

Oral Histories
and **Portraits**
of members of the
Aboriginal Community
recorded in the
Manning Valley
and **Great Lakes**

2004 / 2005



Produced with the assistance of the
NSW Ministry for the Arts





ORAL HISTORIES and PORTRAITS of members of the ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY recorded in the MANNING VALLEY and the GREAT LAKES

Photographs by Julie Slavin.

Oral History interviews by Barbara Jackson and Ralph Saunders.

Transcription and co-ordination also by Barbara Jackson

Production and design by Jane Hosking and Ian Harvie

A Manning Regional Art Gallery Project

Special thanks go to:

**The Aboriginal Advisory Committee of the project, Colleen Ping and
the Family of Aunty Sophie Morcome**

This project has been made possible with the financial assistance of the
NSW Ministry for the Arts



Style:

The responses to the interviews by Barbara Jackson and Ralph Saunders have been written down just as they were said. This has been done in order to record the particular oral characteristics of each of the elders and to allow the emphasis to be placed on certain words and phrases as they were intended by the Elder being interviewed. In many circumstances it becomes possible to almost hear the Elder speaking.

WARNING:

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander viewers are warned that the following
production may contain images of deceased persons.**

Foreword: Pam Paulson

This was a project that I have wanted to create for over 5 years, I am pleased that it has now become a living document.

The idea of capturing the reflections of our Elder's stories, these stories are just the tip of an iceberg, is so that there is something left in our lifetime for the parents, their children and grandchildren.

This document is to acknowledge our elders. We will never know all their stories if we don't sit and spend quality time listening to their stories of how their life was living back in the early years.

I would also like the next generation below our Elders to write about their history, a continuation from our parents to our children.

I am very proud to be a part of this project.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sue Mitchell who has supported me with the idea, the Elders who have participated, Jane Hosking for production and design, Julie Slavin for the photographic portraits, Barbara Jackson & Ralph Saunders for the interviews and research. Also Colleen Ping for allowing us to use the Aged Care Cottage and her help liaising with the Elders.



Introduction:

In 2003 Manning Regional Art Gallery undertook a project to research and record the surviving images of traditional art by the Aboriginal people of the Taree area. During this research it became clear that the memories of the Elders from this area contained vital information about the culture and art that belongs to this land. At the suggestion of Pamela Paulson, we joined forces with her to undertake the 'Elders' project. The stories of the Elders and their portraits have been recorded here so they can be passed on to future generations. Photographer Julie Slavin and oral history researchers Barbara Jackson and Ralph Saunders have contributed a tremendous amount of expertise and energy to this project. They believe, as many of us do, in the importance of recording these things while we can. I am extremely grateful for their dedication. I am also grateful to the Elders who have taken part and for the advice and guidance during this project from Dr Pat Davis-Hurst AM, John Clark OAM and Mave Richardson PSM.

The stories and images recorded are treasures that will survive for generations to come.

Sue Mitchell, Director of Manning Regional Art Gallery

QUESTIONS

The Elders oral histories are responses to the following questions

- 1 What memories do you have of your grandparents & parents ?
- 2 Can you recall a funny thing / incident that happened when you were young?
- 3 Have you ever been involved in Art projects, anything from painting, basket making, fishing nets, boomerang / clap stick making and marking?
- 4 Do you remember a bad experience that you can now laugh at?
- 5 What lessons would you like to teach /pass on to your children and grandchildren?
- 6 What is the best or most valuable lesson you were ever taught?
- 7 How do you want to be remembered in 100 years time?



**ORAL HISTORIES and
PORTRAITS
of members of the
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COMMUNITY
recorded in the
MANNING VALLEY**

Photographic Portraits by Julie Slavin

**Oral Histories collected by
Barbara Jackson and Ralph Saunders**



Madge Bolt

Haven't got much information about my grandparents, my parents. We never had much education, and the white people didn't want us at the school - so I went to the little school on what they call the Reserve and I was ready for 5th class then when the teacher came. She only taught to 5th class so I went back to the white school to sit for my intermediate - but I didn't pass at Forster - there on the reserve.

Forster Reserve

My Grandparents lived down the main street at Forster. They had a lovely place down there, a lovely garden, we used to go and sit, sit there and watch people go to the RSL club and uh, couldn't tell you what year now.

I fell down the peach tree and I broke my arm and I had to go to Tuncurry - we never had a doctor there then - so I went to the doctor in Tuncurry, and uh, I was always tired, an' I was anaemic. And when I was running home with my broken arm an' singing out to my mum 'oh put it in cold water, put it in cold water' an' this other lady she came to look at my arm and she lifted my arm up she said 'oh it's broken, look the bones sticking out there', and it was broken in 2 places. I was only about 9 or 8 then.

My dad, he used to make rods an boomerangs and I used to watch him doing that. I used to go out to Hawk Head out there

in Forster, go out there and git timber to build the rods and everything. He used to make nice rods. He built a boat an he built his own house, our own house, because he used to work in the shipyard where they used to build the tugs an, ah, he built his house out of the old timber from the shipyards. We lived in Forster there for a long time. Before that we lived in Taree for a while cause my grandmother used to live in there, Purfleet. And we used to get the beds, just bunks made out of bag an we used to run down the mission there, Purfleet, an chase the goats. And then after we shifted back out to Forster there an that's when my mum and my dad lived there. Queen Victoria gave us that land there and they lost the map, so we lost all our land out there. Now they built a big hospital on our land and, um, they don't allow us to go to the hospital, it's private. My grandfather and granny lived down town and my family lived down there, it's a long story, ohh.

My son, he always tell me these funny stories about these people, they on drugs, and he says they get in the car at Bulahdelah and come down to Forster. An I always have a good laugh cause he says 'you laugh mum don't ya', and I says 'yeah its funny. They get in the car and come down to Forster'.

I used to laugh, a lot of funny things. I worked in the hospital once and one man, he wanted to walk around, and the matron used to say to him 'look, if you fall over walking around the slippery floor, an I'll kick you in the arse' (*laugh*).

And lots of funny things when I worked in the hospital. There's this man, he had a stroke, and she said to me, 'Madge' she said, 'come now we're getting this man out of hospital', I was thinking to the sister she 'must be stupid to get the man out of hospital'. So we got him out of bed and when we got him out he just slid down the floor and we couldn't lift him. So at that time the minister was there, and he said 'oh stand back and I'll lift him up', and his face went real red, and he couldn't move him, cause he weighed 17 stone, and I couldn't do anything for laughing. That was real funny it was. So we had to get the police in to lift him and he was on the floor and we just put a pillow and blanket to cover him over, and um, so when the police came, 'oh we didn't know he was on the floor!' So he had to get another policeman to help lift him up. I used to do the laundry there in the hospital. I worked there for about 17 years, Forster hospital, then they got a new hospital. Then they built that new hospital on ground that we was s'posed to own, I still did the laundry there.

One granddaughter, she wanted me to learn her knitting but she was left handed. I couldn't teach her. I used to love knitting, used to do a lot of things. I went to TAFE for 4 years and learnt a lot there, used to make dolls and dress em.

I've had 11 children but I loved all my kids, cause they was really good, not like children of today, they really cheeky.

My mum always taught us, there was bad people and good people. Once when I went to the pictures, and they barred me from the picture show because I was dark, and told me sit in another place. But I said 'no my money's as good as the white people' so I didn't shift. So they barred me from that picture theatre from then, wouldn't sell me a ticket. But I worked for a lot of people, I worked all my life, I've worked for doctors, solicitors. When we was young we carried sticks for the lady because they owned the bake house, she used to give us tuppance and a bun. When we grew up a bit we used to go right out what they

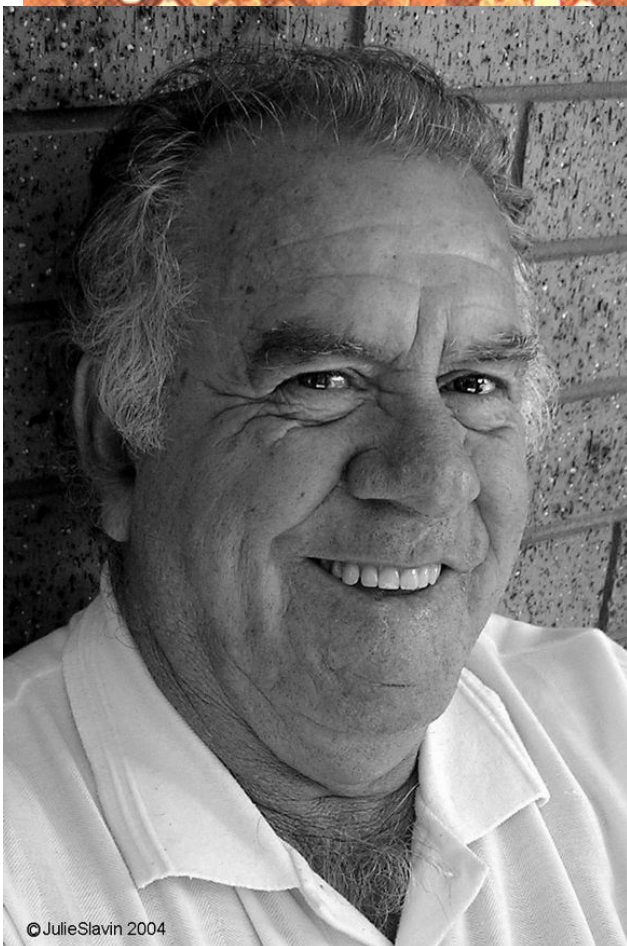
called the moors to pick wild flowers and sell them for our picture fare. It was a long walk out there!

My mum used to taught us we're all the one, black and white. She said we're all the same. I've worked for a lot of people and I've seen white people bad ones, good ones, dirty ones, clean ones. I used to work for a doctor, I used to do the ironing there. It was funny some times cause the doctor used to chase the kids down the lane with a stick in his pyjamas, and their mother used to say 'that's a shilling you owe me'! Oh we used to laugh.

My father, he went to Gallipoli when he was young, by the time they got there the war was over so they just sailed on to England and then came back through Cape Horn and came back to Australia.

My father could have represented Australia in the football team but they wouldn't allow him cause of the colour bar. He was really smart my father. He used to make boomerangs and make rods, he used to burn the art into the boomerangs and I watched him tie the rods up. ♦

Gordon Brown



I have quite a lot of memories of me grandparents. I used to ride with them in a horse and buggy at a younger age. Many years ago that was. They had a two horse team pulling a four wheel buggy. I used to have a great time back then a long, long time ago. My grandfather used to do a lot of horse work at that time and my grandmother was a great cook in them days. There's not a real lot I know of their background as I was too young to remember. That was in Taree at Happy Valley. Well, we used to live there. I went to school up at Kolodong. We stayed around there for many years until we moved away to Glen Innes and Grafton way. My dad was a bushman. He used to be a sleeper cutter in those days and we just had to follow him where the work was. Where he had to go we went with him. Follow Dad up. And then I became a log piler myself and after Dad got too old to work in the bush any more, then I took over. Me and my cousin, we was log falling and sleeper cutting too. Around the back of Wauchope area. I stuck to that for three or four years until I almost got killed a couple of times in the bush and I thought it was time to get out of it.

So I came and got a job down in Wauchope, labouring work, on the sewerage. I became a plant operator there. I stayed there for 15 years with one mate – I became a truck driver and a dozer driver – all that sort of work.

My grandfather had his own two horses, chestnut, half draught or that's what they called them, I don't know too much about horses. I can't remember what happened to the horses after that, he probably sold them. I used to ride around in a lot of horse and sulky, even Frank Saunders at Purfleet, he had a horse and buggy too. I used to go with him and Dad into the bush out the back of Happy Valley there.

Frank used to drive a Bullock team and Dad used to pull the logs and Frank used to haul them out with the Bullock teams. They used to work together out there. That's how come I know about Bullocks cause I used to follow Dad out into the bush and stay with him out there coz I liked it. I was more or less reared out there in the bush. Can't beat the old bush. Just after that he started travelling around looking for work when the work ran out here. We just started travelling everywhere, all over the place. It was hard times and we had to put up with it.

There's not a lot of it that I can remember until I come around and come back here and settles down in Port Macquarie. I lived there for years, married there and had a family. Then I started working around there, driving backhoes and things for about 18 years. And things went bust there and I headed back home here, coz Taree is my home town, I was born and bred there. And then I ended up out here (Forster), met this lady (Marcia) here! We met in Taree, 27 years ago, been with her ever since, settled down here now.

Yes I'm a Taree man. My grandparents names were Sam Khim and Mary Khim, she was a lovely old lady too, a great cook. She was a shearer's cook, so was my mother. My mum was a buckjump rider in them days, she rode horses too. Her and me aunty, mum's sister, used to do a lot of show riding. Mum was one of the first ones, as far as I know, to ride the horse *Skittle*. You remember *Skittle*? You might have heard Tex Morton singing about *Skittle*. Mum rode that horse, buckjumper! In her younger days, of course. Many years ago, that's what she used to tell me. I suppose it's true, I don't think she'd tell me a lie.

I used to do a bit of boomerang making years ago, out in the bush, I used to cut them out of the roots of oak, tea tree and willow trees. I used to do it with a tomahawk then we didn't have a saw, we used to do it the hard way.

Yes, out in the bush with me dad, I just used to cut them. I saw my friend doing it and I sort of copied his, what he was doing and he

taught me how to make em and I started doing that. How to cook them in the hot ashes, put the right bend in them, like the old people used to do. Well I got into that and started doing that. I carved a bit of woodwork and things like that out in the bush but I've never ever done any of it since. I used to do a lot of it then when I was living around the bush. I don't do it now. I'm more or less hooked up with fishing now and mechanical things. I do all that.

I don't use fishing nets, just hand lines and rods. I used to go with a chap that did net fishing, up at Port Macquarie, a professional fisherman. I used to go and give him a hand but as I said, I don't do that anymore, too damn cold for me!

