble Park; two stations before the GMH Station. All sorts of rumors are flying, production will diminish, overtime will be curtailed…. If this materialises the attraction of the job will be significantly minimised.

Sunday 14th April 1957 (19th letter)
May be we will go to Adelaide during the Easter holidays.

Monday 15th April 1957
Pessah, the first one we celebrate out of Egypt but without family. May the next one see us all reunited.

Thursday 18th April 1957
At work, late in the day we received a truck full of rims to be unloaded. It is nearly knockoff time before a long weekend. The boss asks us if we can
help the driver to unload otherwise he will be stuck in Melbourne. Two or three of us get stuck into the rims. Never worked so hard and so fast. Our reward is instantaneous, a large number of full size brown bottles materialise, one is opened and placed in my hand, I drink. A few thoughts flash through my mind: drinking on company premises is forbidden, I don’t particularly like beer, Oops I forgot – not supposed to drink beer at Pessah!

Letter from the Parents, no letter from you.

Friday 19th April 1957
The alarm rings at 6am and we are rapidly on the way to Spencer Street Railway Station. We board the train for Adelaide. We share the compartment with three couples. A young “just married” couple, they are charming and full of confetti, I am a bit envious. Two “military” couples, the men are very noisy and cavalier towards the wives who don’t even appear to notice it; their brains are in neutral but they are happy.

I read the leaflet titled “Through the Carriage Window”. I reproduce some extracts that give an outline of history, geography, culture and economics of 1957 Australia this adds to my enlightenment /bewilderment:

"Melbourne - Adelaide Good Friday Daylight Souvenir."

Good morning. The Victorian railways welcome you to the Daylight special to Adelaide. Incidentally have you had breakfast? It is now being served in the dining car.

Melbourne, 7.45 a.m. You are now leaving Spencer Street station, the terminal for interstate and most of Victoria’s country trains. As you leave the city of Melbourne, where the 1956 Olympic Games were held, you get a glimpse of the busy dockland and the Victoria Railways’ locomotive depot, workshops and other installations at North Melbourne. Spencer Street, from which the station takes its name was named after Earl Spencer, formerly Lord Althorp – Melbourne itself was named after a British Prime Minister Lord Melbourne – whose title was derived from a little town in Derbyshire, England.

Footscray, 3 ½ miles. You are now passing through one of Melbourne biggest and most prosperous industrial areas. Footscray was named after Foots Cray, Kent England. Nearby suburbs of Newport and Williamstown, one of Melbourne’s oldest ports is the scene of great activities when the grain and other primary products are being shipped overseas, …

Sunshine, 7 ¾ miles. A rapidly expanding industrial area, it is the junction of the Ballarat Bendigo railway lines. In the district are works of the Sunshine Harvester Company, large-scale manufacturers of agricultural implements.

Deer Park, 11 miles Adjoining the railway line are the works of Imperial Chemical Industries.

Rockbank, 18 ½ miles. Prosperous farming area ...

Melton, 23 ¼ miles. Farming township and pastoral district Named after Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire England Parwan, 29 ¼ miles Bacchus Marsh 31 ¾ miles named after Captain W H Bacchus who settled in the district in 1938 Ingliston 45 miles Ballan 49 ½ miles Mineral springs with a high medicinal character, …

Gordon 56 ¾ miles it was named after the Duke of Gordon Bungaree 64 miles “bungaree” is native for hut or tent Warrenheip 69 ¾ miles it is named from “warrengen” emu feathers Ballarat 73 ¾ miles the famous South Street Competitions for music, art, physical culture etc… have been the means for discovering singers whose voices have won international fame. Ballarat is proud of Lake Wendouree where the rowing and canoeing events were staged during the Olympic Games. Linton
Junction 76 ½ miles Windermere 83 ½ miles is named after a parish and small town of Lake Windermere, Westmoreland England Burrumbeet 86 ¾ miles Trawalla 97 ½ miles Beaufort 102 ½ miles named after Admiral Sir F Beaufort Middle Creek 112 ½ miles Buangor 116 ½ miles Ararat 131 miles Armstrong 136 ½ miles Great Western 141 ¾ miles Agricultural and wine producing centre (champagne particularly) [interesting to note that the name Champagne was used, because it was considered as a type of wine it is written with a lower case “c”] Stawell 150 miles it is the scene every Easter of the world’s most famous professional foot running event – the Stawell Gift the town was named after Sir William Stawell, a Chief Justice of Victoria. Luncheon is now served in the Dinning Car. Murtoa 185 ¼ miles Horsham 203 ¼ miles Dimboola 224 ¾ miles 12.50 p.m. Nhill 248 ¼ miles Kaniva 272 ½ miles Serviceton 287 miles 1.55 p.m. (S.A. time) The Victorian section of your journey ends here. The V.R. diesel-electric locomotive that has hauled your train is replaced by a South Australian Railways’ diesel-electric locomotive which will take the train to the destination – Adelaide. You arrive at Serviceton 2.10 p.m. (Victorian time) It is necessary to put your watch back 30 minutes. Woseley 292 miles We have crossed the border and are in South Australia …. The line has been converted from a 3ft. 6in to 5ft. 3in gauge. Bordertown 300 miles Keith 328 miles We are now in the heart of what was known for many years as Ninety Mile Desert. Today, however, due to the spectacular work of the C.S.I.R.O. on mineral deficiencies in soils, this area is rapidly being converted into reach wheat and pastoral land. The discovery that the lands in this region needed only minute quantities of the so-called trace elements, cobalt and copper to bring them into full production has brought about this new prosperity. At Brecon, a well known insurance company is developing a £1 million project to settle selected applicants on properties which are being part developed before settlement. In this area too, many Adelaide businessmen are developing properties, encouraged by the fact that money so-used is non taxable. Tailem Bend 408 miles Murray Bridge 423 miles Callington 438 miles Nairne 448 miles named after his wife by Matthew Smillie Mt Barker Junction 452 miles Balhannah 454 miles this town was named by James Thompson in 1840 after the names of his wife Hannah, and his mother Belle, the name having been corrupted to the present day Ambleside 456 miles Bridgewater 460 miles Aldgate 462 miles Mount Lofty 464 miles Adelaide 483 miles 7.20 p.m. after passing through the last of the tunnels we get the full impact of the city lights The train glides into Adelaide Station. It’s journey’s end. We hope you have enjoyed your daylight train trip for Melbourne and the snippets of information we have given you about the countryside through which you have passed ….. don’t you agree with us when we say: “There’s no driving strain when you travel by train?”

