

Television Production at the Meatworks

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During mid 1964, a Television Camera Crew from the ABC [Australian Broadcasting Commission] visited the Riverstone Meatworks over a period of one week [five days]. The “Religious Program” was made each working day between 12.15pm and 12.45pm, thus enabling workers in all sections of the Works who desired to take part in the film production, to have their lunch and be back at work by the 12.45pm whistle. The management encouraged the workers to support the film production, in an effort to build the attendance numbers up.

The half hour episodes were shot at a location between the western side of the skin-shed and the Casings Department, just across the laneway from the Mutton Board. During the filming of the show, those seeking assistance in the form of some good advice, could ask questions and run a scenario to the Church movement conducting the interviews.

Curiosity got the better of many of the workers who simply turned up just to be photographed amongst the crowd, so as they could appear in real life on television, yours truly being one of them. In all, about 20-30 people which included male and female attended the location, but the attendance would vary from day to day.

Wally Woods was the one who always fired the questions and ran scenarios past the three Church people, who were two men and a lady. Other workers like myself were just too shy to come forward and ask questions in front of the television cameras. I noticed that every time Wally was given the microphone and he took hold of it, his hand would commence shaking, and his speech somewhat changed to a quiver as the television cameraman moved in for a close-up of his face. There were many others present who asked questions and received sound advice from the Church movement, and the two film crew were greatly pleased with the attendance and the numerous questions asked. In those days, the cameraman used film in their cameras and not video film tape like today.

The five 30 minute episodes started to appear on ABC Channel 2 in Sydney about two weeks after the final episode had been filmed. They screened on our black and white television sets [no colour sets until 1975] on Sunday afternoons at 3.30pm and appeared in the TV Guide as a “Religious Program”. The five episodes appeared on alternate Sundays, thus giving the series a longer running time period of two months.

As the filming took place not far from the Mutton Board, the larger proportion of those attending was drawn from this location. We all watched our television sets every second Sunday, in a hope that we could catch a glimpse of ourselves on television.