I'd like to pass on the things that I've been taught now, even with your own family. Like get them to do what I've done. But I don't think there's much hope of that!! Look at the hard work I've done since as a kid. By gee I've worked hard. Helped me Dad out in the bush, swinging a 12 pound sledge hammer every day. It's not easy work I can tell you! Six foot cross cut saw, pulling one of them all day, every day, seven days a week, we never had no holidays. We had it every day. I suppose I can look back and sort of laugh at that too. I couldn't do it now.

We used to rob bees nests out in the bush, that was pretty funny. Dad taught us how to do that. Make a smoke on the ground first where the tree was going to fall if the honey was up in the tree somewhere and we had to fall the tree to get the honey. The tree would land right where the smoke was and the fire and smoke would sort of dope the bees up a bit and that's how we'd get it. Sometimes the bees would get too much and we'd take off and get a plant in the bushes. Sometimes the bees would find us and get in there. We'd turn around and we'd get a laugh out of that. We'd come out of there with our eyes puffed up and then they'd get us, but that don't matter, we'd turn around and do it again. I done that a few times and laughed about it. We'd say 'I'm not doing that anymore' but you'd do it again, something gets in your blood and you'd do it again....ah it was great! But I haven't done it now for a long time now. No need to do it anymore...bit easy life now....think I need it too!

I think the most valuable lesson I was taught was machine operating. I had a good boss at the time. He taught me a lot of things and he trusted me to do a lot of things on me own, where I couldn't see any other boss doing that. He really trusted me to go miles away in the trucks. He taught me how to do it, drive a

truck, dozer driver, and he taught me how to do that and I stuck with him for 15 years until he folded up and I had to go and look for other work then, which I found. It wasn't hard for me to find another job with the experience I had. I soon found another job and did that until I got crook myself and had to give it away.

I'd like to be remembered as a hard worker. At 10 years of age I was out helping me Dad putting sleepers up on the skids, notching them in with a chopping axe, getting them ready for him. At 11, 12 years of age I started squaring my own sleepers with a

broadaxe that Dad got me. That's how I'd like to be remembered. You know, being a hard worker. All we was brought up on was kangaroo meat and wild turkeys and stuff and damper bread. Sometimes it was tough in those days.

We didn't mind, didn't hurt me. Look at me. It's good tucker. I enjoyed it. I long for that now even I'd like to get back out in the bush again, taste some of that. I think that's long gone now, I just can't take it any more. I'm a bit old for that. Much as I'd like to I'd just have to leave it alone. ♦

Betty Bungie



I was taken away from my mother when I was 4 years old and lived with my father. My mother lived somewhere else I don't know. My mother died, we lived up Nambucca Heads.

Aunty Madge, she asked me to come over for a few days and then (I) stopped here (Purfleet). Married Johnny Bungie, had 11 children, one died. I wouldn't know how many grandchildren, or great grandchildren. Johnny played football a lot, represented Purfleet. *(Johnny Bungie was in one of the first football teams circa 1930s)*

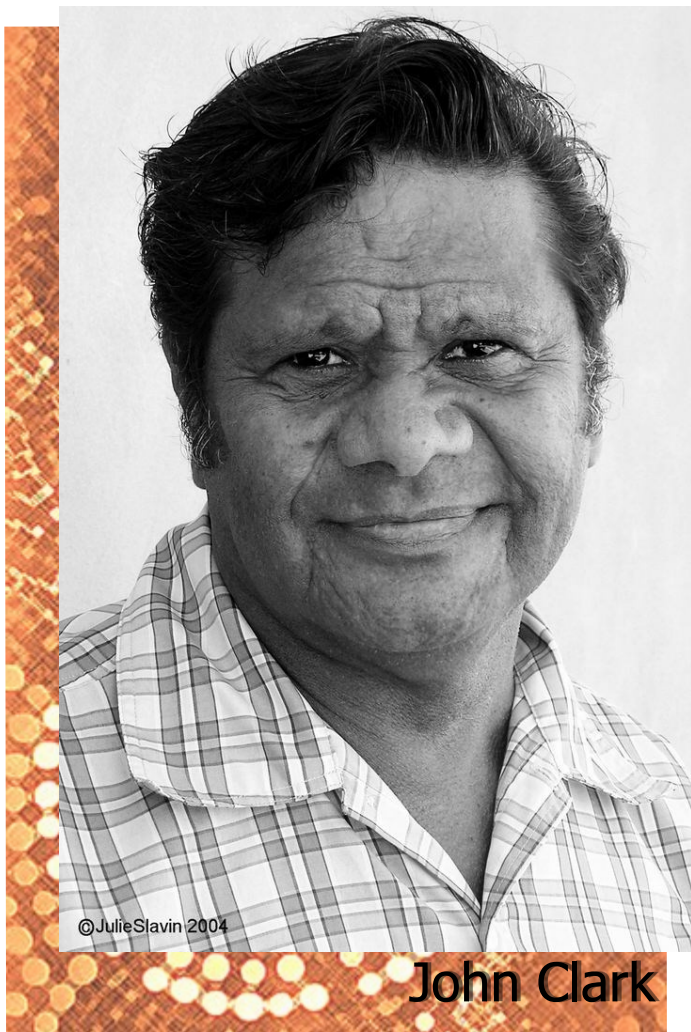
Father was very cruel to us, he was strict had to do everything he say so. Strict man from Nambucca Heads that's where we come from. Still got brothers and sisters up there at Bowra. It was a good life, fishing every day. When Johnny was alive he used to take us fishing

down Saltwater, Wallabi, wherever we wanted to go, he'd take us. Caught a lovely big snapper, bloody big fella, hand line fishing at Redhead. Fish for leather jackets. They eat the grubs, I don't. Love Cobra, yeah love cobra they get it out of the wood. Lot of em don't eat it here (Purfleet), some of my family does, some don't, my grandchildren don't, and they don't eat porcupine. Not so long ago I had porcupine, when we was living up at the old house up there, 21 years we bin in this house. We bin all over the place fishing, Blackhead, Forster. Now he's (Johnny) gone, got nowhere to go now.

When I first come here to Taree he (Johnny) had a horse and sulky. Like riding bare back alright used to go out to the Kills on horses, down here to Redbank, lost a horse down there. Had to walk home, he took off, left us down there, we had to walk home, 4 of us. Had to get up the next day and go and find him, he was right up the other end of the paddock. Ohh that was a long time ago.

Husband used to go out and gets bush tucker, wallaby, kangaroo, porcupine, everything he wants, he'd gets it. Yam, ever eaten Yam? Like potato, nice. Two of my boys go hunting, sometimes they bring me something down, just a little leg. It's lovely that kangaroo, I don't eat wallaby. It's got a different taste to kangaroo. Kangaroo is more better for me, I eaten kangaroo all my life. My father an em used to go huntin' get em all the time up there, used to eat it every day. Sea mullet, couldn't go past a sea mullet. Big place Nambucca, open right up now, big river, I seen it myself. It went right down to the walls, they had it opened up.

When I was with the ol fella here we used to go up the mountains, bloody big waterfall up there! I like going up there, long time since I bin up there, don't know what's it look like now. Look at my lemon tree, bush lemon, second crop this year! ♦



John Clark

My grandmother used to make me damper and damper sandwiches, she make em shanghai. We never had much food back in those days but she was always looking after us. We lived at the top of Harry Clarke Drive, left hand side, been a few families been through there. That's where I got my first hair cut from Uncle Frank Saunders. He used to cut my hair when drunk. He'd put a bowl on my head and cut round. It was funny because I was frightened he cut my ears off, cause he always seemed to cut em, I think. I dunno if he was just doing that or not, he'd grab the scissors and hold my ear with it. I hated going up there cause he was a rough old bugger, cause he used to chase us on a horse with a shotgun and whip if we done the wrong thing.

We had respect for all our old people in them days, you had to respect them otherwise they'd bash piss out ya, ya know. They still cared for ya, ya could go to any house back in those days and they'd feed you, I think that's changed in our community now, you can't do that anymore, up to a point you can. Our families are struggling now. Back then they had nothing but they gave everything, they have a lot more and people don't give enough.

I'll tell you about a school experience I had. A bloke the same age as me, he died. Back in the old days, they were poor. We were poor but they were poorer than us, cause his family used to come and ask our family for crusts. This young boy, he had no clothes, all he had was a grey coat, he used to wear this grey coat everywhere, nothing else underneath. He wore this to school one day, and the teacher kept asking him to take his coat off and it was boiling hot. Everytime the teacher asked him to take his coat off I killed myself laughing, and finishing up I got chucked out of class because of this big grey coat he was wearing. He'd said 'no, I'm right miss', he'd be there sweating, you could see it coming off his forehead. And every time the teacher asked him through the day, I killed myself laughing. Finished up I got barred from the class room for playing up, but the teacher didn't know what I knew. This old grey coat saved his life though. There was three wells at Purfleet where we used to get our water and he fell in the well one day and the grey coat spread out on top of the water and it held him up long enough for people to come along and pull him out. So the grey coat was a blessing but it was also not very good in school days. We used to bash the white kids up because they used to call us black all the time. We used to really get into it with em cause they used to be very racist in the playground. They called us black in front of the teachers and everything so we used to bash piss out of em.

The other thing I remember is the picture theatre where the front row used to be sectioned off with a rope. They used to let us come in when the lights were down in Taree, the Boomerang (zelsabar) Theatre. That doesn't seem that long ago to me. Coming down for rations with my grandmother down to where the Land Council is now, used to be the old ration shed so we used to get our medicine and rations from the mission manager in the same building we're sitting in having this recording. A lot of people don't realise how hard it was back then but there was happy days. There was no alcohol around, that's really changed people. To see a drunk back then was really, all the kids gather around cause they never seen a drunk. Now its every day you see em.

What we used to do was go out hunting, we used to take our shanghais and go out huntin. Anything we knocked we'd actually cook and eat on the day. We used to go to the farmers and ask for the old cow pumpkins, we used to eat those, back in them days the

farmers give you pumpkins and give you fruit. Back then they used to give things away. Now they can't afford to do that.

We were stealing fruit, me and Manuel Ritchie and a few of the boys down at Stitts Creek. And it was a bad experience then because he chased us on his horse with a whip and we were faster than Manuel and he was the last fella there running along. The farmer kept flicking the whip behind and telling him to go faster and he turned around and swore at the farmer and saying 'it's the fastest I can go'. It wasn't real funny then but it is funny now when you think about it!

Do you boys get together now and laugh at them things that happened then? Well we probably don't do that enough. I think we need to actually sit down together like the Elders and talk about what used to happen to us when we was kids. The unfortunate thing about it is a lot of people I grew up with are now dead. This thing about Aboriginal people dying before they're 50 is coming true in our community. There's only a handful of people that I used to go to school with are living. The rest of them are buried in Redbank or the cemetery at Purfleet.

Enjoy life while it's here. I mean it's really great to enjoy what ya got. We whinge about everything and nothing, but we don't realise at what we got and we need to really enjoy what we got. I mean kids buck at going to school, it's the best days of their life. I know that now. Wish I could go back and do it all again, ah, but its something you think about when you get older. I should of done this I should of done that, so trying to get that message through to young kids now to enjoy their youth and being carefree and everything. That's something we need to get across to them now because once you get a bit older you can't get it back again.

The best lesson I received and not knowing I received it, was the love of my parents and grandparents because that's really stood me in good stead. I can laugh at everything. I don't hold anger too long, and I'll keep working and dig my heels in and be stubborn when I need to. So that's the only thing, that's the best lesson. If I can get that across to some young people it's the best way to live.

I think people need to live their life and don't worry about me, I'll be gone! *(Laugh)*

More stories: Uncle Eddie Lobban was short and real dark and he had white hair. Every

time I seen Uncle Eddie he never had shoes on. He went away to Coffs Harbour once and when he come back he had this immaculate suit on, brilliant it was. Lovely waist coat, lovely trousers but only one thing wrong. He had no shoes. He come back and got married for a week, now this was at the end of his life. But that was Uncle Eddie. A couple of stories about Uncle Eddie that people don't know. He went to court once and they said to him, 'Edward George Lobban, were you inebriated with intoxicating alcohol on a certain day?' and Uncle Eddie looked at the judge and said 'Uh?' and the bailliff leaned over and said to him 'was you drunk last Friday?'. And ol Uncle said 'oh yeah, yeah, I was drunk'. Now that was a funny story when it was told but you got to remember that uncle Eddie spoke 3 languages and English wasn't one of them. Wasn't a real great one but a lot of people think someone was ignorant but Uncle Eddie wasn't ignorant.

We went down as kids down to Blackbutt Road down Old Bar Road and Uncle Eddie was sittin' over there under a tree. He'd just knocked this tree over with all the bee hives in it and he was sittin' there eatin' honey and all the bees were all over his head right down his backside. Now Uncle Eddie Lobban never been taught by white man the ways of the bees but he knew em anyway. And he kept waving to us boys to come over and eat but we wouldn't go near him. We was frightened, scared of bees, we never seen this before. There was Uncle Eddie pitch black, all these bees like a big wig going right down from the top of his head right down his backside, sittin there eatin honey just like that. I never seen anything like it, oh it was great.

There's another story about Uncle Eddie. Walking home from the pictures from Taree and heard this squish, squish noise behind him when his walking and he stopped and looked around and the noise stopped. Then he kept walking. Squish squish, and the next minute Uncle Eddie took off and he could hear this thing behind him squish squish he run all the way home. He rushed in the door and said 'oh, ghost after me'. He went to walk round the table and he heard squish squish, behind him. And you know what it was, it was the bottom of his trousers dragging on the ground, lots of laughter. But that's what he was, Uncle Eddie was like that, he was scared. Cause down at Stitts Creek we were told there was old tusk lady. They reckon the old tusk lady was there to catch anyone coming home at night in the dark and if you walked home she'd get ya! And there's

also another story about Long George. Long George would come chasing ya and when ya run away and look behind and see him coming, he seemed to grow taller. He'd start off about 3 or 4 foot and gettin about 6 foot tall chasing ya. These was the stories going around amongst our young people back in them days. I don't know if the elders put these stories around to frighten us or not but we wouldn't go near Stitts Creek!