Printed April 1957, the Victorian Railways Public Relations and Betterment Board, by direction of the Commissioners. V.R. Print

We arrive at our destination at 8 p.m., a twelve hour trip, we need to stretch our legs. Tante Esther is waiting for us on the platform. It is a real pleasure to see her after so many years. We take a taxi and go straight to the hospital where Oncle Elie is recovering after a hernia operation. He is radiant. They have not changed. All the Bentata’s of Australia, the four of us are reunited. I hope that we will rapidly become more numerous. We take the taxi to 10 Jervois Street North Glenelg. We keep talking to Tante Esther up to midnight. A letter from Doudy Harari awaits for me; he gives me news of old friends, Reggie Schwartz (in Switzerland), Igor Hilbert is a scout leader in France and Sami Hayon is his assistant. Behar is at a university in France, Massiah Gustave at a Grand Lycee, Abdallah Mohammed is at Grenoble and studying hard, Trigacci in London and Mario still in Cairo.
Saturday 20th April 1957
Relatives and friends of Tante Esther come to visit us and gather news from Egypt. We go for a drive and look at the building in progress being prepared for Mr. Ades. We visit the Lieberman’s house. We pay a visit to Oncle Elie at the hospital. At 4:30 we meet Lola (nee Adess), Lucien Curiel, her husband and her sister Poussin. People that we had not seen for a long time. Pictures “Bus Stop” – stupid.

Sunday 21st April 1957
We stay home up to 12:30 p.m. Mr and Mrs. Ades come to see us. Our Parents used to see them regularly and my brother completed his studies in Cairo with their daughters and met them in France whilst at university. We lunch at a restaurant with Lola and Luc. At 3 p.m. we are back at the hospital, once again all the Bentatas are in the same room. Back to Glenelg to pack up. Mr. Pessah comes to see us, he is a good friend of Oncle Elie; they had spent a lot of time together in prison. We are told we will shortly be introduced to a girl from Melbourne; I meet her, I am given her name: “Aviva”. My heart literally misses a beat; what’s happening, I never thought this name could be applied to any person other then MY Aviva!
At 7 p.m. we are at the station and the train departs, we will meet again. Terrible night, the train is freezing and we are rattled all night long.

Monday 22nd April 1957
We arrive in Melbourne at 9 a.m., I am half dead and go straight to bed.

Tuesday 23rd April 1957 (20th letter)
Work restarts. Received your letter number 11, also a letter from the Parents they still don’t appear decided.

Thursday 25th April 1957
“ANZAC Day” – Australian New Zealand Army Corp.

Friday 26th April 1957
A shop steward catches up with me and I am soon a member of the Vehicle Builders Employees’ Federation of Australia. Our motto is “unity is strength” and for the sum of eight shillings I am issued with my membership card. My trade is officially “storeman”. Contributions are 14 shillings per quarter, for females or juniors, payable in advance. The back of my card informs me that in case of accident I shall be entitled to the sum of 20 shillings per week for 10 weeks in any one year.

Saturday 27th April 1957
Overtime is cancelled. Some shopping in town, bought a watch band, have joined the Alliance Francaise de Victoria. Bought a dustcoat. Opened an account at the ANZ Bank. The postman delivers your letter (No. 12). Went to the pictures, saw two good films. I am reading a book on the life of the explorer and navigator Jean Baptist Charcot. My scout troop in Cairo was
named after him. In the morning went to the Immigration Office, I think there is hope. Borrowed from the Alliance volumes 1 and 2 of “Boomerang” by J Villeminot.

**Sunday 28th April 1957** (21st letter)
For the first time I go to a party; at the beginning it is boring later on we are laughing.

**Saturday 4th May 1957**
Working overtime again. A desk has been provided for me in the store to replace my old table. Am I kidding myself? I think I am considered by the others as the de-facto coordinator for the goods-inward store. Is it the fact that I have been wearing a dust-coat and a tie? In the course of a long conversation with Dusty (the supervisor) he praised me and referred to me as a gentleman. George is spitting chips. Wrote to Mario. We went to look at a house, the rent is £11 per week.

**Sunday 5th May 1957**
Get up at 5 a.m. Iron shirts. School work. In the afternoon we are at Frida’s home. We develop some guidelines for our little group. We don’t want to become politically biased. We don’t want couples, at least not at the beginning. We should have a balance between boys and girls. We don’t want rules. What will come out of this mixed up group? The common factor is that we are all Jewish. As foundation members we are Sheila, Fay from Australia, Annette from Belgium, Frida (Hungarian) Gladys, Jeanine, Maurice Lisbona, Maurice Choueca (Ray’s brother) My brother and I. Ray Gandour is our de-facto, dynamic and jovial president.

**Wednesday 8th May 1957** (22nd letter)
I am sick. I feel like a stranger in this room that is foreign to me.

**Thursday 9th May 1957**
At work Arthur is trying to take over my “paper work” job. I have become the de-facto clerical person at goods inward. This is accepted by all with the exception of Arthur. One or two are even happy not to be involved with the paper work but not Arthur; I guess he must think why would a freshly arrived young migrant have this “cushy” job?

**Friday 10th May 1957**
Pictures: “The Solid Gold Cadillac” and “Five against the house”.

**Saturday 11th May 1957**
At Myers we buy a few items of furniture: a chest of drawers, a cupboard, two beds and mattresses. In the afternoon we go to the new house. In the evening we are at a party and are solidly outnumbered by non-group members!

**Sunday 12th May 1957**
Wakeup at 10 a.m. Work. Correspondence. In the afternoon we meet at
Fay’s home. Once again our group is together and we have fun.

