

Porirua Hospital Museum / Resource Centre Oral History Project

Recorded: 15 January 2004

2 SIDES

Interviewer: Helen Reilly

Abstractor: Helen Reilly

THOM VAN ARENDONK

- 035 Reads details about his CAREER BEFORE WORKING in PORIRUA HOSPITAL: arrived in NZ in 1952 as Dutch immigrant. Describes work he did in CANTERBURY: on roads, on a dairy farm, in the stores of a radiation laboratory in CHRISTCHURCH. Details about work in stores. Mentions an incident with a traffic officer. THOM loses place in notes.
- 136 THOM gives details of working FOR 25 YEARS IN 4 OTHER MENTAL HOSPITALS: ROTURUA, TOKANUI HOSPITAL (TE AWAMUTU), KIMBERLEY HOSPITAL(LEVIN) and LAKE ALICE (WANGANUI) before coming to PORIRUA HOSPITAL in 1977.
- 146 Describes PORIRUA HOSPITAL in 1977 in comparison to other mental hospitals: some advantages such as proximity to city, training school for psychiatrists, but chronic understaffing. Describes conditions for staff and patients, particularly the sub-standard buildings such as F Ward and outdated bathrooms. Refers to KARORI HOSPITAL. Recalls there were many things to do.
- 240 Explains MANAGERIAL DIFFICULTIES and HIS LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE POWER now PORIRUA HOSPITAL was managed by WELLINGTON HOSPITAL BOARD, rather than directly by the government. Narrates anecdotes about laundry and ironing machine.
- 272 Describes his FRUSTRATION WITH LACK OF FUNDING AT PORIRUA HOSPITAL, compared to his experience at LAKE ALICE. Mentions other Hospital Boards WELLINGTON and DUNEDIN helped out. Tells anecdote about funding misunderstanding and building a water tower at LAKE ALICE, illustrating power he had there, compared to his lack of it at PORIRUA HOSPITAL. Mentions his successful 'political machinations' at LAKE ALICE and buying washing machines at TOKANUI HOSPITAL as a contrast to his financial problems at PORIRUA HOSPITAL. He learned to be manipulative in order to get things done.
- 364 Describes why WELLINGTON HOSPITAL BOARD DID NOT ADEQUATELY FUND PORIRUA HOSPITAL. Narrates story about getting money for essential repairs such as boiler house. Some digression. Suggests he was not fully acquainted with head office frustrations but he never had enough funds for administration at PORIRUA HOSPITAL.
- 396 Describes EFFECT OF NEW DRUGS ON PATIENT NUMBERS. Mentions LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) being used at TOKANUI. Recalls ineffectiveness of previous medications compared to 'new drugs'. Relates anecdote about one violent patient in LAKE ALICE Maximum Security.
- 420 End of SIDE 1

SIDE 2

- 008 Describes WORK AS DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION at PORIRUA HOSPITAL: names some heads of departments; held weekly meetings; approved all expenditure, shortage of nurses. Explains how he correlated needs of hospital and presented them to Hospital Board.
- 072 Details of DEPARTMENTS AND STAFF at PORIRUA HOSPITAL. Mentions staff training centre used by outside health professionals as well. PORIRUA HOSPITAL big compared to other hospitals.
- 112 Describes CONDITIONS AT TOKANUI HOSPITAL in 1960S: poorly resourced, bad publicity, lack of staff.
- 145 Details about PORIRUA HOSPITAL ESTATE during his term: staff numbers, PUKETIRO Centre established (1978). Mentions opening of KENEPURU HOSPITAL (1977). Describes work done at PUKETIRO CENTRE. Explains why PORIRUA HOSPITAL nurses were paid more than in a public hospital. Refers to 'Gerries' (patients from the Psych-Geriatric Unit?). 800-900 staff reported to him.
- 223 Describes PATIENTS' HOLIDAY CAMP at WAIKANAE: accompanied by nurse, used PORIRUA HOSPITAL bus for transporting rations and laundry. Explains how cost of meeting fire regulations ended the camp. Mentions holiday place for patients at KIMBERLEY HOSPITAL.
- 272 Describes ACQUIRING PREMISES FOR THE PORIRUA HOSPITAL MUSEUM. Describes discussions being held about celebrating 1987 Centenary of PORIRUA HOSPITAL. Explains why he started collecting old equipment and photos.
- 326 Describes 3 WAYS MANAGEMENT DECIDED TO CELEBRATE CENTENARY OF PORIRUA HOSPITAL:
1. Research and write history book – commissioned WENDY HUNTER WILLIAMS
 2. Create a museum
 3. Hold a ball.
- 386 Recalls PROBLEMS WITH PRINTING HISTORY BOOK. Tape fades here.
- 392 Recalls SATISFACTIONS DURING HIS CAREER: how 'new drugs' improved patients' lives, how he got pocket money (for cigarettes) for the patients from the SOCIAL WELFARE DEPARTMENT.
- 423 End of SIDE 2