I remember my grandfather telling me about when he used to go to Forster. Grandfather Ronnie Maher used to go to Forster punt! And the coppers chased him out there and caught up with him on the punt and tried to arrest him. So my grandfather chucked him over board, and when the policeman got back to shore my grandfather was gone. Oh some tricky fellas in the old days!

There was another old bloke named Uncle Joe Simon. He drove to Forster and he had this little green pick-up and he took all these black fellas in the back with him. They had an accident and there was all these black fellas laying all over the road. This car come

along an the bloke said 'oh stay there, I'll go get a ambulance' and when he came back the car was gone and there wasn't a black fella to be seen. They disappeared, they wasn't going to hospital.

When we was kids our parents used to fix all our sores up, boils and everything. Then what happened the manager brought in a white midwife to look after families at risk. The only problem was soon as this white lady showed up, no black fellas went near their houses. When she came to our house we wouldn't go there till she left. Our mother was in hospital but we weren't going to have nothing to do with no white woman. Things have changed since then, I mean we work together now but back then we were scared of white people. ♦

FOOTNOTE: Mr John Clark was awarded the Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Honours list in 2004 for his services to the indigenous and non-indigenous communities of the Manning Valley



or not but that's what we called him, Sugar Can) from Gloucester. He used to smoke this big pipe and could remember that and he looked after us, cause the welfare was chasing us because we were all fair and they tried to get us and put us away.

Mum was from around here. Dad was from down Parramatta - he was a white man. I lived in Purfleet all me life. I seen funny little things, bad things, good things. But they were the good ol days, not like today. They're at one

another's throat today.

AUNTY BARBARA CLARKE OAM

I didn't know my grandparents, only me mum and dad and family. Mum sort of reared us up by herself. Her and dad split up but they were friends and we got on very well. She was a good mum, best mum Ive ever known. I remember the time when she got us cause the welfare was after the fair kids. She hid us, took us away out of Purfleet way up in Barrington Tops where this old Indian bloke was, Mr. Choodjican (I don't know if I'm saying it right

Oh, I just tried mucking around one day. One afternoon after they had a big turn out, out there and they had all that hessian around, stopping people from getting in because they were paying to get in to see the Corroboree and Uncle Charlie Edwards was the old devil. He had the devil's suit and Uncle Eddie Lobin, they used to call him Nuggett, and he was a big chief sitting in this bark humpy on the stage

and they had a really good time there and a lot of the people from Taree and all over came and watched. So I was a bit interested in this grass skirt they had, this bag hessian skirt, so I put it on. The next day, near the open fire, and blow me down, I went up in flames! I can still remember Uncle Charlie Edwards and Auntie Chris, that's mum's sister, they used to live with us, he came out trying to put the fire out. 'Stead of rolling me around in a blanket, he was patting me, making it worse. There was a few other funny little things I could tell ya but I don't want to say it cause, he was in bed, you can imagine and he came out with no clothes on, rolling me around and patting me, trying to get the fire out. But in those days no-one really noticed anybody. They didn't take any notice, not like today. If you do anything like it today, they take notice of you.

When I got married to me husband, Tommy Clarke, we got married out at Purfleet in that old Lands Council building, that white one. We had a double wedding, Shirley, my sister and Rex Morris and from that day, I never stopped work. I worked all me life. If it's bean picking, pea picking, digging trenches I've done it. I've been there and I've done it, with my husband. He used to double me on his bike and we used to go out looking for work. They were good days, good times. We'd go corkwood cutting but once I got a leech on me I didn't go back cause I forgot to take salt with me that day. So to me, they were good days I really totally enjoyed it. We never sat around, we worked all the time. He used to get work on the farms. I used to go down and help him. So mum got on to us one day because he used to double me everywhere when we used to go working, on the bike and I was about 8 months pregnant and she had a few words with me. 'You're not getting on that bike no more Barbara. Keep off it.' So those days, they were good. I remember my friend, Esther Saunders. She was a really good friend to me and when she passed away it was very sad. She got run over actually, out there, up on the hill (at Purfleet when the Pacific Highway passed right through the community). She was a good friend.

There was times when we used to always have dancing and there was Susie Russell's father, he was the M.C. and we used to have all old dances that were going then. Rex and Bronk Morris used to play the piano and everybody used to always be there on time, none of this black fella's way now. At Purfleet where they play football now, Shirley and Daryl used to live and Sharon Simon. The hall was just up on that park there. We used to have great times there, it was lovely. All sorts of

dances they used to have, the Purfleet band they used to have. They played guitar and ukulele, all sorts. There was Joe Simon and a lot of them play there but it was really good. Then, Uncle Charlie and Auntie Chris, they was the main ones up dancing all the time and I remember Dicky Simon, he was an artist, he used to do all the paintings. He used to do some lovely paintings too and everybody used to rush Dick cause he was the best dancer of them all. All the women used to fight over him but he was there for everybody. He'd have a turn with everybody dancing.

So it was lovely, a good turnout. Yeah we'd go to all hours and after that, the Morris' used to live over not far from that hall, tin place and after the dance we used to go up there and have sing songs. There was Rex and Ivan Morris and Peter and Beryl, poor dears they passed on now. But Annie Morris and Jim Morris, that's their father, they used to have lovely times, sing there till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning cause they never used to have their meals until around about 9 o'clock.

Poor old Annie, she was a great one for making dampers and she wouldn't let anyone have anything to eat until she made the dampers up, that high a stack. And she'd sing out, 'come on, come and get it' and as soon as they finished that meal then they'd get the music out and sit outside with the fire and have sing songs all night.

I'm very proud of my family, girls got away from Taree. There's only one girl here now and that's Rhonda, but that's all my girls. They all own their own home and I'm really glad they got away. They work, they got good jobs, not short of a quid and apparently my son out at Dubbo now, he bought his own place. I got em off from Purfleet. When we got off of Purfleet we done very well in town.

We bought this old place in Taree in Muldoon Street and they all said we were silly buying it but Tom and I, we done a lot of work to it. I was in cement out the front, up to me ankles, helping him do the patio. We done a lot and we had Rotary and Lions and then they all came over and gave us a hand when we moved into Taree. They helped us out and there was Mr. Shannon, he was the schoolteacher. We had a lovely time and that was only a two bedroom house when we bought it. I had 10 children but we made it into a four bedroom house by the time we finished it. We had good memories there we didn't want to move out, but we did. I think we done the best move. It's nice up here (Wingham), we like it.

The best lesson I ever learnt was to respect your elders and never back chat em. Always go to school when you're told to. My

mother never had that problem. Mum had meself, Shirley, Nina, Norma, Dulcie and Len Mitchell, four girls and one boy and I had ten. I'm not sorry I had ten. I'm very proud of my ten children. My eldest son got killed in a car accident coming home from Wingham one night. I was waiting on him down at Taree Bowling Club cause he said 'I'll see you there mum', and we waited, and waited and I said: 'There's something wrong, I want to go home' so Tom said, 'come on let's go home then'. Sure enough, as soon as we got home the police knocked on the door. It was about me son. I said: 'don't tell me, I know, don't tell me'. That was a terrible night. I went round with bitterness in me heart about this fella that done it. But they got their justice, I didn't have to do it.

I'd like to be remembered for being there for everybody. I like to help in any way I can. If anyone rings me now, you can't stop me, I'm gone. I don't care what time of night it is I'm here for em.

I received the Order of Australia (OAM). I got this telegram from all different ones you know, Prime Minister, you name it I got it from all walks of life. I got these telegrams, I got sick of opening these telegrams. I've still got em today. I've got em in a photo album and I was the first Aboriginal in this district to get one. I think I was the first in this area to receive an Order of Australia. That's for working with the children out at Purfleet at the pre-school. I started in '66, I got the Order of Australia, I think it was in '76 so, they were good days and children in those days, they respect everybody.

FOOTNOTE: Aunty Barbara Clarke was the first person to receive an Order of Australia (OAM) in the Queen's Honours list in 1972? This recognised her commitment to developing services for indigenous children in the Manning Valley.

UNCLE THOMAS CLARKE

Parents were Harry Clarke, came from North Haven, mum she was a Buckshiram. I don't know where she come from, Karuah or where. Actually she only had 2 kids, I think dad was married three times, that's what they say. My sister got drowned when I was only 2 year old, she'd be older than what I am, she'd be around 78 or 79.

Karuah was where I was born and bred, Karuah, and I come up here from there when I was 5 year old. I bin up here 70 years and I was up here when the ferry used to go across the river. We used to go to the pictures and used to cost me one and threepence to go to the

pictures. It was ninepence to go in and sixpence to spend. And that's what I say to these fellas today these young ones. We used to come out of the pictures and then we'd just get on the ferry and ride the ferry back and forth all night, stay there, cause there wasn't much traffic in those days.

Went with Kenny Saunders, go trapping rabbit, rabbit skins, cutting grass, paspalam grass, cutting corkwood, all that to just make a living. That was when I was in my late thirties just pushing into forties. The corkwood we used to take down to the factory at Croki. The grass, the paspalam we used to sell it to North's, even blackberries. We used to pick blackberries and sell them for, if we got 2 quid or a quid it was a lot of money in those days, even five bob.

I went to school at Purfleet and the highest class there was 4th class, then you was finished from there on, you was out. So when you got up to 4th class you was 15 year old you was finished school. After that I just went round with me father doing a bit of work, brush cutting and burning off and I was lucky to get 2 bob for that. I stayed with them (parents) till I turned about 16 then I got out. I used to stay with my Aunties (dad's sisters). I never stayed at home much cause I never got on real well with the step mother.

I worked on the railways, end of the '40s and the '50s. I used to get 7 pounds a fortnight. Then I finished there and went into the building trade and then we bought that place in Muldoon Street. That's where I shifted from Purfleet in '68. I was in there for about 14 - 15 years. I was married and had all the kids then, the only fella we lost was Errol, eldest fella, he got in a car accident. From there on they wanted to buy me out and that's how we finished up here in Wingham and bin up here 16 years. Wingham's nice an quiet, I think I'll be here till I die anyways. (*Laugh*)

When we was young we used to go killing birds and eating, like have a bit of salt in our pocket, make our own Shanghais, kill the bird and make a fire and eat the bird. Oh I used to get up to some silly things in those days, not like these fellas do today. We didn't know what drugs were like. We used to have clay stick fights, with a bit of clay on the oak thing, oh all those sort of things we used to get up to. Of course that's when the road used to go through Purfleet, the highway, and we used to swim in one of those dams up there on the mission. We used to go out to the kills, go wallaby hunting and all that.

I know the bloody school teacher was a woeful fella, yeah he used to come along and hit us. You'd be sitting in the class room and

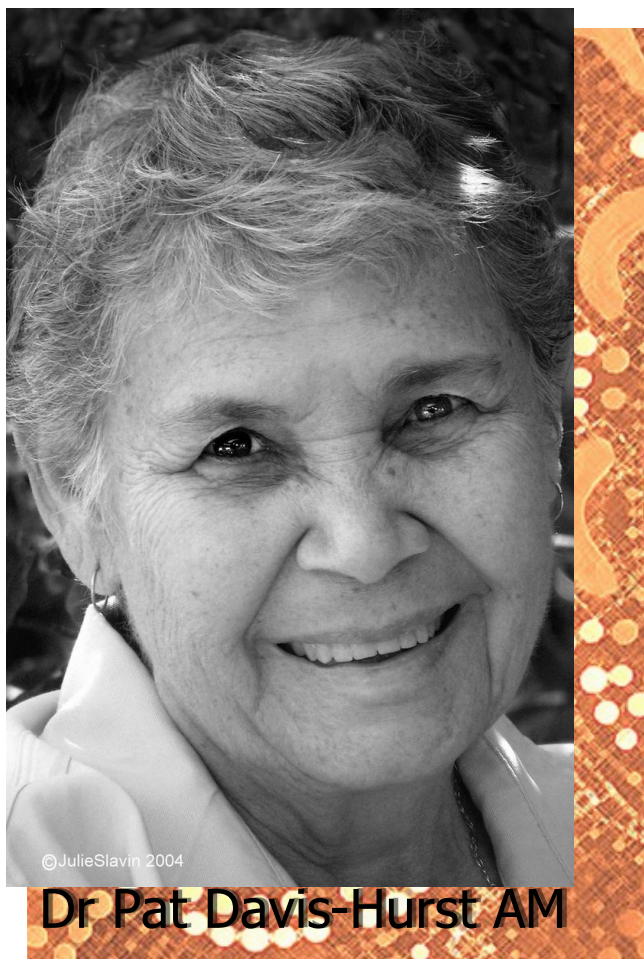
you only just had to look and he'd hit ya across the ear'ole and nearly lift ya off the seat. He'd throw the duster at ya, oh he was a cow. I broke me collar bone, ya know where the pre school is now, that's where we used to live around that area, I broke me collar bone. He kept me in the school, I was in pain. Dr Stokes, he was the doctor, he plastered me all up. Oh young fellas in those days, I fell over an done it again, that's goin back in those days. Used to go by horse and sulky in those days to go to the pictures an you used to walk from Purfleet into the picture, to catch the ferry and up to go across. In the old days where the Council Chambers is now that was all little cottages all the way up there. There was an old boarding house on the other side where the big fig tree is, that's where the RSL is (moved 2004). Used to have Thompson's Corner, that's the one where the real estates are. Well Fogs pub is still there, that was there when I come up when I was a kid. That's going well back, that's in the '40s they come up in the end of the '30s I think, cause dad left me in Karuah and he come up here. He used to work on the Forestry down at Limeburners down towards Karuah. After that I sort of got out on me own, independent, then I got married to Barbara, been married for 54 years.

You can't teach em anything today, only thing I could teach em is keep em out of trouble, that's about all.