**Monday 13th May 1957** (23rd letter)

**Thursday 16th May 1957**

Working overtime this evening. There is hardly anything to do. We are doing a massive cleaning job. Our group of three is having a chat in the middle of vast stores. We are each armed with huge brooms and resemble a group of street sweepers. By now I have acquired a fair dexterity in handling the broom. The first day when I joined GMH I was given a broom and together with other store people instructed to sweep the floor at the end of the shift. I nearly rebelled, who do they think I am? I am an educated young man, I can read and write, I do not have to sweep; I soon realised that this was standard procedure. For a few minutes we are watching a film screened at the Dandenong drive-in, about a kilometer away. The factory is silent, empty and eerie and appears populated by phantoms. The shadows of the cranes are like ghost arms imploring a pitiless divinity, the divinity of the men in blue. Where usually noise, steel and fire prevail we stand. We are those who leave for work with the stars in the sky and return home with the stars in the sky. We are not planners or designers we just make things happen. We need a better capitalism as communism is failing. After a few moments of reflection the mood changes to one of hilarity. We each grab a car trolley loaded with the steel body of a Holden yet to be born, the panels are not yet spot welded. We each stand in our car in the drivers’ position and run a man-powered car race in the wide deserted aisles.

**Saturday 18th May 1957**

We get up at 8 a.m. The house is upside down. We slept in the lounge with Roby and Pixy. After a minimal breakfast the removal people arrive, We play at being “Three man in a boat” (a hilarious book by J K Jerome). We are simultaneously loading the truck and the car from the refrigerator to the meat balls for lunch. Every body gives instructions, suggestions, advice,… in a friendly disorder. At last at about 11:30 a.m. the convoy departs from St Vincent Place, Albert Park, our destination is Jupiter Street, Caulfield. We each work in our room and we are trying to organise ourselves in the new premises. Our furniture has already arrived and we start filling drawers with our stuff. We open suitcases that have been closed for five month. We have been living out of suitcases for so long. At night it is fantastic to be able to turn myself in a bed without fear that the stretcher will topple.

**Sunday 19th May 1957**

Winter has arrived suddenly; everything around me and in me is gray. It rains. We tidy up the garage and the sleep-out. At our 6:30 p.m. meeting time we can only find a shivering Maurice. The others with the exception of Fay, are unable to join us. From Fay’s home we go to the Kadima Hall, a documentary on the Sinai campaign is being screened but no spare seats. We proceed to the New Theatre and see the second episode of the Gorki Trilogy. Gorki is about 16 years old and he knows that Czarist Russia is not well governed. But at this stage we know nothing about his philosophy, his feelings or his politics. As communist propaganda it is a bit lightweight. In
Melbourne it is illegal to screen films for profit on Sundays so we had to make a voluntary donation to get in; this was the painful bit. We leave at the end of the episode decided not to come back for the third episode. We congregate at a milk-bar and I consume my first Australian meat pie. Tasteless and barely edible.

**Monday 20th May 1957** (24th letter)
I am freezing, it is 5 a.m. Pixy, the dog, is moaning and picks up a slap. I still can’t find my bearings in the new house. It is raining. Received a letter from the Parents and from Mme Cohen. I was expecting something from you.

**Saturday 25th May 1957** (25th letter)
Shopping in the morning. In the afternoon we visit the French Consul. We float the idea of a French Scout troop. Lukewarm interest. Evening film “High Society”. Something is not right with my eye since yesterday; I must have picked up some dust at work.

**Monday 27th May 1957**
Gone to the doctor who removes a sliver of metal from the eye.

**Friday 31st May 1957**
Received your letter.

**Tuesday 4th June 1957** (26th letter)

**Sunday 9th June 1957**
I wake up at 6; I am late! What happened? Luckily my brother reminds me that it is Sunday otherwise I would have gone to work. In the evening we have invited friends for a “party”. They behave reasonably well. We have fun we sing a fair bit in French.

**Monday 10th June 1957**
My eye is still sore, I go to see the doctor. The verdict is an “ulcer” in the eye, whatever that means…. Drops in the eye are prescribed and a cotton pad to shield the eye until it recovers.

**Tuesday 11th June 1957** (27th letter)
I endeavor to write a letter that is not too down hearted.

**Thursday 13th June 1957**
I have an appointment with the eye specialist. The first thing he tells me is to throw away the eye pad. The eye has a scar that will slowly heal, it will probably diminish but probably some residual scar will remain. The position and the size of the scar will determine if the sight will be affected!

**Saturday 15th June 1957**
We drive to Essendon airport to greet Felix Benmayor (Mrs. Bassat’s
brother) he arrives from the Congo, via Israel. He has the aura of a powerful and wealthy man. He speaks without bragging of his houses, carpets, jewelry,..... He has made his money in the old Belgium Congo. He is due to spend about twenty days in Australia before returning to Israel and the Congo. My childhood memories of him are vivid; he once sent a post card to Roby from Eritrea or the Congo in which he said “please tell Claudie that I have shot six lions and six tigers”. This was powerful stuff. Six months ago today I left Egypt; during the last half year my whole world has changed: travel, job, language, culture, family,.... what will the next half year bring?

**Sunday 16th June 1957**
Our first drive in the country. We are about a dozen friends in three cars and proceed to Emerald Lake. Beautiful country side.

**Monday 17th June 1957** (28th letter)
In Victoria we celebrate the Queen’s birthday to day!?!?!?!?!? We celebrate a bit with some spring-cleaning.

**Thursday 20th June 1957**
I have an appointment with the eye doctor. He wants to see me in three months time to be able to give me a more specific assessment.

**Saturday 22nd June 1957**
I join the Melbourne Public Library. We currently have ten library books! Including Omar-ibn-El-Khayam.

**Sunday 23rd June 1957**
We visit the “Cercle Francais”; a far younger and friendlier atmosphere than that of the “Alliance Francaise”. The President, Mr Gaille project slides about his trip to Japan. My brother and I make a small presentation about French scouting, we are still interested to start a French Group. Today the Bassats have prepared a birthday party for Josette. Her friends are still home when we return. The kids are extremely noisy; Roby is busy in his adopted role as vice squad officer.

