

Australia June 2023

I was telling one of my new friends in the Monday night horseshoe league a little about my radio career as a farm broadcaster. He asked me about traveling to various events and conventions and posed the question of where was the most interesting place you got to travel. Without hesitation I said Australia. How could it not be?

In May of 2005, the year I was President of the National Association of Farm Broadcasting, I was given the opportunity to travel there to report on and learn about agriculture and see firsthand how Australia agriculture operates. This trip was funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Just getting there was an experience. I flew from Omaha to Dallas to Los Angeles. From LA, we left on a Qantas jet at 10:30pm on a Thursday night and I arrived in Sydney at 6am Saturday, a 14 hour flight crossing the International Date Line. I flew business class meaning the seat stretched out nearly flat and had a good night's rest and was immediately acclimated to Australian time.

Mr. Warwick Chuck, project manager with the International Media Centre of DFAT was my host throughout the visit. The first day we had lunch and he handed me a ticket to the ballet at the Sydney Opera House. The building with its iconic architecture is a must see when in Sydney. Being a farm kid from Minnesota I wasn't sure what to expect from a ballet but it was an exceptional program. The Australian Ballet Company presented Ballet Blanc.

Warwick also told me that on Sunday I would climb the Sydney Harbour Bridge. "You mean all the way to the top?" I said. He said yes, it's only 135 meters above the water when you're up there. That didn't sound so bad until I converted that to feet. Wow, that's 444 feet! Let me tell you, it was the experience of a lifetime. What a view it is from 'only' 135 meters above the harbour.

My actual work of covering agriculture started on the following day. I met with officials of various farm groups the first couple of days. Then in midweek I flew to Canberra, the capitol of Australia. A meeting at the capitol building was scheduled with the Minister of Trade Mark Vaile. I spent 15 to 20 minutes in his office talking and recording an interview. Later that day I had a luncheon meeting with the U.S. Embassy's Counsellor of Agricultural Affairs Andrew Burst. He told Warwick Chuck, who accompanied me on the trip, that he'd like to get a 20 minute meeting with the trade minister.

After touring around the capitol building and around the city of Canberra, it was off to the airport and on to Melbourne. After touring the city, I went to a local restaurant where I tried kangaroo. Not having had kangaroo before, or since for that matter, I figured I better try it since I'm here. It was a quite good but the secret to good kangaroo I was told, is that it has to be done rare. There is no medium rare when it comes to kangaroo meat.

While in Melbourne, I went to the Victorian Livestock Exchange. I met with the Chairman of the National Livestock Identification Scheme, John Wyld. Warwick and I went out to his ranch called Box Plains near Gippsland, Victoria which is southeast of Melbourne. We hopped in his Range Rover and drove out to where the cattle were on the far end of the ranch. This is when I discovered the Range Rover was the smoothest vehicle I'd ever ridden in. Our return to Melbourne took the scenic tour along the southeastern coast of Australia. We had dinner and libations in Melbourne that evening before heading back to Sydney the next day.

The next trip in a much smaller plane took me to the city of Moree, New South Wales, which is north of Sydney in cotton country. I toured cotton farms and cotton mills. Being a northerner, this was a very interesting part of the trip. Our dinner that night was with several cotton farmers plus some executives of the Australian Cotton Growers. Back to Sydney and one last side trip, this time by car to the Hunter Valley Wine Region of New South Wales, the Australian equivalent of California's Napa Valley. I toured 4 different vineyards and toured their processing facilities. From there it was back to Sydney to prepare for the journey back to the States.

So you can see that when I was asked what my most interesting trip as a farm broadcaster was, I would be hard pressed to come up with one better than the trip down under.

You can scroll down and see some of the pictures of my trip.



Above I'm standing 444 feet above the Sydney Harbour with the Sydney Opera House in the background. Below, is a picture I took of the bridge. Note the little flags at the top of the bridge, I was standing right next to them.