I learnt to respect the Elders. In the younger days, if you back chatted the Elders you'd got, you'd know what you got, you got a good hiding. Whereas these fellas, they back chat em and you can't do nothing about it, cause the law's a funny thing ain't it? You gotta pull em into gear sometime. I think the older ones, the fellas you try to pull into gear,

the young, the little fellas you try to teach them early but the older fellas, some of these fellas here today, oh 'well we know everything', that's what they go. They know this, they know that, and 'if you hit me I'll report you to police'. I don't know, why do they have to leave home, if the parents are very strict on them, if they don't learn they go an live on the streets. Why? Then the government's feeding them. It's like these unmarried women today, look how much money they getting', they get more than we do anyways. When I was on the dole I used to get 17 pounds 7 and sixpence a fortnight to keep my family going and these fellas today they get, well it's not a lot of money when you work it out, its not big money. They think it's big money but it's not, you don't get much for your dollar these days. I was paying a bike off 2/6p a week, 5 bob a fortnight I was paying off a push bike. That's what I say, I lived at Purfleet, finished my growing at Purfleet. Actually Dr Stokes said I had TB, they sent me to Waterfalls, I was in Waterfalls in the '40s yeah. I just come back when the Second World War started. They just give me treatment, wasn't much of a treatment because I used to get up and make beds every morning, so I jacked up on it and got out. I seen a lot of things in my time yeah. Me and this other fella was in there an I just got there that afternoon and they put me in the bed and one fella he died that afternoon. We went over the grave yard and they have the graves already dug, yeah just ready to put em in. That's my story.

I'd like to be remembered as one who kept me nose out of other people's business, just go along and do me own thing that I do. ♦



Dr Pat Davis-Hurst AM

I haven't got any memories of my grandparents, I barely remember my dad's mother, granny Laura. Mum's mum died early, she was only thirty six I think when she died, mum was only nine, long before my time.

My mum and dad were around, my mum died in 1992 and dad in 1982, she lived ten years longer than he did which is to be expected today in Aboriginal society.

Great memories of parents because I was reared up in the depression days. We remember the war years quite well as a lot of the Elders would, they're very vivid memories, some very sad times some good times. It wasn't all bad. Mum was one of the first, well I think, one of the first activists, rebels in Taree, cause she opened a few doors. She was the one sitting in the picture theatre where you had to sit in the first five rows, you wasn't allowed to sit in the back, paid the same fare but you had to sit in a very hard seat and look straight up at the screen, and this particular night she sat in the back with us and defied anyone to move her and of course a couple of the white women were screaming 'there's a nigger sitting in the back row in our seats!'. The manager came down with the usherette, I remember that, and asked her to move otherwise they'd get the police and throw her out. She said 'well you can try but I'm staying where I am cause I paid

the same fare as they did'. He put an argument for a while but finally he gave in and went away and never came back and from that time on everyone was allowed to sit in the back without any fuss, but still a lot of complaints from the white community as usual.

I was born at Purfleet in a humpy, well it's not the sort of humpy you see today like in the outback, a make shift building, dirt floor and I suppose you can't get anymore grass-roots than that.

I remember the ferry quite well because mum and dad used to have a sulky and horse, we'd go into the pictures when we had it, and tie the horse up at the other side, come across the punt to the pictures. It was a cold time, the wind was blowing across the punt and middle of the night when you're going home from the pictures it wasn't, but we coped, we put up with it. All the horses and sulkies stayed on the other side (Purfleet), quite a few of them had horses and sulkies then, which is a bit of a luxury cause later they had to sell their horse, sulkies, whatever they had to for food. Cause the men couldn't get work, they wasn't allowed to take jobs away from white people so they weren't allowed to work, only to work for farm products like eggs. Whatever the farm was growing at the time, that's what they were paid instead of money.

They were tough times but the Aboriginals' knew. They didn't expect anything else, any luxuries, because they battled all their life as they always did and of course if you're used to that sort of thing you cope. It's not like we were living in luxury and suddenly taken away then you miss it, that's when you have problems. So we didn't take things for granted.

Mum was born at Purfleet and Bert Marr was too. Couple of other people that I know of. My dad he came from the Port Stephens, Karuah area, that was where he spent most of his childhood in those areas, he was a Worimi man. My mum was Worimi, I'm Worimi, I'm not Biripi, no, but we do know the two tribes. You know they lived together in harmony the two tribes. They were both passive tribes, Biripi this side of the river and Worimi the other and of course Worimi was such a large tribe and large boundaries from the bridge right down through Port Stephens across Stroud and Gloucester and all them other places. Where Biripi's up this way Port Macquarie down to the bridge across to Nowendoc I think it's nearly out to Walcha right across there, yeah it's big areas.

There's lots of things I remember, I nearly drowned three times when I was a kid, I

was always terrified of water, you know water that I can't see the bottom of, I think a lot of people are like that always like to see the bottom. And boats, I don't like boats yeah, cause my cousin he pushed me out in a boat once and I drifted up the river screaming my head off. An my dad was running up the river bank almost having a heart attack and I must of been only eight years old at the time. He used to always play practical jokes, that was Lester Dumas my cousin. This was out at Saltwater. Another time I almost drowned down there and Eric Russell pulled my out by the hair of the head, I went down for the third time, oh we were about the same age.

I was working out at the medical centre. I was the founder of the Gillawarra Medical Service and we had the funding bodies down and, I don't know whether you know Bob Mazza, he was one of the field officers for DAA (Dept. Aboriginal Affairs) at Port Macquarie. He lived up there and they came down with another fella, Bob Draffin. We were having a meeting in the waiting room which is now the Old Land Council Office and this fella pulled up outside, he came walking down the track with a big coat on. We knew he had something under the coat. He pulled up at my car which I had locked, he tried the doors, he came around the side of the building, I said 'that fella's got something in that coat there', it was a sawn off shotgun. The DAA officers and all the other non Aboriginal funding bodies that were there, they all got under the table. Bob was with them and I said to Les (Pat's son) 'you'd better go, you sneak around that side and I'll watch him from here'. And of course Les did cause he was the Administrator at the time. He come behind him and held onto him, grabbed him from behind with the bear hug. Next minute police come from everywhere. There was about half a dozen cars, sirens going like something out of the movie, and all pulled up and drew out their guns and looked like something straight out of a movie and singing out, and Les was screaming too, 'I can't hang onto him, I can't hang onto him!'. He had this sawn off shotgun fell out of his coat, yeah loaded too, cause soon as Bob Mazza and all the others had their chance they took off straight for Port Macquarie and didn't stop till they hit home, (*lots of laughter*) they never came back. I thought that was funny but quite serious at the time, had a good laugh later.

We had a workshop going in our backyard when we were in Cowper Street. We had a granny flat there that we worked out of

and we had quite a few women and then we moved up to the Drive In Theatre when it was a youth centre (circa 1980s). We had quite a lot going up there, discos for the kids and lots of other workshops you know for adults. Had a lot of women who'd never touched a brush before but did some really wonderful work especially with ceramics. Of course it brought out their skills and showed what they can do. I improved too on it cause I've got a lot of paintings here now that I keep for myself, I've sold a few but I did it for my own pleasure. Ray, my husband, his work goes all over the world on commission.

There's so many lessons to pass on, I think that young people need to know and understand and listen to the Elders. Listen to their parents, and I hope the parents can give them good advice because I don't see any future for our leaders down the track if they don't take notice of what's happening around them now. And that's tolerance, and to help their parents all they can, not to be a problem and to do well at school. That's the main thing, stay at school and try to do, and be, as good as they can because that's the key to their future. I've always said that. You can't do anything without an education. You have to know what the politicians are talking about especially if you intend being involved in organisations down the track. Without that experience and bit of education behind you, you haven't got a hope.

I nursed my daughter until she died of cancer and I learned a lot out of that, how to be a better person yourself and be more tolerant to other people which I think I've been over the years anyway. But you can always strive to be better. Everyone can be a better person and I think I learnt that out of nursing my daughter and my mum and dad before they died cause you learn a lot about yourself as well as other people. I had six children, I lost Angela my youngest daughter at seventeen with cancer, I adopted Crystal when she was only six months old, she's seventeen now and of course Sally came into our care when she was one year old. She's eight now, we have an extended family now and they're all doing well, she is at school.

I don't know how people perceive other people, I hope it's always in good faith and good stead, always have a kind word for everyone. I think the code to live by is you wouldn't want anyone saying anything that you wouldn't want to be called yourself. I always say do unto others as you'd have them do unto you.

In 1992 I got a Member of the Order of Australia Medal, (AM)*. That was for all the community work that I put in over the years, nearly fifty years now. I was only twenty three when I started with the CWA to where I am today. Bob Mazza was there too, he was a good friend of mine, he was a wonderful man. That was the night they got the okay for the Olympic games in Sydney, the very night and we couldn't get any sleep cause car horns were blowing and people were cooing around the streets. Didn't feel too good the next morning I can tell you.

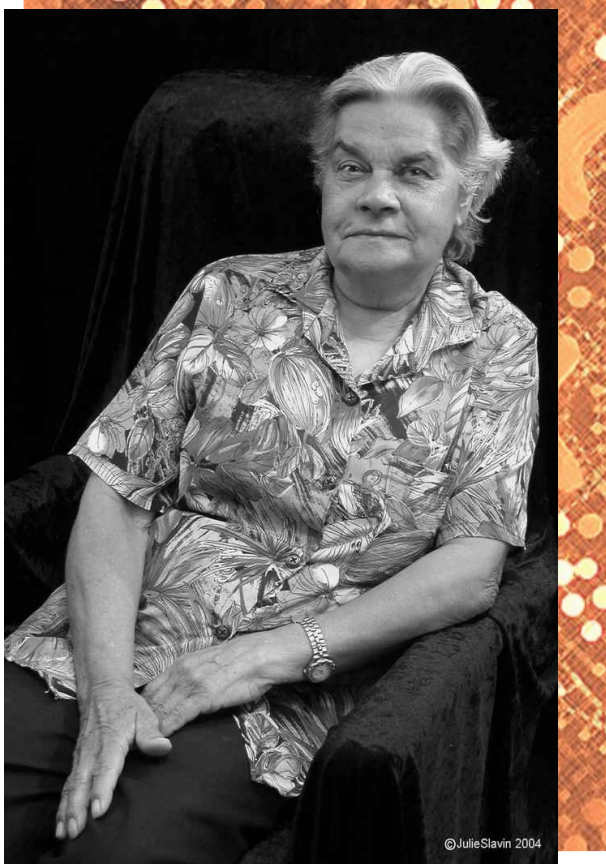
I got an honorary Doctorate of Letters just over twelve months ago now (2003) from the University of Newcastle which was quite a shock and just recently I got the local hero, which I'm a very reluctant hero I can tell you. I don't really like the title and for that reason I wasn't going to accept it.

The local Council now fly the Aboriginal Flag due to real people power, a real community effort on everyone's part because a lot of people were involved in it. I just organised the march, which wasn't a big deal you know, cause I was sort of used to that sort of thing. But I had a lot of help with Russell playing the didj with Jeremy, Bruce Spence on the bagpipes, it added that bit of touch to it all and it was a really mind blowing, really

wonderful, wonderful time. I think we made history on the day. Quite a lot has happened this year (2004) in lots of areas, lots of good things came out of it. Forster put their flag up without being asked and that came out of the rally, and flags were going up everywhere. I've got one flying here now on a permanent basis and lots of my friends, non Aboriginals are all putting theirs up outside their homes, they're getting a bit of flack but they said people'll get used to it. The flag issue was on TV 'A Current Affair'. There were calls from Brisbane, Tiga Bales did an interview a couple of times with me, Radio Redfern couple of times and I think Ralph even had a fax from the New York Times down at the Koori Radio. I said 'well you tell them to mind their own business cause they have their own bloody problems', that came from me. You know the way they treat the Negros over there, Hispanics and everyone else, they shouldn't be worried about ours. ♦

*FOOTNOTE: Dr Pat Davis-Hurst was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 1992 for services to the indigenous people of the Manning Valley. In 2003 the University of Newcastle honoured her with an honorary Doctorate of Letters for her research and presentation of indigenous history in the Manning Valley. She has also received numerous other awards for her tireless work on the community.

Betty Donovan



I've forgotten most of it. I had a great granddad, he was an Irishman, Gran's second husband Charlie Castledine and Margaret Mary Saunders was my mum and Kenneth my father. And granny Liza, she was fabulous in our kids days, that was dad's mum and our grandfather Herb, he got me all my jobs in Taree when I started to work, and my great grandad was Charlie Castledine and Granny Castledine. I went to school at Purfleet. I was born in Waratah, Newcastle and I was 2 years old when mum got married again, married someone from here and moved to Taree. Went to school and grown up here and left here when I was 21, got married and left never came back, of course only to visit.

We moved away when we got married because there's no work around in those days, when we were young, I've always had work and I worked in the hospitals, and as I said my grandfather got all my jobs for me. We walked in and out to Taree, in the morning early and back home in the afternoon, just domestic, cleaning, in the hospitals and a few odd jobs in the houses, but they were too hard those jobs. They wanted you to do everything more or less. They made us work hard for our couple of

dollars, oh couple of shillings. It wasn't very much and we did a whole lot of ironing and washing, we were only young you know, young girls but when I worked in the hospitals it was really good. We had a very strict matron, if we didn't shine the taps and mirrors and everything we were made go back. But it was good training for us, least it learned us how to work and do things properly. A few of the girls worked, we all say the same thing, it was good. We were thankful because it was good training, cousin had worked in there, the baby hospital. I think I was 13, that was one of the funny things, I'm under the beds scrubbing the floors and the ladies are having their babies on the bed, and I was only 13 years of age then. I didn't see a lot but I heard a lot of screams and babies crying. That was one thing I've never forgotten, being there in the wards when they're having the babies.

(Betty married ..Donovan from Eungai Rail) and we lived at Stewarts Point for a long time till we starved and wore all our clothes out and had to pack up and go to Sydney. He was a truck driver down there for 35 or 40 years. We both worked the whole time we were in Sydney and very hard - you had to work hard when you got down there - did a lot of bush work before then picking peas and beans and clearing paddocks. There was not much money for that, cause they pay the Kooris what they thought what suited them in those days, wasn't standard wages. We got up into that part talking about proper wages it was happenin' in the big time then.