**Monday 24th June 1957**
I will not get anywhere if I continue to work for GMH at Dandenong. I tender my resignation today. In a week I will be jobless at a time when I should not be unemployed.

**Tuesday 25th June 1957**
I don’t go to work today but go to the Commercial Bank to apply for an advertised position. In the evening we attend a memorial service for Mrs. Bassat’s sister. The Rabbi is very informative.

**Thursday 27th June 1957** (29th letter)

**Friday 28th June 1957**
My last day at GMH and I meet two French employees! Some supervisor wants me to empty crates of heavy parts. He can forget it, it is nearly 4:30 p.m. and for me it is time to leave. General Motors is a huge company; what sort of career could I have developed with more tenacity? Some unusual practices prevail: The large well subsidised canteen is available to all personnel but why are white collar staff restricted to the parquetry floor and the blue colour staff to the lino area? Every body appears to know that if you need cheap tires it is just a matter of talking to the appropriate store person and they will be thrown over the cyclone fence for later collection. How come the security staff, dressed in police style uniform does not appear to be aware of the practice?

**Saturday 29th June 1957**

Hectic shopping, bought the “High Society” LP for Robys' birthday. Purchased 19 folders. Photocopied the letter from the French Consul, highway robbery they charge £1-1-0! Felix Benmayor bought a house in Australia to add to his collection.

**Sunday 30th June 1957**

Party at Raymond's. Big disagreement between Maurice Choueeca and Maurice Lisbona!

**Monday 1st July 1957**

Math test, not too bad.

**Tuesday 2nd July 1957** (30th letter)

Frozen all night long, when I get up in the morning everything is white with frost. Looked for work.

**Wednesday 10th July 1957** (31st letter)

I am in Queens Street and step in a phone booth to ring a prospective employer. They seem to be interested, I am interested. We agree on a date and time and they ask for my name. It is obviously not an anglo saxon name. They stop being interested and simply say: "sorry we do not employ New Australians". End of discussion!

**Saturday 13th July 1957**

We dress in full French Scout parade uniform and proceed to the Shrine. We meet the Consul, Mr. Le Bas de Plumeteau and representatives of the French community. We are given the wreath to carry and follow the Consul to place it next to the French memorial plaque at the base of a tree. Words of welcome from an Australian representative. We visit the Shrine.

**Sunday 14th July 1957**

A toast at the French Consulate. We talk to the Consul, about our Parents. He is very understanding but can he help?

**Tuesday 16th July 1957**

I have the flu. The Doctor comes three times.
Friday 19th July 1957 (32nd letter)
I get up. A bit of mucking around. A blind priest comes and recites a poem, poor man.

Saturday 20th July 1957
I feel that I am well and truly over the nasty flu and spend two hours lovingly drawing a radio circuit.

Sunday 21st July 1957
School work. Visit the Braunstein’s in the afternoon.

Tuesday 23rd July 1957 (33rd letter)
Possible job

Friday 26th July 1957
At last I have obtained a job, on a trial basis for fifteen days. I would so much like to have a regular job. Who would have sought, a year ago that I would be so keen to have a 9 to 5 job? During the job interview it was a bit strange to be asked to obtain a reference from a minister; my initial reaction was: I do not know anybody with access to politicians but I realised in time not to make a fool of myself that I would need to provide a letter from a minister of religion. In this instance Mr. Gamil came to the rescue. He obtained a statement from Rabbi Goldman (who later married us) indicating that I was known to Mr Gamil in whom the Rabbi had full confidence and that the rabbi had been assured I came from a respectable family. The company wished to ensure that staff members had a sense of ethics and conscientiousness.

Saturday 27th July 1957
Correspondence. College work. Hairdresser.

Sunday 28th July 1957
Wake up at 6 a.m. We meet Lucien and Rene and proceed to Royal Park. We set up a tracking game. Not too bad. We walk through the Botanical gardens and the Shrine area. At 3:30 p.m. we meet at St Kilda and drive to Croydon for a bar-b-q. This is a Jewish function. The band arrives at 8 p.m. Ray tries to create a kibbutz atmosphere but with his white shirt and tie it is not easy. We are back home at midnight, tired and happy.

Monday 29th July 1957
First day at work with Wright Stephenson & Co. Ltd, the office is based at 34 Queen Street in the city. They are a firm of seed and grain merchants established in 1861 in New Zealand. I work for a young man who goes under the title of Chief Clerk, he reports to Mr. Willocks the Accountant. We have about a eight male clerks in the main office and as many typists in a separate glazed area. When I see the receptionist I could have fallen in love with her, she looks so much like you. I tell her so. I cant cope with her name “Barb”, what a name for a girl! I am to look after the stock records
and invoicing relating to two company stores, one located in Albury and the
other in Spotswood. Written communications with Albury prove to be no
problem, Spotswood is different as we have a direct phone line and I have
grave difficulty in talking to my contact person. He can’t speak English; he is
Australian and has such a strong accent! I have to ask him to repeat himself
so many times. In the office we share one huge mechanical adding
machine, it has a black steel frame, is mounted on casters so that it can be
wheeled from desk to desk. You can key-in a number and enter it by
actuated a lever about 30 centimeters long. After half an hour you develop
a soar arm. The job requires me to receive delivery vouchers from my two
stores, price and extend them so that the invoices can be produced in the
Typing Pool. I am also required to maintain the stock records for a variety of
grains and seeds. I find that a popular type of animal feed is called
“bersim”, this is a slight distortion of “bersim” an Arabic word being a plant
used as fodder. I am having difficulty in handling the logic of the
calculations. It’s a good thing that my Father had supplied me with all the
data of the imperial weight and measures system; however he had not
provided me with the weight in pounds of bushels of various type of grain.
The sort of calculations I had to become familiar with drove me crazy.
Imagine keeping stock records in tons, hundredweight, quarts and pounds.
All the goods coming in the store are expressed as (say) 10 tons, 6
hundredweight, 3 quarters and 20 lbs. Based on the following relativity you
can see things are not straightforward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Conversion Factor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 long ton</td>
<td>2240 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hundred weight</td>
<td>112 pounds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 quart</td>
<td>28 pounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To further complicate the matter the goods were sold in bushels, a unit of
volume to measure grain. I had to learn that a bushel of maize weighs 56
pounds, and similarly I had to memorise the weight of different variety of
grains as each type has a different weight. Imagine, if you can the following
scenario: You have in stock goods in tons, hundredweight, quarter, lbs. that
you sell in bushels for £-s-d!!! To help us in our calculations each clerk was
issued with a nicely bound thick manual. It was titled Ready Reckner and
provided on a separate page the multiples of units of currency in halfpenny
increments so that you can easily calculate 3689 times £1-12-11 ½. At the
time I would have voted for the immediate introduction of the metric
system. I am convinced that the level of mental arithmetic required
for the simplest calculation provided very good exercises for
generations of pupils.

