

Truc's story from Vietnam

Part Three

Rat-tat-tat. Rat-tat-tat.

The noise from the sewing machine never seemed to stop. Mr and Mrs Huynh had stopped working on farms. Instead, a company delivered big backs of cloth, already cut, to their home. Truc's parents joined the pieces to make clothes. Because they were paid for every piece they finished, they worked sixteen hours a day.

Sometimes, one of them would call out, 'Please come and unpick the stitches. I have made a mistake.' 'Yes mum'. 'Yes dad'. Truc and his siblings would say and run to help. It was part of their culture to obey their parents.

By this time, the family had moved from the old bungalow to a house of red bricks in Kilburn. Truc moved to a nearby school. Because his English was much better, he made many Aussie friends and didn't get bullied.

After school, Truc would watch TV. His favourite show was a travel documentary where the Leyland brothers travelled all over Australia in a four-wheel drive. Truc dreamed of visiting such beautiful places in the outback. The pictures on TV were so different to the factories, grey smoke and ugly fences near his house.

After five or six years, Mr and Mrs Huynh became very unhealthy. They worked so hard indoors that they had no time to exercise or get fresh air. But they had saved up some money. So they bought a market garden in Virginia, just south of the Gawler River.

'Market garden' is a funny name. It is not a market. Nor is it a garden. Rather it is a place to grow vegetables for sale. There were a few glasshouses at the market garden when the Huynhs bought it. Mr Huynh there built several more glasshouses until there were forty in total. There they planted cucumbers, zucchinis, capsicums and tomatoes.

Each day, Mr and Mrs Huynh drove an hour from their home in Kilburn to the market garden. They left early in the morning before the children rose, and returned late at night when the younger children were already asleep. Then Mrs Huynh would cook

the next night's dinner and put it in the fridge. The children had to heat up their own dinner.

On weekends and school holidays, the whole family worked together at the market garden. There were always lots of jobs to do: planting, fertilizing, harvesting. Summer harvest was very difficult. The glasshouses would get very hot. They could only spend a short time inside the glasshouses picking ripe vegetables. Then they had to run out to cool down or else they could collapse from heat stroke.

In a good season, the cucumbers sold for \$5 a bag. In a bad season, they sold for \$1 a bag. At the shops, Truc saw that they sold for \$1 each. He thought, 'We work so hard for three months, bringing up these cucumbers, and someone else earns all the money.'

But when the work was done, the market garden was a fun place. Truc fished in the river, built bike ramps and watched their dog run free. But when weekends and holidays were over, Mr and Mrs Huynh kept their long hours, and the children had to manage any growing-up problems and schoolwork on own. Yet, when Truc finished high school, he got good marks and to choose to study medicine.

After Truc became a doctor, he went to work in Darwin. There he studied further to become an Emergency specialist. He also went camping every weekend and during his holidays. He wanted to go to all the beautiful places he had seen on TV when he was a boy.

Truc met Nancy and fell in love. Nancy is from El Salvadore. Truc loved many things about Nancy. He especially loved her sense of adventure. They went on a six-month trip to northern and western Australia. One evening, Truc brought out a small diamond ring and asked Nancy to marry him. She said yes.

Truc now works in the Emergency Department of a big hospital. He and Nancy have three children. As a family, they go on many camping holidays. The children love fishing, swimming and exploring the outback.

Truc wants his children to keep their Asian culture of respecting elders. But he also wants them to learn the Australia way of thinking for themselves. He hopes that they will have a sense of adventure and that they will know that even with nothing except each other, they still can be so, so happy.