My husband worked on the containers trucks, and they sit down on the harbour nights and days waiting for the ships. When they went on strike to bring the containers in to take them where they had to go, he spent most of his time down on the harbour waiting for the ships to come in. They had heaps of jobs him and his brother.

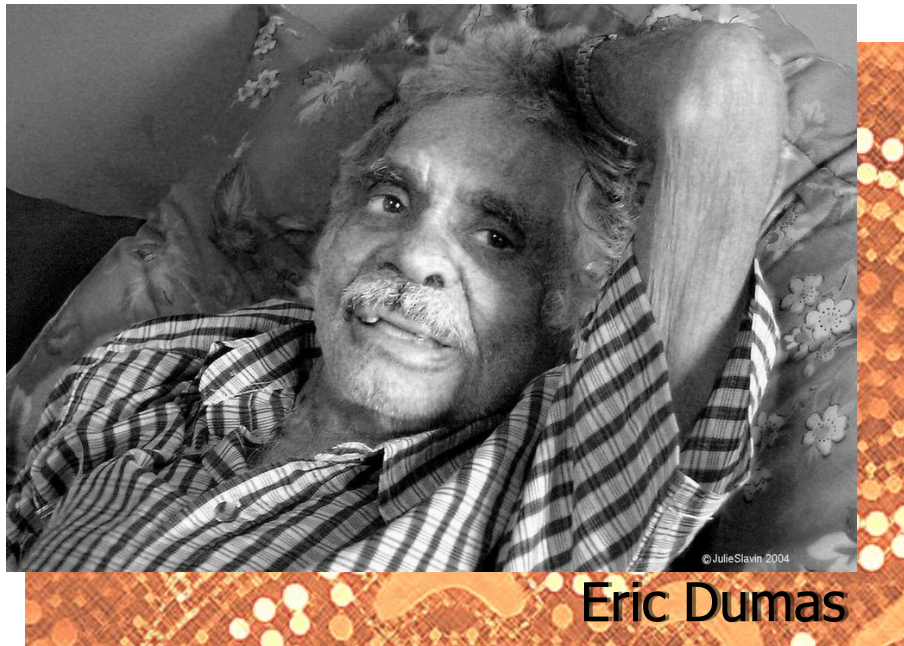
We moved down and lived in Paddington for four years, and Auburn for four years and finished up at Mount Druitt. We were down

there for going on 50 years. Happy to be home, I think I've been home for about 5 years now and the family came with me except one son who's still in Sydney. He said he wouldn't know what to do with himself when there's no work.

The art projects I've been involved in have been since I've grown up and came back, there was nothing much for us in those days when we were kids. Only thing I can remember is walking down to the creeks every day swimming. Apart from that there wasn't much going, a few concerts but not like it is today, they're into everything. We weren't included in any grown ups, we were told to go away and not listen to grown ups talk. We didn't do much at all, there was a few concerts and corroborees and choirs. Sunday school and church was our main activity sort of thing, our pleasures. We had a lot of religious stuff when we were kids. I loved Sunday school of course and I did love my church as well, fellowship as we called it. We had a day for the girls' fellowship and enjoyed all that. Most of the time it was fun and games going swimming and playing on the football field with all the other kids, that was a great time for us as that's all we did, nothing much.

I tell my children a lot. They're into everything, they do more than I ever did, my sons and daughters. One's very creative, he sings and writes his own songs and plays guitar and the other one's a workaholic. He works on the railway in Penrith. The other boy lives in Armidale, he's always around when there's a sing song on.

I'd like to be remembered as a good person, friendly, outgoing. I help my daughters most of the time with their children, baby sitting, I did a lot of that and grandchildren and now great grandchildren so I get involved in most of that. ♦



She looked after us real well in the old days, old wood fire place and all that stuff. She looked after us pretty well in Purfleet.

We used to go down Saltwater every Christmas, all our families, Aunty Marge, Pat Hurst and her mother, always have Christmas together down saltwater camping. It was pretty good then in them days. Every year never miss. That was all bush then, no tracks in there then, little boy right up to teenage. We're a pretty close family, Marge Marr and Uncle Baldy Marr, Harry Clarke, all them old people from Purfleet, they all passed away. It was pretty good in my day anyway, never heard of drugs or anything like that. Me father never used to drink then, only in his old age around about 70 I think, started drinking, never used to drink. Grog free zone all that stuff it was pretty good, my teenage days. School days, went to Purfleet school, we weren't allowed in white school us Aborigines, just had to do the school out there, learn some stuff.

Forster and Zelma, Eric's parents.

Mum and dad done a good job for us. Used to play football with Forster Hawks, looked after us pretty well. Those days were harder they reckon but we got on pretty right.

The old fellas, Nuppy, James, we'd be down the football ground playing football or running around, if we weren't home before dark, these boomerangs would go flying over our head. We had to be home before dark, before that sun set. If we wasn't home, 'swing' the old boomerang come flying over the head. Pretty strict those days, we had to be in by dark or the old elders give us a flogging. That's what they want these days, these kids out all night. Changed a lot isn't it?

Me dad used to whistle, two or three

whistles, if we weren't home by then we'd get a flogging. Pretty strict then. Yeah had to be home before dark, pick up a load of sticks for the next morning to make a fire to cook breakfast, get an arm full of sticks to take home with ya.

Main one, take notice of your mother and father an when they gone you'll miss em, you miss em so much. You should be good to your mother and father. Take notice of mum and dad, be good to your old people. I used to always like sittin' down and listenin' to, tellin' yarns and stories with the old fellas, that's what I enjoyed most. Be good to your old people.

I'd like to be remembered as being good, that's about it. I don't think I done anything bad to anyone in my life. Kenny, Nugget and Mick and I went to school together you see, when we used to go to Purfleet, old school, and we'd get drunk together. Never ever had an argument in all our lives, we been good friends, still good friends, poor old Mick, think we always will be. Cause we're pretty close together in our school days, growing up together, used to go huntin' together, we was pretty close. Mick, Jenny and me, Warner. We used to go camping up round Hillview, mostly there and up Nowendoc. Kangaroos, rabbits, yeah pretty good old days. Happy with my life, lots of lovely kids, 5 great grand children about 14 grandchildren, there's a few of them and 6 children. I have 2 sisters Maree and Jenny and 2 boys. ♦



Maureen Gothcroft

and animals and all the creatures, I won't let the boys even come down and shoot around, I tell them to go.

So you were born here in Catalina?

No. I was born in Taree, but we didn't live here, we lived with grandmother for a long time and then we went to live in Bulahdelah. All through my school years we lived in Bulahdelah, we went to a little school at upper Mywor, it's called. A little bush school, we went there till I was able to go to high school.

Not many, none of my grandfather, and none of my other grandfather either. My father originally came from Cabbage Tree Island. I've never ever met grandfather Bolt, but grandmother Bolt used to always hide me. If I got into trouble she would always hide me under the bed. *(laugh)* And I still remember mum's mum, I remember her, she had beautiful long white hair like Aunty Irise's, and she used to tuck it underneath her legs and sit on it. So not long before she died I think they cut it, and they plaited it and Roy's father had it for a long time, and I don't know what he did with it, whether he sold it or what happened to it. But grandmother, I can remember her taking us up around the hill one day and we found a little sugar glider. So she got it down out of the tree and she said 'I'll let it go tonight' and she put him out in the loquat tree and he was gone in the morning. So he must have got back into the bush some how, but we weren't allowed to kill things or anything like that, she forbade us to kill things. She used to say one day we will want that, we will need it.

What did you eat?

We killed some ducks and sometimes the ibis that fly around here, they're good souped up, lovely. I was sitting down one day at the back of my house and there was a lot of noise and I came out and said 'don't shoo the birds away', and they said 'are they your chooks Nan?', and I said 'no they're not my chooks' I said. But I like the birds to come around my yard. We've got ducks, we got water hens, those birds, the galahs, the cockatoos all come into our backyard because now we feed them and we run out of seed, *(laugh)* when it comes to the end of the fortnight. Yeh, I love the birds

I went to high school in Bulahdelah, I didn't go to high school here. For a while when I was younger I lived with my grandmother. Then mum took me and we lived in the bush then. We lived in Bulahdelah till I was about fifteen, sixteen, then we came back here to Forster to live, we lived in the old place for a while. Then the old lady down Helen Street, she only used to be a visitor, she used to come every year. So this year I was out getting blackberries in the backyard of her house, and we were throwing this great; not a three-be-two, I think it was a six-by-two, *(laugh)*, it was real thick anyway. We were throwing it up on the blackberry bushes, and she came out and said to us, 'girls, you doing that, you'll get injured'. 'No we're right,' we said to her.

Anyway we offered to get her some blackberries, so we got a dish full of blackberries and handed them over the fence to her. Anyway, she came to see mum, I didn't know she was there until I walked in - and she said 'would you like to work in Sydney?'. I said 'yeah, I wouldn't mind'. I went to Sydney when I was fifteen, I worked for Mr and Mrs Gunning in Castlecrag, I looked after her two little boys.

Well I was used to looking after the kids you see. When we were kids, we used to have to help one another, right down the road you know. We used to have to help one another get washed, get dressed and all that. We used to have to do chores, we didn't just put our hands out for money. We had to work. I chopped wood, I washed up, I made beds and everything. Even when I was thirteen and that. I got my last floggin' when I was thirteen. My father seen us talkin' to some boys, that's all I got my hidin' for. We were down the street and dad spotted us talkin' to some boys. I come

home, I wasn't expecting to get a hiding, I got knocked down as soon as I got in. My father followed me to my bedroom and bashed me with a strap. He said he should have killed me. I just laid there and I said 'go ahead'. When I was sixteen I ran away from home. I ran to Sydney and I stayed with my Aunt. I got a job down there in a dry-cleaning place in Redfern. I worked there for about two weeks, then the bloke used to ask me to stay after dark, to stay after hours when everyone was gone. Aunt Miriam, I was staying with her then, she said to me, 'no, you don't stay after everyone's gone, you tell him that you've got something else to do and get out of it, talk your way out of it'. So I did, and then one night he asked me again would I stay? I told Aunt Miriam, and Aunt Miriam said 'no, when you go in today you tell him you're leavin'. I said to him, 'I'm leaving' I said 'I'm not comin back'. Aunt Miriam said 'you're not goin' to work there no more'. So I came home then. Yes, Aunt Miriam did always used to look after me.

And then I came home and went back to Sydney. I must have been seventeen. I worked for a lady called Mrs Nelson, and I looked after their two daughters, in Koraleigh. It's out near this side, Hornsby way, Turramurra. I worked for her for a while, then I left and I came home. When I came home I worked at the Tudor (*unsure of Tudor*) for a while, after that I went back to Sydney. I was going back to get another job and I met my husband in Woolloomooloo Pub, where I shouldn't have been. (*laugh*) I was only seventeen then. I can remember a lot of things about when I went to Woolloomooloo. That's when they had the first cigarette machines, and I didn't know how to work them, and he came over and he worked the machines. So I was getting cigarettes for my Aunt because I never used to smoke. So we got in together and we've been together ever since, except when my husband once stepped right out of line, I grabbed my kids, 'bye bye', I took everything. No way were they going to treat me like that. I mean I was down there, we were living in Granville, way out where I was, it was lonely because I couldn't get to see my relatives or anything. And I used to travel all the way to La Perouse to see my Aunt, that's Roy's mother, and then my cousins. It used to kill me every time I had to go that far.

I only had Pauline, so I took her with me one day out to La Perouse, my Aunt's singing out, we were in watching TV, she was singing out to me, 'Maureen!' And I said, 'Yeah!'. She said, 'Do you own this kid out here?'. I said, 'Yeah Aunt, a little girl!' She said, 'Yeah!'. She said, 'come and have a look at your little girl'.

She was covered from head to toe in black boot polish. She had got the black boot polish from my Uncle's things and just covered herself all in black boot polish. She was lucky that I'd taken a change of clothes with me. (*laugh*) So we bathed her, (*laugh*), and she's the daughter now that lives out at Nabiac, that's Pauline, she's older than Anita(?). Look, laugh mate, you couldn't help it. She said next time she comes, she said, dress in black before you bring her out. She was covered in polish, and I had to wash and change her and then we went home. We used to spend most of the day with them, I'd make plans to go and spend all day with them if I could. Most of the time Hans used to be away, because he worked on the railway then. He was guards-foreman. Hans is German. When he'd go away, he'd stay for maybe two, three days then travel back with the train. I used to go do my visiting them times when he wasn't around see. Then he started to go out and not come home. Then one night he went out and came home just covered in blood, and I thought 'oh my god', I thought he'd fallen off the train and got hurt. It turned out the some of the boys at Redfern there tried to rob him of his pay. But he'd already been home and given me the pay so I knew they didn't get anything. They had knocked his front teeth out and everything you know. So after that when he started running around, leaving me all on my own, not coming home, not bothering to call or anything, I said 'It's time for me to pack up' so I just packed my girls up. I had Anita and Pauline and I had a little one, I lost him. I just went to the bank and withdrew all my money, everything that was there. Packed me girls up and the boy and come home. And I've been here ever since and I haven't moved. After I lost the little boy we went to Kingscliff to live for three years. And then I had Regina - no - I had Gine (*Regina*) before I left home - ahm, (*pause*)- I was pregnant with the boy I lost a couple of years back. When Regina was born Pauline walked in and said 'mum she looks like the milk-man'. She was laying on the bed and I said, 'don't say that', I said, 'she's your sister'. Because Regine's fairer, she's a lot fairer, she has the pretty blue eyes, Regina.

How many children did you have?