**Tuesday 30th July 1957 (34th letter)**
Work is beginning to shape up but the time wasted and inexactitude of the
work is amazing.

**Friday 2nd August 1957**
We are given a good news when we wakeup, we won £5 at the Ajax
Sporting Club lottery. At work everybody wears a white shirt and a
tie; I have no problem with the ties but the bulk of my innumerable shirts are coloured. I will need to buy some white ones. On the Radio Josephine Baker sings “J’ai deux amours”, not me, I only have one.

Saturday 3rd August 1957
Received a letter from you and one from Dad. Today the Parents are leaving Egypt. Will they have problems to get the Landing Permit? With some of my winnings I buy two pairs of socks (10/-) a wallet (7/6)

Sunday 4th August 1957
Get up late – 10:15 a.m. – late breakfast, some correspondence, lunch in the garden. Splendid day, washed a load of socks. Polished shoes. It still takes a long long time to iron a good Egyptian cotton shirt. Because I wear a jacket at work I develop the ability to iron the front of the shirt, the collar and cuffs; this must save about half the time. Up there for thinking.

Monday 5th August 1957
Telegraphed Aviva best wishes for her birthday. Received news from the Parents, they will probably travel to England. If everything goes to plan they will be here on 6th November. Received a letter from Mario; I feel like picking a fight with him.

Tuesday 6th August 1957 (35th letter)
Received a letter from you and one from Oncle Elli. Wrote to you and Mario.

Wednesday 7th August 1957
At work the company has obtained two additional rooms one floor above the main office. The big Boss Mr. Officer gives a small speech about the growth of the business; we are also reminded about the need to be tidy in our work and maintain tidy desks and work environment.

Thursday 8th August 1957
Happy birthday darling, today you are 21! I wish I could give you a kiss.

Friday 9th August 1957
At 4:30 p.m. all the staff is invited upstairs for tea and cakes. The CEO has arrived from New Zealand for the inauguration of the merchandising division. Wednesday’s pep talk must have been caused by the arrival of the Kiwi brass. In the afternoon I am formally introduced to the adding machine. Today is the end of my trial period; it is time to go home and nobody has told me anything about trial! Is this good or bad? In the evening we see a film “Tea House of the August Moon” – good.

Saturday 10th August 1957
Shopping in the morning. On the tram I meet the Scottish Group Leader of the scout group based on Glenhuntly Road. Pictures “Tea for Two” and “No room for one more”.
Sunday 11\textsuperscript{th} August 1957
School work, correspondence. Roby is sick. Heard on the radio “Hymne aux Temps Futur”, magnificent. I had to come to Australia to hear it sung properly.

Tuesday 13\textsuperscript{th} August 1957
We have invited the Scottish Scout Leader at home. Ian McDonald. We have a long discussion, up to midnight, on our and his scouting experiences.

Friday 16\textsuperscript{th} August 1957 (36\textsuperscript{th} letter)
Received your letters 28 and 29. You appear annoyed. We visit Scotty at his scout hall. No patrol leaders but the boys are full of enthusiasm!

Saturday 17\textsuperscript{th} August 1957
Morning shopping. Afternoon school work. Evening pictures with Raymond and Sheila. I draft a letter to send you.

Sunday 18\textsuperscript{th} August 1957
We go house shopping with the Bassats. Correspondence. School work.

Monday 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1957 (37\textsuperscript{th} letter)
As every Monday, who feels like going to work? Parker fountain pen repaired £1-17-6!

Wednesday 21\textsuperscript{st} August 1957
No school this evening, term holiday. Mr. Bassat’s birthday.

Friday 23\textsuperscript{rd} August 1957
In the evening I go to Scotty’s scout hall, in French scouts uniform. Some induction takes place and some of the boys are virtually forced to go to confession. I think my scouting was better. Scotty leaves the meeting and I take the meeting in hand. I take pleasure in telling them about my scouting.

Wednesday 28\textsuperscript{th} August 1957
I visit my Spotswood store. Everybody appears efficient, in control and knowledgeable.

Tuesday 10\textsuperscript{th} September 1957
Received your letter. Roby has bought a small car; it’s about time as he only talked about cars and was becoming unbearable. Received the contract for the Elsternwick flat that we will rent.

Wednesday 11\textsuperscript{th} September 1957
The Bassats have gone to Sydney for a week. This will be a bit of preparatory training for us. Pixy is lonely and miserable, she misses Mr Bassat.
Thursday 12th September 1957
I did not know that I had such hidden talents to grill meat!

Friday 13th September 1957
In spite of the date nothing special today.

Saturday 14th September 1957
Today we shop at Elsternwick for our new flat.

Sunday 15th September 1957
We go to see George Herscue. He is the milk bar guru. He has bought and sold milk bars. He has a few words of advice for making money in the milk bar business: keep your money in cash and close at hand, save accommodation rent expenses by sleeping in the milk bar stock room. Party in the afternoon….. Who could have guessed that in time he would make a huge amount of money and loose it, become the owner of a horse that would win the Melbourne Cup, be convicted of fraud and thrown in jail.

Sunday 22nd September 1957
Party at Jeanine’s home.

Monday 23rd September 1957
We start shifting, little by little, to Elsternwick. We are to reside at 36b Glenhuntley Rd.

