

INTRODUCTION

As someone who is working in a nursing home as a hostess, I am surrounded by residents (not all of them) who are there against their will and share with me their nostalgic feelings about the past. I work at a nursing home in Zaandijk called *Graankoper*. The nursing home has both an open department and a closed department, for residents with dementia. *Graankoper* is an open department where the residents are allowed to leave the department and go outside whenever they want. All of the people who become residents there will, most likely, never return to their homes.

The spaces inside the nursing home are sometimes decorated with images and furniture of the past. A huge image of the facade of *Simon de Wit*¹ is facing you when you walk through the main entrance. Everything is based on the past: the furniture, the music, the activities, the food, the decorations et cetera. Some of the residents in the department I work at, are in the beginning state of dealing with dementia. The residents sometimes think they live in the past and tell me stories about their lives as if it happened that very day. One of the residents, called P. Servaes once told me how he had just come back from singing class; he had a wonderful time, but it made him very tired. The day before, the same person told me with great passion about all of the countries he visited with his show choir called *Whale City Sound* and how he would do anything to go back to that time. It was interesting how one day he thought he was still living in the past, while the next day he said he would do anything to go back there.

1 *Simon de Wit* was a supermarket chain in the Netherlands from 1951 till 1972, when it became part of another Dutch supermarket chain called *Albert Heijn*. Both *Albert Heijn* and *Simon de Wit* originally come from Zaanstad ("Geschiedenis in detail | Albert Heijn", 2020).