I had nine all together, I raised seven of them. Oh that's nothing, there's twelve of us, eleven, twelve of us. But you imagine these kids today, they have one and two kids and they're stressed out, they can't cope. I mean, that's ridiculous, I always say to them, 'look, sit down and think about things first'. Now I'll tell you a story, there's a woman in Bulahdelah, she's had 23 kids, 23 kids, to the same man. And I think,

I'm not sure, but I think her name's in the *Guinness Book of Records*. And she was named mother of the year, oh, about ten, twenty years back. I said 'look, how do think that woman coped with all her kids, when youse have only got two and three kids and youse can't cope with them'. I mean, they didn't have TVs in those days, no washing machines, no vacuum cleaners.

The older ones looked after the young ones?

That was the way it was, you were always brought up to help your siblings that came behind you. And whatever clothes that you grew up with, handed down to them and I can remember that. Dad worked, dad worked very hard in the saw-mills, in one at Bulahdelah but it was out at Marquell.

Was he a Bolt?

Yeah. Dad worked in the saw-mills most of his life until we came to Forster, and he got on the council for a while. And then after a while they put him off and he never worked after that. And dad went home, we said go home, and dad was lonely and I said 'go home dad and see your sisters', cause dad had one, there's three I think - two still living now - one's just passed away not so long ago. 'Yeah daught,' he said 'I'm goin home' he said, 'but I won't be back'. We lost dad that year. He never came home, so he's buried in Ballina. So we go up every now and then. Dad came from Cabbage Tree Island, so all those people from Cabbage Tree Island are related to

us. *(laugh)*. Yeah Dad's a Bunjinna, Dad used to talk with Aunty Daff. You know who Aunty Daff is? Aunty Daff is Pursie's grandmother. Now when she used to live here, her and dad used to always talk in a lingo, they never talk English. They spoke in a lingo to each other. Because Aunty Daff didn't come from here, she came from Nambucca. So I think that dad's tribe and her tribe they sort of all spoke the same lingo. Otherwise dad wouldn't have been able to speak to her. They'd sit down and have a yarn in their own lingo, and I always wished I could have picked up some of the same lingo. But no, I think it was too hard for me to twist my tongue around it. *(laugh)*

No no, nothing like that. But I love fishing, I go fishing whenever I can, but I haven't been lately because I've been sick, but when I can go I go.

Do you go beach fishing?

Beach? Ah, mainly rock fishin', but I'm getting on now and my legs won't hold me up when I get up on the rocks, I get shaky, *(laugh)*. You know how you get, and I don't like going rock fishin' now. So I go down around the lake wherever it's low, I can get on the rocks and that.

Have the fish changed?

No I don't think so. ♦



Les Jarrett

Kinchela Boys Home. There were girls and boys at Bombaderry.

All the Timburys from La Perouse, that's all my people, ever done was make boomerangs. One of the brothers - mum was the only sister - all the brothers used to make the boomerangs. One of the brothers used to make little brooches and he had me helping him make the brooches, that's how I learnt to use sandpaper and everything. That's after I came out of the Home. Warren was next to me, he was 3 yrs old, I was 6 and Merv was eighteen months old, one and a half, when we were put in Bombaderry Childrens' home.

I don't have any memories of my grandparents, only my grandfather, Joe Timbury from La Perouse. I was taken away when I was 6 years old, me and two other brothers. We were down at an Aboriginal mission called Wreck Bay. They took us to Bombaderry Children's Home and then to

Things I remember before I went to Bombaderry. When I went to school, all the other boys had sisters I was the only one without a sister, you know, used to make me feel no good. I remember that. Sit on me own all the time. We weren't at Wreck Bay for long cause we were taken from down there. You see

Mum and Dad had parted and Mum had got in with one of the blokes from down at Wreck Bay. They didn't want us, I suppose, or something so they put us in a home. Apparently, I found out later, Mum and a couple of her brothers were reared up in Bombaderry Children's Home. I do remember my grandfather. He got me out of the Home. He got me out. Merv (brother) was sent to a sheep station. He ended up 28 years shearing. He became a pretty good shearer. Warren was sent to a cattle station and grandfather got me home. I was in Kinchela Boys Home, sent up there. Six weeks and I packed my little swag and I hoofed! You see he'd stuck there all the time all those years. So I said 'No, I'm going'. You see, one fella was going over to Victoria so I ended up going there.

I was nearly 18 when I came out of the Boys' Home. Six weeks with my grandfather. He had me in Perry's Parking Stations, garage sort of thing, washing cars and that. An one fella was going over to Victoria. He asked me would I like to go and travel about. And I said 'Yeah'. In them days we just got a sugar bag, a blanket, a change of clothes, whatever, and walked. Yeah me granddad he got me out.

It was hard in Kinchela. In winter time they changed your job, you were allowed to change your job every month. One month you'd be out milking the cows the next month you'd be working in the dormitory or you'd be in the kitchen or the laundry or you'd be out in the gardens. Winter time you'd get frosty mornings up there and you'd never have shoes or boots. On a cold frosty morning you'd have to go and get the cows in from the back paddock. We had to milk them too. They had three boys at a time on the dairy, 40 odd cows. Can't think of the best job, all the jobs were good. You do a bit of everything, see you're out the back paddock with barbed wire fences you'd make, learnt to cook too in the kitchen, see. Learnt farm work, ploughing, they had 2 draft horses in them days. We learnt a lot of things.

And every Christmas time they'd take you out to Smoky Cape Beach, near the Lighthouse there, and the huts there, the boys would stop down there, sometimes for 6 weeks. Learn to fish and catch worms on the beach and that. The older boys would teach all the young ones. OH THAT'S MY LIFE. You learn to do just about anything, you know, grow vegetables and this and that.

I'm glad that I was in there, in one sense you know. I learnt to work and how to do things. I went back to La Perouse to see my mum.

Lesson to pass on would be to learn to

work. I could walk past a tree and just grab a leaf and play a song out of it, or get a couple of spoons out of the drawer and play the spoons. A lot of people can't do that, you try to show people, they can't do it.

A lot of people in town will remember me, yeah, because a lot of white people in town I made little brooches for. And I worked for years up the dump. I used to help a lot of people unload their vehicle. I worked there for nothing, I just used to sell the scrap metal.

I had 6 kids, 3 girls, 3 boys, they're up at Bowraville, up Bowra. After I come out of the home and start to get around all the places working, yeah I travelled about. There wasn't any dole in them days, so down around the south coast, a lot of farmers used to grow beans and peas and little gangs you'd go picking beans and peas. The girls and boys would camp in the barns, yeah it was a good life, Oh sometimes I'd have a spell from that and come up north, come back to Kempsey. This was after a few years travelling back and forth, even went out to the fruit in Griffith and them places. Then I was at Kempsey, a mate of mine said 'I'm goin over to Bowraville for a weekend I got a girlfriend over there do ya wanna come over for a run?', 'Yeah right oh'. Anyway, went over there got mixed up with the boys there, met a lot of people that knew my parents, because my father come up that way an that. I got in with some of the boozers there an got drunk, next morning I look an they said he went back to Kempsey, he left me there. So ended up in Bowra for 30 years, 6 kids, yeah ended up getting married there. From there I went down the south coast see, when the kids were old enough to look after themselves, cause I didn't like the way the missus was going. Everytime I used to go looking for work she'd put the maintainers on me. I was out west, I'd be all over the place on some job and I'd have to come back and do 17 days, I done that, oh don't know how many times. I said 'when the kids grow old enough to look after themselves I'm off'. So I went straight back to Nowra, and I'd always come up here pull in now and again, (Purfleet) had a lot of friends here. So when Lorna's old man died she asked me to move in here, good place close to fishing, good home. Must be about 16 years now.

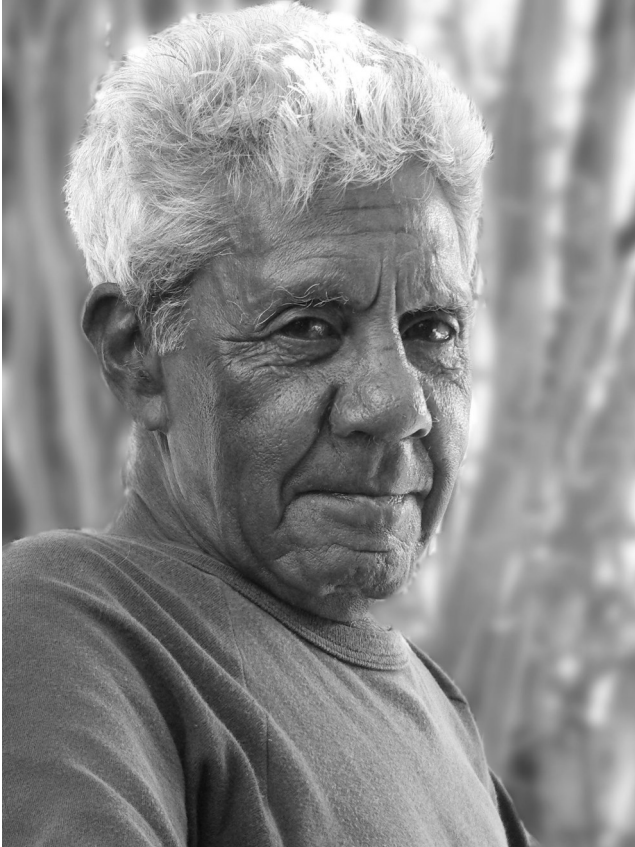
In regard to boomerang brooch making Les said: I got nothing to do, I just get a bit of board (wood), get sandpaper I got a saw there, get a bit of board saw a bit off, cut it. In fact, I started one this morning. I like to be moving, you know exercise, they reckon I'm mad. I like

to walk home from town, sometime they pull up and I'd say 'no keep going I'm all right'. I'm 77 now, do our own lawns, yards, be the cleanest yard on the mission wouldn't it?

I walk through the arcades an shops in town they say 'hello Les' give me a little wave, oh I feel real good. A lot of people want to pay

me I say oh no just give me a little hug.

I only make these little brooches. My uncle taught me, mum's brother. That's all they do at La Perouse. I don't sell any. Anyone who does me a favour I make em for em. All over town I bin making em. ♦



Herb Maher

My great granny, I looked after her, me and me sister Ida Maher, or Ida Ritchie which ever you want to call us. Before she was married and mum and dad, my mother and father, we had to look after our grandmother, Granny Castledine, she died in the house. Uncle Donal Ritchie, he come over from Kempsey and we looked after him till he died, and our other uncle, Sid Saunders, and we looked after him till he died. That was the way of the young people, to look after the Elders because that was our job.

I can remember my grandmother, she used to sneak away, she's always sneaking away to Singleton and we had a little dog named Cliffy and every time she'd take off the dog'd start barking, following her. We'd knew she was going. *(laugh)* We're looking all over the place for her and couldn't find her and when we come back she'd be sitting on the verandah with a big red hat on her head,

people from Old Bar brought her home.

Me Grandfather Castledine, he died long time before Granny died, I got no real recollection of what he used to do. He used to live up on top of the hill. Me brother Kenny Saunders, Mick and Nugget's and them's father they used to look after him.

Me Mother was named Elizabeth Maher. She married Digger Maher and divorced him and married Herb Ritchie from Kempsey and that's where I was born, Kempsey me and my sister Ida. We was both born in Kempsey Hospital. She was one of the best cooks you ever seen, on a Saturday night we'd come home, get on, have a few plonks and we'd go down the road and hook a couple of fowls off for Sundy dinner. *(Lots of laughter)* Now you gotten me telling all me secrets!

As I recall Uncle, you achieved great heights! Yeah, they come out ere one morning they brought a big truck out. They's looking for runners and they took us all up to Tinonee Road and they took off and left us there and we had to run all the way home. So I outrun most of them, the whole lot of them rather and the only reason I outrun em, I was hungry and wanted to get home for a feed. When I had a feed then I found out I got picked to run with the Olympic torch. That's true.

I used to make walking sticks, me brother Mick's father, Nugget's father and Kenny and them's father he taught me how to do it, I used to make walking sticks with a snake on it, snakes head hanging on the handle so you can walk around with it.

I went to Sydney and I worked on sky scrapers, worked under ground in the tunnels, helped put the tunnels through under the ground. I never done much but I was there working on a jack hammer gang. I always did work with a jack hammer. Me and me brother Bert Ritchie, Manual Ritchie, we all worked down there. We worked there for most of our lives then we came home to the bush.

Too many (funny stories), too many to explain. I seen Mick, Harry Saunders and Richard Morcome, we was up there rabbiting an Mick put his ferret in there to hunt the rabbit out up the log and the rabbit was

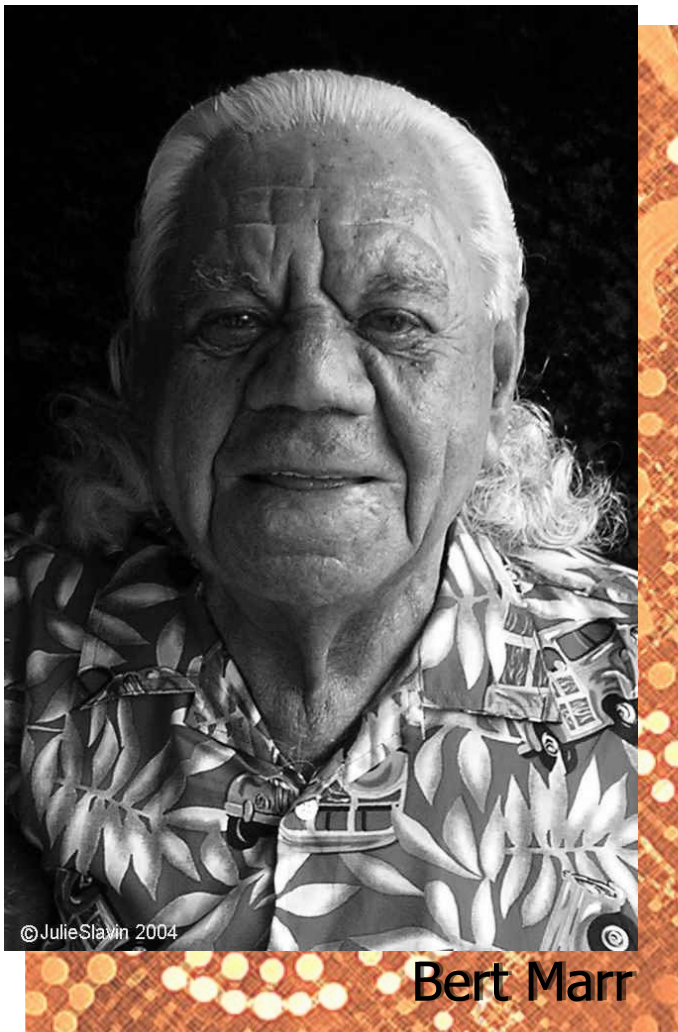
stubborn and he wouldn't come right out so Mick he said 'wait till that rabbit pokes his head out and shoot him'. The rabbit poked his head back in and the ferret put his head out and he shot him in the head, *(lots of laughter)* and Mick chased him down the road.