Tuesday 24th September 1957
At work things are hectic; the typing pool is not coping with the volume of invoices to be typed. Innocently I mention that overseas I used to type. The next moment I find myself sitting behind a typewriter, in the middle of a bunch of girls, embarrassing! They use a funny QWERTY keyboard, nothing like the AZERT keyboard that I am used to. I should have known better, not that long I did apply for a typist job at the ABC, they appeared interested and asked me ring them for an appointment; the reply to my letter was addressed to Miss J Bentata.
I bought an LP of Paul Robson’s songs for Joujou’s birthday. Vacuum cleaned the flat.

Wednesday 25th September 1957
Rosh Ha Shana. I hope that friends and family around the world are all o.k. Very special menu.

Thursday 26th September 1957
Today is Show Day so with a Caltex ute we organise three trips and shift from Caulfield to Elsternwick. The umbilical cord is severed; we are fully independent. We have all the problems in the world to move our cupboard to the first floor. We sleep our last night at 38 Jupiter Street, we are frozen on camp stretchers.
Friday 27th September 1957
Goodbye Caulfield. I arrive at work loaded for a weekend away. After work I go to the Australian National Airways city terminal under heavy rain. A good excuse as my unpolished shoes are not presentable.

So I arrive at Essendon airport and board the DC6 Douglas Skychief. Flight 232 Row 10 Seat A. We take off at 7:10 p.m. (Vic time) and land at 8:45 p.m. (SA time). This is my first air travel. They feed us. Fish (it is Friday!), rice, peas, tomatoes, asparagus. Cellophane bread. Biscuit and Kraft cheese. Inedible dessert. Coffee.

From time to time we hear the voice of the captain requesting us to fasten our seat belts or informing us that we are flying at so many thousand feet above sea level. As expected, in the usual way three of the airhostesses are charming, the fourth one has a lot of success with the male of the species, she is a mixture of Martine Carole and Marilyn Monroe. As soon as I arrive I take the bus for the city terminal. Oncle Elie is waiting for me and immediately we go to Glenelg we keep talking until late at night.

Saturday 28th September 1957
I go with Oncle Elie to visit the City centre. We walk to his office; it’s a bit of a mess. Mr. Pessah lunches with us. We are then invited to visit them at Mt Lofty; they have a splendid house. We meet the whole family, they are all very interesting. The mother, Penina, is full of life and has a point of view on everything. The son Uri plays the piano very nicely, the daughter Ilana debates Israel and the bad conscience of Jews around the world. We spend a lovely afternoon and evening in a magnificent site.

Sunday 29th September 1957
We relax in the morning. In the afternoon we call on his parliamentarians’ secretary. We talk about the Parents formalities. Oncle Elie has worked very hard and for a long time to get us into Australia; and is still actively doing it for the Parents. I leave at 7:45 p.m. on a DC4 – flight 239. I arrive home late. I am greeted by Joujou who opens a bottle of sparkling white wine.

Monday 30th September 1957
My ear has not stopped hurting. Is my Egyptian otitis flaring up or is it simply the aftermath of the plane?

Tuesday 1st October 1957
Joujou’s birthday. We are invited at the Bassats.

Wednesday 2nd October 1957
We stuffed ourselves on home cooked potatoes. We notice a scout hall not far from our flat. Armed with my letter of introduction, in English,
written by Vova Bellin, our ex scout Group Leader I introduce myself to the scouters and ask them if they need a couple of leaders. They are very nice and tell me that they have a good number of volunteer leaders on a waiting list. We keep on chatting and after a while they come clean and inform me that although technically they are a nondenominational scout group in reality they only accept Jewish kids and scouters. They are surprised when I tell them that this is not a problem as I am Jewish. My brother and I joined the group as assistant scout and cub leaders and struck a friendship with Sol Cohen and John Mansfield.

Thursday 3rd October 1957
We cook rice. It has the consistency of cement! We spend a very pleasant evening with Mr. & Mrs. Pelicone, the owners of the nearest milk-bar in Glenhuntley Rd. They are Italian and come from Cairo. He used to work on board the “Egypt” and the “Sudan” as accountant/purser. These two paddle ships, moored on the banks of the Nile, in a nice suburb, are floating tea house/restaurant. My parents used to be frequent patrons. In his younger years Mr. Pelicone was a member of the Italian expeditionary force in Shanghai and was somehow trapped in the country he had to walk huge distances to eventually leave China.

Friday 4th October 1957
Erev Yom Kippour with the Bassats.

Saturday 5th October 1957
Yom Kippour, we break the fast with the Bassats. Back at home I finally start filling the application for a Landing Permit for you. How much longer will it take? Technically my brother warrants that, until I reach the age of 21, no financial costs will be incurred by the Government, should we not marry he will pay to have you leave Australia. No fear!

Wednesday 16th October 1957
On my way to college I hear two young women speaking in French. “These Australian girls, how vulgar, they look like tarts. Look at this one the way she wiggles her bum!” I can’t help but interject “I am in full agreement”. They are stunned.

Saturday 19th October 1957
News from Oncle Eli and the Parents are not good. This blasted “Spanish Moroccan” nationality is confusing the authorities. Spanish would be o.k. but with the White Australia policy the Moroccan part is not good. Today I lodge the application for your permit; I would so much like you to be here now!

Sunday 20th October 1957
Summer has suddenly arrived today.

Tuesday 5th November 1957
Today we have a public holiday, “Cup Day” they are all mad! Nobody talks about anything else; the papers, the radio, horses, horses, horses!!! We are developing the habit of eating at two local restaurants. The first one “Arta and Paula” is just opposite our flat, it is run by two Yugoslavs. We rapidly acquire a reputation as good customers. The second one is owned by a smiling Chinese gentleman. It is next to the Elsternwick picture theatre. We patronise his establishment because he prepares a very nice fried rice and also because our taste buds do not appreciate our rice cooking skills. For quite a while we assumed that his smiling expression “ta” at the end of the conversation was a Chinese salutation; eventually we understood that it was an Australian expression.

Wednesday 6th November 1957
I receive notification from the Immigration Department that your application is being sent to France.

