

Northward Bound

I don't recall how my father broke the news that he was moving up the corporate ladder and that the promotion involved relocating from Brisbane. I assume the story broke over the dinner table. That may have something to do with the only remaining detail in my memory: The relocation meant we would need a new dinner service.¹ The keywords were *Noritake* and *Spring Leaves*.

From that, I assume that these matters had already been discussed at length by those who mattered. Those who did not were faced with a *fait accompli*. The judges' decision was final, and no correspondence would be entered into. There was no question of a right of reply.

If that seems at odds with the details concerning other aspects from the distant past, there are limits to what you can reconstruct from Messrs *Google* and *Apple Maps*. *Google* suggests the particular *Spring Leaves* was a line of china produced by *Noritake*. Since none of the associated images look familiar, you'd guess it was a long discontinued line. With the rest of the detail shrouded in the fog of distant memory, the next clear recollection comes from a discussion after we'd travelled from Brisbane to Rockhampton.

Initially, I thought we caught the overnight Rockhampton Mail train, but I conceded that we might have flown. Christmas holiday visits to grandparents in Rockhampton involved an overnight train journey; I assumed the same considerations applied this time.

But my brother remembers it differently and filled in details that suggest he was right. In Barry's version, we flew from Brisbane to

¹ Presumably, Dad's new position meant that he might have to bring visitors to dinner *chez Hughes*.

Rockhampton in a Queensland Airlines ² Fokker Friendship, stopping in Maryborough *en route*. ³

But we definitely flew the last leg. Initially, I thought that would have been on Trans Australia Airlines Flight 456, ⁴ touching down in Mackay, Proserpine, Bowen and Ayr *en route*. ⁵ But Barry remembers it differently; a single stop in Proserpine proved longer than scheduled because we had to wait for a fuel tanker to refuel the aircraft.

As I recall, in Rockhampton, the middle one of my three uncles had some idea of what we were in for. Mervyn suggested Townsville would be *hot* but that it would be *a different kind of heat*. Apart from the fact that there had recently been a fire in the bulk sugar terminal, that was all I knew about Townsville as we headed to Rockhampton airport.

Of course, there must have been more, but it would have come from the Year Four or Five Queensland Social Studies book, so I probably had an idea of relatively⁶ unimportant things like

² The Brisbane-based Aircrafts Pty Ltd, which had operated since 1927, changed its name to Queensland Airlines Pty Ltd after World War II and continued to offer services to centres to north and west of the capital before becoming part of the Ansett group in 1966 (Valerie Dennis, *Air Travel in Queensland* in the Queensland Historical Atlas). However, another source ([here](#)) has the airline merging into the Ansett group in 1958.

³ A Queensland Airlines timetable would confirm Barry's story. This Ansett Airlines timetable from 1963 suggests the airline did not operate services in and out of Rockhampton.

⁴ My father would have preferred the privately owned Ansett ANA, but according to [this timetable](#), the airline did not operate in and out of Rockhampton.

⁵ The aircraft left Brisbane at 7 a.m. on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. After stops at Rockhampton (8:40 to 8:55), Mackay (9:55 to 10:10), Proserpine (10:35 to 10:45), Bowen (11:15 to 11:25) and Ayr (11:55 to 12:05), it arrived in Townsville at 12:25 p.m. Stops after Townsville were Ingham, Innisfail and Cairns. [TAA Jetline Timetable](#), February 1963.

⁶ To your run-of-the-mill not-quite-eleven-year-old schoolboy.

industrial activity and railway lines. I knew there was a port. That's where the fire happened.⁷

However, I had no idea what it was like to live there. Like Rockhampton, it would probably be *hot*. Fortunately, it would be a *different kind of heat*. The prospect of temperatures *a la Rockhampton* twenty-four by seven by fifty-two was something to look forward even less than the flight that would get me there.

⁷ [North Queensland History](#) blog; *Burnt sugar, a disaster averted* ([Queensland State Archives](#)); *Cop it sweet, residents told after sugar shed fire taints air, water* ([Townsville Daily Bulletin](#)); *'Nobody believed the sugar would burn'* ([ABC Local](#)).