I'd just like em to be who they are and what they are, not try to be somebody they not. They Aborigine and should be proud of ya colour and ya country, nothing more nothing less.

To learn to look after meself and work for meself. I never took a hand out and I never

will. I'm a pensioner, but I got the rights to get that I think. I'm 64, be 65 this year (2004). I worked all me life and paid tax, I never worked for nothing and never wanted for nothing and I reared my family up and that's the way it was.

Ge e that's a hard one ain't it? I'd like to be remembered for who I am and what I stood for and the way I lived all my life. I don't shunt no responsibilities. I help people out when I can and I always will. But me I was reared up to be a man and I always will be. Thank you. ♦



Bert Marr

I remember a lot of my grandparents. Rory and Regie McClemments told my grandfather Uncle George Russell to shift his family up here (Purfleet Mission). He said 'George you can build your house up here at Purfleet and settle your family in'. Mum and uncle Arthur, uncle Bill, all the Russell family, my granny, granny Susan, they lived over there in the first place. They were first people to come out here. All the rest came in later years, all the rest of the families, to what we got

today, all the big families.

We used to have very good times you know, my granny was the midwife for the tribe. She's the one what brought me from my mother, done me in the tribal way. My gran, she was a lovely woman and also a great teacher

I remember a lot about the old people, the Lobans, McClemments, all them you know. Katie Davis, all them all the old people, we used to have really good times.

We used to play a lot of sports. Every month, they'd have sports here for the young people. Good times we had with all the Elders, cricket, sometimes a bit of football, rounders, twos and threes, three legged races, hundred yard sprint, all this hop step and jump all these for us out here. We used to have great times.

Dad & Mum, my father was a pastor. Bert Marr here, he got educated in Singleton to be a pastor. He went through Bible College at Singleton, that's where all the Saunders used to stop up there. There was a place up out from east Singleton - up on a hill used to be, like a mission. That's where I first seen all the Saunders, Uncle Jerry and all them. Bill Saunders, Granny Matty and all them. I seen them all up there before they shifted to Purfleet. Yes, used to have very happy times, singing happy times and that's where dad came from up there to be a pastor here. This house is built on this where my father's church was. This house built on holy ground, this is where I got married ere in the church here, right where we sitting.

We had some lovely good times, the old people. I could go on and on way back the early days - when I first seen the steamers come up the river - the river was very deep those days. Was deep because they used to come in high water over Harrington through the bar and go out high water again. They used to

come in and get poles, sleepers, girders, transom and take them to Newcastle and Sydney. I seen all that when I was a young boy in short trousers

I used to dive you know, they used to throw money off the steamers to us, the fellows who worked on the steamers. They'd throw money and we'd dive, we catch the money as it was coming down, we come up with a mouth full of money. We'd have great times on the river.

Funny thing I ever seen when I was a boy, like, they called this old fella Albert, 'physicy' we used to call him. He had a habit when he bowled this over. He'd bowl playing cricket down there over the old mission he used to bowl like go like that, (like punching it) and Stan Carter was standing not far away from him. When he bowled he hit Stan in the jaw. Well next minute they start fighting, well that's the funniest thing I ever seen in my life. And laugh, well us kids, Robert Bungie and all us young fellas in those days, we killed ourselves laughing way they started into it fighting you know. They had a good go. Well that was the funniest thing I ever seen, fella to bowl like that (bowling with the right and punch with the left), he'd always stick it out. Oh tricky ol fella that one.

When asked about involvement in art, Uncle spoke about protests for Aboriginal rights. I been into everything, marching protest for better conditions for the Aboriginal, protesting in big marches. Newcastle, all over the district everywhere, for better conditions for our people. We used to always have a good time afterwards, get all together have a big BBQ, have sports and that .

I used to make all my own boomerangs, shields, spears, all that, and do all my work on the boomerangs and everything, put kangaroos or sometimes sharks on it. Today they got hot needles like electric for drawing on boomerangs, work what you do with woodwork. But I used to get the bit of wire, flatten it all out with the points, make different shapes, and put it in one of them 4 gallon drums. An make a fire in it and put holes in the side of the drum and put our wire in there. Do all our burning in like that, do all our work, do a lot of painting an all, painting the boomerangs too. Oh used to sell a lot of boomerangs fast as we'd make em we'd sell em. We'd make 6 or 700 hundred in no time. They'd be gone in no time, people come to us and buy em, so much a boomerang. Oh we making good money too. That's what I'd like to see today, young boys over here, Youth

Centre, making boomerangs. Should make a lot of stuff like boomerangs, shields, spears, like we used to do here. Me and the ol fellas like Reggie Russell used to do all that type of work.

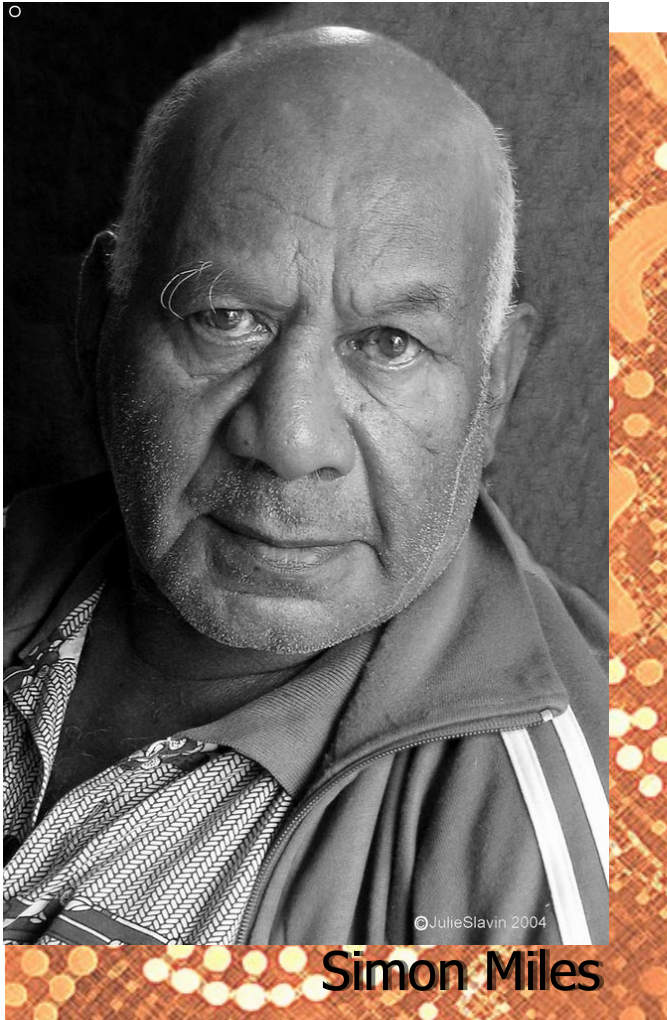
Well we were playing football over in the oval, Taree where High School, Johnny Martin Oval recreation ground. This other fella, Cecil McClemment see done something (when playing against the Blues). The referee put him off see, well next minute this white fella was running to get a try and he (Cecil) ran out and tackled him and he was put out of the ground. Well that was the funniest thing I ever seen playing football. The referee put him off and told him don't you come back here again. Oh killed ourselves laughing when he tackled that white fella.

Lots of things I'd like to teach you know. I'd like to teach very spiritual walk you know, to go through meditation, to build that spirit up within the body you know and make it stronger. The spirit is willing there but the flesh is weak, that's what I'd like to teach em to build that spirit, how to go about it. My sister's boy came here a few weeks ago and asked me about things like this and I was teaching him how to go about things. You gotta do fasting, go without anything all day without eating, have a place to go, little place where you can go through meditation. One little place for spiritual things. You can get very strong very powerful in the spirit. The old people used to tell me in the early days. They used to put themselves in a trance by doing it this way, put themselves in trance, and the spirit would come out of the body and they'd be laying there like if they were dead. You'd walk in and look at em like if they were dead. They used to tell me used to happen to some of em. They do this spiritual thing, the spirit used to travel and come back and tell em, come back in the body again. My Granny went through a spiritual trance, she went up there and she come back down again told all her children, mum and uncle Arthur and all them, 'you must stand to be a Christian, go through the religious way' now he showed me everything. I can tell you everything. I went up there, he had a place for me. Yeah, granny Susan and she was a wonderful spiritual woman, gran. I'll never forget her, I loved her so much. And that's what I'd like to see the young people, go through that, makes you strong. I even do it now, when I'm in the room by myself. I go through a spiritual meditation and it's good for the body, mind and spirit, builds up everything strong makes you stronger, makes you feel good too.

To respect, to respect all your Elders, aunties, uncles, all the Elders, to respect them and that's how we was taught. That's the one I remembered right through and that's my teaching today. Respect all your uncles, aunties all the Elders all of them and respect all women because only for a woman you wouldn't be here.

Respect all women just the same as you respect your mother.

Still like to be remembered as The Elder, Bert Marr, Goonabahn. ♦



No memories of grandparents, I was only very small. I left home when I was 13, cutting cane around Fingal, Tweed Heads.

I only knew my mother, never ever knew my father, was reared up by stepfather yeah. He was very strict. Mum came from up Ipswich way.

Fingal was only just a little camp, no road then, had to row across the river to get the shopping and that. Good memories, happy times.

On my father's side they were all Islanders you know, Fiji Islanders. They're all ol fisherman, fish an that. I wasn't allowed to walk down the beach when this ol one was

there. They usually sit on the beach all the time, and the other old fella, he's got out sittin on the back step, and see him coming back from the beach. 'Hey Jimmy where you go this morning?', 'Oh Jimmy I go along sand beach', 'You see Annie?', 'Annie who?' 'Any Buckin female I tell ya '. His misses was cooking breakfast and hit him across the head with the frying pan. Lots of laughter.

Haven't done any art in my life only hard labour.

I've got some bad memories, can't laugh at em though.

Lessons to pass on: education one thing I never got, have that education, work work, work, that's what got me out of a lot of trouble

Honesty is the best policy, I went up to the saw mill one day looking for a job (at Woodenbong). I just stood there talking for a while. One bloke dropped a ten shilling note while he's working, I was thinking to myself I can get some tucker with this to take home; nuh I wasn't doing that. I asked 'did anyone drop anything', he said 'yeah a ten shilling note', 'oh I tell you might be able to get a job'. He sent me out to this farmer on a contract ring barking for 6 months. Instead of going home buying a bit of tucker with that ten shilling note, that night I walked in with a weeks supply of groceries cause I had to go bush you see. If I'd kept that ten shillings just had a couple of loaves of bread you know, I had 6 months work there.

I like to be remembered as honest, trustworthy, treat other people how you'd like them to treat you. ♦



Sophie Morcome

(As told by Lynette and Wilma Morcome)
Sophie's parents were, Mary and Neil Morcome.

Me and Kathy was swimming in the tank. She (mum) didn't think it was funny at the time because like she said they drank the water from that tank. She was trying to hit us with the broom. We'd just laugh and swim away from her. But every time like, she'd through the years tell someone about that and have a good laugh. But she didn't think it was funny on the day.

Also as a child I remember, she had a dint in the middle of her forehead. I asked what had happened to her, she said it was when she was playing hockey somebody accidentally hit her in the forehead with a hockey stick so it stayed there, the mark.

She didn't do any bark paintings but she won a prize for ceramics. She would have been in her 70s and she was so proud she come down home in Five Dock. I couldn't get over my mum at that age to start doing ceramics and pottery and to win first prize, couldn't believe it herself. She's still got beautiful stuff over at Rita's. She made ceramic bowls and little ducks and little rabbits, she even give Rhondalene that toilet thing.

Mum used to always, all the kids loved an even the grown ups, loved her doing the charleston. Pam one time when we were kids, Pam she's going, 'Aunty Sophie, Aunty Sophie, come on do the charleston for me' and mum'd start doing it cause she go that fast you'd think she gonna fall over. But she was steady on her feet. Pam would sit there and

she'd laugh that much the tears were rolling down her cheeks because she thought it was so funny.

Her and Aunty Lill, Aunty Rose's sister, one time, mum come out doing the charleston at Clare's 21st and Aunty Lill come out doing the hoola. Yeah one doing the hoola and one doing the charleston. Throughout her life she gave a lot of people joy cause young and old used to ask her to do the charleston. Everybody loved her doing it she used to be that fast.

I remember mum talking about going up to the spring well, they used to go up there on a certain day and wash, all the women used to do their washing in the well. That was a certain well for washing, they'd have their yarns and laughs up there.

I remember too as a child mum used to take us to the river, the big Moreton Bay Fig on Purfleet side. A lot of the women from Purfleet and mum used to take us to have picnics under that tree there.

Mum, she was a great believer in having respect and we were taught to respect our Elders. And you know it's sad when I see now a lot of children have changed and they don't have the respect that we grew up with.

One thing about mum, she was very good with her spelling, English and hand writing, and her hand writing was very beautiful so I think she would've been proud of that. A lot of people, like Dad, because he didn't have much schooling, he didn't know how to spell much. So Kath and I we used to always write out the list for him. With mum it

was good that she knew how to, she had the opportunity to. With mum too, she stressed it for people to have an education. She'd always say 'you kids you go to school cause the education, you gotta have a education, so think'.