Thursday 7th November 1957
Today I am given a month notice that my employment will be terminated. It’s a shock. It appears that I was replacing an employee who was doing his National Service. In the evening Raymond visits us at home and we discuss the possibility of having our own milk-bar; being self employed and running your own business appears a very attractive proposition, particularly when you have just lost your job. Eventually we look for and inspect a milk-bar for sale in the bush at Greensborough. It looks grubby, devoid of customers, a review of the books shows little resemblance with the cash register tapes. Mice droppings are visible. Maybe we are too fussy but on the basis of this unique inspection we give up what might have been a brilliant business career.

Friday 6th December 1957
Received a cable from Oncle Elie. It is brief and to the point: “visa stamped”. Let us hope that this is a definitive approval. I have passed my exams. No news from you for the last ten days.

Friday 13th December 1957
One year ago today I left you.

Monday 16th December 1957
I am 21 today. I am to be considered as an adult able to sign documents, be responsible for my acts. I feel that it is a day just like any other, I have the same freedom as yesterday. Because a 21st birthday is so important Mrs. Bassat had asked me what do I wish to receive as a present. So today my request is satisfied and I am the proud owner of The Concise Oxford Dictionary – 4th edition – 1540 pages.

Tuesday 24th December 1957
My last day at work for Wright Stephenson & Co. They very nicely say goodbye to me with heaps of smiles and good wishes. I receive a good reference…. “throughout the time he has been with us, we have found him
particularly courteous and willing, always eager to be helpful, and invariably punctual...”. One p.m., I am jobless. Merde, I will nevertheless enjoy my holidays. At 4 p.m. I arrive at the Ansett ANA City terminal where I meet my brother. At 5:25 p.m. with 10 minutes delay the captain starts the engines, the propellers start spinning, the engines are roaring, we are en-route for Adelaide. A few moments later the voice of the Captain informs us that due to a minor incident the plane will have thirty minutes delay in departing. So four hours later the plane is till nailed on the tarmac and we are asked to transfer to another plane. As soon as the plane lands in Adelaide we are paged; it is a message from Oncle Elie. We ring him, he is worried as the airline offices have given no information about the delay. Naturally our luggage has arrived on an earlier flight and has been shipped to the City office! So we have no choice but to proceed to the City. Eventually we retrieve our luggage, jump in a taxi, we are fuming. It is good thing that we are not rude to the taxi driver because after a few minutes of travel he addresses us in French. He comes from Lebanon. It is his turn to be floored when we talk to him in Arabic. At last at midnight we arrive at 10 Jervois St – Glenelg. The family is reunited and we talk and we talk.

Wednesday 25th December 1957
I phone Joe Levy; an hour later he is with us. He has not changed much from the days when he was a patrol leader in my troop. He left Egypt in December 1954, he is taller, broader, but still the youthful Joe. It is a pleasure to see him. In the afternoon we visit the Lieberman (Tante Esther’s sister) then we climb up a flight of stairs and we are with the Jacquillard more friends from Egypt; we meet Lola and Lucien Curiel.

Thursday 26th December 1957
I meet Joe in the City (the Village!?) In a few hours we visit the museum, the public library, the lending library, etc… and we rest on the grassy edge of the Torrens. We talk about the good old days. I say goodbye to him. I have never seen him again although I have occasionally heard from him. He is a medical doctor still practicing in Adelaide. I purchase a fascinating book, “The Secrets of Suez”.

Friday 27th December 1957
City visit in the morning. We meet Mr. Pessah and travel to Mt Lofty. I barely have an hour in the hills and take the train back to the city. Received cards from Igor Hilbert and Jacques Mestoujian.

Saturday 28th December 1957
Take it easy during the day.

Sunday 29th December 1957
More take it easy. In the afternoon we visit the Ades; they have just arrived today from an extended tour of Israel, Europe and USA. They saw our Parents in Paris and reminisced about the life in Cairo and our Maadi Club. The whole family used to be member of this “sporting club”
established for British Army officers during the war. I used to enjoy the swimming pool, the skating rink, occasionally tennis. My parents main activities revolved around coffee and tea added to long stretches of socialising with family and friends on a lovely grassed area. We would also occasionally enjoy an open air film screenings.

**Monday 30th December 1957**
We return back home. Well the holidays are over it is now time to look for another job.

**Tuesday 31st December 1957**
Alone at home. I have lashed out and bought a pouch of pipe tobacco. On the radio I am listening to the yearend program. Suddenly 1957 is gone.

**Friday 3rd January 1958**
We are on our way for our first camp in Australia. We are with Saul on our way to Upper Beaconsfield. We arrive around 8 p.m. and the scouts are already in their tents. We join the leaders and enjoy the evening. Time to go to bed and we amaze the others by our methodical approach to sleeping preparation. Glasses are carefully stored in a shoe next to the head! The beret pulled down as far down as possible virtually covering the eyes, the scarf (Texas robber style) covering the face, we are ready to sleep. They laugh at us but in the morning we have not been savaged by the mosquitoes.

**Saturday 4th January 1958**
Reveille at 5:30 a.m.; the night has been cold, we are frozen. What happened to Summer? Inspect the camp; it looks well setup with all the appropriate scouting “gadgeteries” that make camping fun. In the evening the campfire gathers all the scouts; they can’t sing! I miss my style of camp.

**Sunday 5th January 1958**
Big debate between the leaders, they all flair up and eventually things go quite again. Just the same as scouts leaders in Cairo. Camp ends at 3 p.m. and we spend the evening with Saul Cohen.

**6th to 16th January 1958**
Looking for a job that might provide a minimum of satisfaction.

**Sunday 12th January 1958**
We visit the Upper Yarra Dam for a very pleasant 160 miles excursion. We are with Johny Mansfield, Saul Cohen and their parents. Huge bar-b-q, have eaten so much that I have a tummy ache.

**Friday 17th January 1958**
I apply for a job at Thorn Electrical Industries. It is a technical clerk’s position. They manufacture television sets. I am interviewed by Mr. E
Dunn, “call me Ted”. He is the youngish Chief Engineer in charge of design and manufacturing. This job might be ok with my RMTC studies. To reach them I enjoy a long tramway ride through parks and old suburbs, it is followed by a brisk walk; they are located at 493 Albion Street, West Brunswick. Hurray they see the light and offer me the job. This is my first job attracting an adult rate of pay! We will have to find out if we like each other. For the first time, I find myself being interviewed by a female Personnel Officer. Later I find out that she is the wife of the Personnel Manager. Both of them together with other senior staff members are from UK on contract from the parent company. No news from our Parents since 31\textsuperscript{st} December. I saw two French films, they are stupid but they make me feel home sick for Paris. It is funny to be home sick for a city I have never seen. I feel like an old Parisian far from home. I feel I know this city very well; I know the gray walls, the wet streets, the monuments, the history, the grand buildings and avenues, the less then salubrious suburbs, the rude taxi drivers, the metro, the attractive young girls…. I know it from so many books, studies, history, literature, from the friends that I now have in the city. In far away Melbourne I have the nostalgia for the Paris I have never seen.

\textbf{Tuesday 21\textsuperscript{st} January 1958}

I start the new job. My direct boss, Oldrick Jelinek, (he has difficulty in convincing people that it should be pronounced “Yelinek”) is from Chekoslovakia. It is obvious that he has a profound hatred of everything Communist. He is not much older than I. Oldrick has left some long lasting memories. He was fond of saying that he was too poor to be able to purchase low quality goods, he thoroughly enjoyed my Mother’s cooking, became the de-facto photographer on our wedding day, the only photos we have are owed to him. Some thirty years later it was my pleasure to hire him at Ramset.

Our job is to ensure that any engineering changes in the product are documented. We produce typewritten master lists, describing the type and quantities of components required to manufacture. The lists are used by engineering, purchasing, stores, production…. We update engineering drawings and electrical circuits. Engineering changes or requests for concessions are continuously flowing through the office and keep both of us busy. Mrs. Gwen Riddett, Ted’s secretary, is supporting us with her typing skills. She also was instrumental in selecting a staff wedding present for us, I think it was a pressure cooker.

\textbf{Wednesday 29\textsuperscript{th} January 1958}

We greet the Parents at Port Melbourne. After a year plus it is nice for the family to be once again reunited. The flat that was spacious for two is proving to be cramped for four. The kitchen is atrociously small. The external wooden stairs are not the best for my Father. We will look for something a bit more spacious.

\textbf{Thursday 20\textsuperscript{th} February 1958}

I leave work at 10 a.m. I feel sick, running a fever.
Friday 21st February 1958
Fever still 39 degrees. The Parents are preparing for our next move.

Saturday 22nd February 1958
Today no temperature (36.3) We work all day long and by the evening we have settled at 168 Church Street, Middle Brighton.

Sunday 23rd February 1958
During the day we soon realise that we have a mouse in the house. The hunt starts, I catch it. And another, and another. I become the official mouse catcher and in a matter of a few days I must have caught a dozen or so.

Thursday 3rd April 1958
We leave home at 7:10 a.m. We are in two cars, a Holden and a Wolsley. We are Sol Cohen, John Mansfield, Stuart, Kevin “I’m hungry”, my brother and I. Stuart and Kevin are friends of Sol, they have done their National Service together in a catering unit. We travel up to 12:30 p.m. and setup camp at Wangaratta. A lot of talking, we do not go to bed before 2 a.m. and we are up again.

Friday 4th April 1958
at 6:30 a.m. With nothing in the tummy we travel towards Albury. We are blocked by a flock of sheep on the road. Our objective is Canberra and we drive through what appears to be remote suburbs before realising that we have driven through the city. We make a “u” turn and return to Canberra. We find a camping ground and setup camp at 3 p.m. We visit the city that is full of tourists. In the evening we drive around Parliament House and take a few photos. I sleep in the car, it is not comfortable.

Saturday 5th April 1958
We visit Canberra from A to Z; Parliament House, the War Memorial, the American obelisk… It is a nice city, full of parks, modern, clean but so small. At 3 p.m. we depart for Narooma; a lovely township full of life.

Sunday 6th April 1958
We travel from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. What sort of country is this; we have breakfast in a small hotel and we consume steak and eggs! What a country! A long monotonous drive through the forest. We visit Boydtown, it used to be a whaling station up to not so long ago. It is a nice place with a rugged hinterland. We stop for a look see at Lakes Entrance. We arrive at Bairnsdale and spend the night; it is so drab and lifeless compared to Narooma. It is amazing what the poker machines can do for a small town.

Monday 7th April 1958
At 6:30 a.m. the car convoy departs and we stop at Yallourn to visit the huge brown coal open cut mining and power generation. We arrive home tired and satisfied. The all up cost for this enjoyable long weekend is £14-
16-2; this covers fuel, car service, food, camping fees, souvenirs…

**Wednesday 28th May 1958**
Hurray, I receive a telegram: “Arriving Oceania Aviva”. I am overjoyed, we will get married, the oh so long absence is drawing to an end. To night I feel a bit mad.

**Thursday 12th June 1958**
On the way home from the pictures, “The Brothers Karamazov” (Yull Brinner and Maria Schell) I overhear a couple speaking in French, she is saying that Maria Schell behaved like a tart, they discuss the plot in a loud voice. I interrupt express the view that the book is far better then the film. I meet Jeanine in front of Flinders Street station and tell her that you will be in Melbourne at the end of the month, she makes me promise to ask you to see her the day after your arrival.

**Sunday 22nd June 1958**
Another few days.

**Sunday 29th June 1958**
See you tomorrow darling.

**Monday 30th June 1958**
Another few minutes and I will have you in my arms.

The Beginning

ref: LOIN
The Voyage

The Oceania

Claude reading and smoking on deck

DAKAR
Claude and Mr. Marius

Claude and Jacky
CAPE TOWN
Claude and Jacky
Canberra ACT
Saul Cohen, Stuart, Claude, John Mansfield, Kevin

Claude in NSW
with John in Victoria

L to R - first row: Raymond and Sheila, , Fay ??, Maurice Lisbona, George Herscuc. 2nd row : Claude, ??, ??, Maurice Choueka 3rd row: Joujou

Meanwhile back in Paris