She was born in Wauchope, to Mary Dungay married Neil Morcome our Grandfather.

I think mum would like to be remembered as a gentle person. Everyone who knew her said she was softly spoken, yeah softly spoken, gentle person. Aunty Madge was her best friend, Madge McKinnan, Aunty Katty Boomer. Also Aunty Noorie, Narelle Clarke she was a very good friend of mum's too. When you think about it, mum must of been lonely with all her old mates had passed away, even some that was younger than mum, went before her. Aunty Muriel Cassey, all her mates, they was all gone. Yes, and Eadie Macdonald was another great friend of mum'. After Eadie went they was not many of them left of the older ones, I think she was lonely after all the old friends. Then she had a lot of young friends and they all took mum under their wings.

When we was kids we'd all be in the room and we used to love sittin' down and mum she loved sittin' with us kids and every night, never miss, play eye spy with my little eye. It was funny, we'd be making up riddles and everything and that all the time. I'd reckon Rita come up with the best one yet with the riddles. She said 'what did one dead leaf say to the other dead leaf' and we was all trying to guess and no, we give up, and she said, 'nothing cause they both dead'. Ohh they were fun times with mum.

As we was growing up we was with mum most of the time cause dad used to work away and he used to only come home on weekends. So we had mum all the time with us. And also dad passed away when we was young, so we always had mum with us. When dad left she was like our father, took over the father part too.

Aunty Sophie had 9 children. Family was very important to mum cause at a young age she was taken away. She always stressed that, keep the family together. You know another thing said to us, when she got really sick, we didn't want her to go into a nursing home or anything cause she said to us all her life, 'why should I?'. It took a long time before she'd go on a carer's program because she had pride because of what happened to her. So we had to end up telling her, mum, go on it so you can get things that you need. But she always stressed 'I'm never ever gonna go into a nursing home or whatever and if I get sick, I got daughters to look after me'. So when it was the end it was hard for us to make that decision because she was really ill. And they also said if she got well enough, she'd still have to go to a nursing home. So I reckon the Lord took her at the right time for her and for us as Christians. We believe that you know. It worked out, because she was gettin well, she was gettin ready to go home on the Thursday and when she was ready to go home she had a slight stroke and then after that she just went straight down hill. So she wasn't goin' to no nursing home. Instead she went to the Lord. ♦

FOOTNOTE: Aunty Sophie Morcome passed away before the completion of this project. Her story has been told by her daughters Lynette and Wilma.



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Fay Patterson

We had an ol house with a big open fire place, and we used to go up to the islands for the school holidays, spent up the lake on the islands. We'd take ten loaves of bread and that would be gone in 2 d0ays. My grandfather had a big bag of flour and he used to make damper for the rest of the time. We had hundreds of rabbit traps, they set the rabbit traps, we used to sell the rabbits for a shilling each then and they'd sell the skins. They'd set them on the wires and then in the day time they used to fish off the island, throw the fish on the coals and eat em like that. My grandfather was a very active man, they brought up the family and they brought up a lot of grandchildren too. He was always very active, he had a lovely garden. He kept all the boys busy, they grew tomatoes, pumpkin, peas and beans all the vegetables. We had a big corn field with all the watermelons underneath. Yes we had fowls for the eggs, we had a couple cows we could milk. Then we got the fish, grandfather used to be up early in the morning and be back by half past six with 6 big black fish, he was a champ fisherman.

He'd take tourists out fishing and a lot of tourists come up here and they had these Guy

cottages down in Bruce Street. Little houses on the corner of Bruce Street and Breckenridge Street. See, they used to call my grandfather Barney but his proper name was Robert. This bloke he used to take out fishing, Mr Guy, that's why they called them Guy Cottages. He'd say 'Barney bring those children down' and he'd show us these movies. It was Charlie Chaplin, Felix the Cat the real old ones, we used to sit on the floor and laugh. I'd cry laughing at Charlie Chaplin. Another policeman he used to take out fishing, Mr. O'Neil. You know they used to have big cracker nights years ago and build big bonfires, but they never set anything on fire. He said 'Barney bring all the kids down' and he supplied a big box of fire crackers, we let em off.

When we went to school on the mission all the children was related. Up by the bowling club, there was no houses, just bush. We used to go across the swamp to get geebung and yams to eat and the school bell would be ringing and we'll run back across the swamp to school. One time we was running back and there was a bee's nest hanging and I nearly run into it. I said 'my bees nest' and all the kids, they respect ya then you know, if you said that it was yours. So after school I went home and told me grandad 'there's a bees nest over there'. Of course he could handle all the bees and they'd get all over him and never affect him. The stings would never affect him. So he said, 'I'll meet you after school and go over and get it', and he went over with a bag and he put it round the bee's nest and broke it off. He tied it up on the verandah for a couple of days and then he put it down in the shed where he worked. We had honey there for years, lovely honey out of the bee's nest. Then the queen bee died.

My mother, she went away to Sydney to work because years ago there was no people working, so my grandparents brought us up.

The rowing boats were only 25 cents or 50 cents for a day or something. We used to run home after school and hire a boat and go out and get plenty of mullet. We used to love going out in the boat fishing.

What about the Worimi language? Did your grandfather speak it?

No, his father probably did cause my grandmother told me that he was a tribal man, my grandfather's father. And my grandmother told me he used go out and do sacred things in the bush, you know what they did. My grandmother told me my grandfather used to ask his dad 'Dad what do you do out in the

bush?’ and he’d say ‘never you mind my son never you mind’ and never tell him.

I was with Tobwabba, used to do a lot of dot paintings, most of my paintings sold. I was just there for a while before I went on the pension. I wasn’t there at the beginning of Tobwabba. See we went to TAFE when we was older cause we were in Sydney working. Maeve got us into TAFE and then from TAFE we went to Tobwabba. Russell (Saunders) taught us, he’s nice, Russell. He taught them all how to do it, he’s very clever. There’s some of that art in Taree, none of mine, it all sold. I didn’t keep one piece for myself.

I had a frightening experience. When we left school and we was working down at the Gumleaf Café, my grandparents and aunties and uncles ended up at Bulahdelah working in the sawmills. We had this old house with a big verandah right around it and I was coming home and you had to walk through the ferns and bushes. The football ground was where the hospital is, I was about 15 and me brother was 17, and my cousin Jenny was s’posed to be stopping in the house with me. But she’d stopped down with this lady, a dark lady, who was the cook. And so I was walking home and I was looking back to see my brother and this stick cracked across this swamp. They’d just drained this swamp out. And I looked over and saw this man standing there and he had a big overcoat and hat on and I couldn’t see his face. I took off up the track and God, I nearly fell there. And I got up to the old house and there was only kerosene lights then. I couldn’t find any matches to light the lights, and I was in this big house all by myself. We had an old dog named Booza so I got Booza, I had a room off the verandah, and there was only a peg in the door to lock the door. And then there was this window that you put up. A great big heavy square thing that had four latches to hold it up. I watched down this swamp to see if any one came up. But nobody did and I went to bed and went to sleep. With the dog! I thought if anyone comes he’ll let me know.

We was told to respect people and that. If we weren’t polite and respect people we got a hiding. Now they don’t, the children, tell them anything. I don’t want to talk about that.

Manners and respect people you know, like everything. Be polite, good values you know. Cleanness an that, in the house. They was very clean the old people, they boiled all their washing. They used to take their beds out, you know the bed springs an that, sun them in

sun now an again and the mattress out in summer. Air them out an that, they don’t do that now, people, or some of them don’t.

There was an old chap used to come up and get me and my cousin in a horse and sulky when we were about 11 or 12. He takes us out to 7 mile beach. Opposite 7 mile beach was ‘the Moors’ as they used to call it and there used to be thousands of wild flowers there. This white fella came up, Mr Robinson, and take me and Jenny out there and we’d go and get a big bunch of wildflowers and he’d take us back home. And in our lounge there was a little square table with a big vase that was always filled with wildflowers all the time.

I see in the paper a fella with an echidna, porcupine. They used to be thick up there, there’s none now. You know Kularoo Drive? Well there’s a golf course there and we used to go there and the porcupines used to be thick there. I wouldn’t eat them. Maybe they used to eat them a long time back but not this generation, I don’t think. I wouldn’t like to eat snakes. I’ve tried catfish.

My grandfather was born at Coomba Park and his father was born at Coomba Park. They used to put a fence right around the Mission and they said ‘keep your fence around your Mission cause it protects your land, they can’t take it’. And the Aborigines used to keep the fence real strong and good around the Mission. And when they seen one family going out the Mission gates, out to the Tanks, out to the beach, all the families would go, you know. They’d pack the lunches and baskets and they’d go out there. They’d play cricket. The men would fish and catch fish and the women would cook damper and the children would all play. It was a beaut day out. And then if they’d see one family going in a boat they’d all go in the boats. It was like close-knit family sort of thing you know, they all respected one another.

I think the Club spoilt a lot of people’s family life. Everyone’s at Clubs and things, spending their money on grog and pokies. When we were kids and played marbles, the parents and grandparents joined in and played marbles with you, you know. And if you played, they used to call it ‘rounders’, but it was like an American baseball type of thing. They’d get over on the Flat, there was a Flat on the Mission. One mob’d get over there and then they’d be all over there playing, you know. In Auntie Cinda’s book they said that my grandfather was a good cricketer. He used to try and throw the cricket ball into that.

There was a big dam right near the Mission and we used to go up there and play all the time and we used to model things. Make little houses and cows, horses and cowboys and all the things. And when we was at school the teacher seen us playing with this clay and she said 'Where did you get that clay?' and we said 'Oh, up that dam' and she said 'I want you to bring a real lot down'. And we made these masks, like a pig's head and fox head and sort of things. Then she put all the paper on it and cut it off and you put the green around the frog and you had a frog's head. And we put on a concert down at the Hall, we had all these heads on and that.

Well, when I was young my Uncle Bob Simon came home from the War. All the Mission went down to meet him and I was sick in bed on the verandah. Anyway, they all came walking up with him and Daphne Ridgeway was over at their house and she had this old empty kerosene tin. She was really sick and she probably couldn't sing out loud for him to hear and let him know that she was seeing him, thinking of him you know. And then when the prisoners-of-war were released, I was sitting with my grandmother over at the house. Auntie Eddie Simon was over at the Mission and they released the names in the paper of the prisoners of war that were out and they had Simon Foster. She'd seen it and she was waving the paper at my grandmother and singing out 'Bob, Bob'. You know, he was released. And I remember the planes flying over Forster. I was only a kid but they put out all the fires in the open fire places. You had to put out all your lights and not smoke without your head in the ground and they all went and stood on the verandah and heard them go over. And they put out all the streetlights cause if they seen you they'd have bombed you...and I just remember that as a kid. We just

stood there really quiet and just listened, they must have given us a warning to put out all the lights.

They had these books I suppose when the War was on, coupon books. You know you had coupons for sugar, bread, butter, you know, all these things. Meat. You had so many coupons and by the time you finished them up if you didn't have any you didn't get anything. But we had plenty, like on our place, live off the land. Oysters and that, fish, rabbits. And when we were kids we went and got blackberries and mushrooms to sell to the guest houses. And a lot of the white tourists, guests, would come up and they'd buy the prize mushrooms off us for 40c. And blackberries, Christmas Bells, yeah we used to sell bunches of Christmas Bells. And now they won't let you. What I can't work out, they won't let you pick the Christmas Bells, they fine you over that. Yet they'll go and plough them up, the white fella, and throw them out. But we only want to pick them and put them in a vase and admire them. They just want to destroy them.

My grandmother used to tell me years ago they had them big washing tubs and things and they'd wash outside. She said the old Aboriginal would be there and the Willy Wagtail would come and sing and talk to him in the lingo!! And he'd say 'What are they doing up there in Kempsey?' And he'd answer back and then he'd tell them what the bird told him, 'oh so and so has died up there and someone's sick'. Next minute it would come through that so and so had died, what he said. Yes, she used to tell me a lot of stories cause I slept with her all the time. She would tell me the stories all the time, yes, and that's passing the story down for you to tell all the stories. ♦



Susie Russell and Shirley Ping

and camp through because one of my uncles worked with him which was good. I had my own horse and my brother had his own horse and Horace had his own horse at Purfleet.

We used to go out to Hillview. We had our own ferret and make our own traps. Put the ferrets in and hunt the rabbits out and skin them and dry them out and send them up to Gloucester. That's where they would buy them. *And you would eat the meat?* Yes but I didn't like it. They looked too much like cats. No, it was good, different

to today. Mum used to work in town for doctors and cleaning like that.

We used to go to Saltwater and camp there the whole 6 weeks and you know, it was hard but it was good. Happy times. But then I had to leave school at 13 and my first job was in Langley's hospital, the maternity hospital. I had to have the floors, the verandahs all scrubbed by 9 o'clock before the doctors come around. But that was 30 bob a week, that was \$3.00. Betty and I, like there was four or five of us, had to leave school and get jobs. Betty Donovan (Betty Saunders then). But we weren't lazy, put it that way. *Why did you have to leave school – just to help the family?* It only went to fourth class at Purfleet. *And why didn't you come into town to high school?* They wouldn't allow us and they wouldn't allow us in some shops. But that's all water under the bridge. I always say you should forget the past and look for the future.

I really enjoyed growing up in Purfleet because we was made to go to Sunday school and made go to church. There was no trouble, no such thing as trouble. There was no drunks or nothing on Purfleet. In other words, we had a good community. Nobody went without. They all shared, you know what I mean. It was really good.

Lots of funny things. We used to go down along Glenthorne Road pinching oranges but I'd never pinch. We had one girl, Shirley Morris, you might know her, she was the silly one. We'd tell her to go and get our oranges and when it was her turn to go in we'd sing out 'they stealing the oranges' and poor old Shirl would end up with none.

AUNTY SHIRLEY PING

We used to live in Karuah when they took my sister. Mum waited until Horace and I got older then we walked out of Karuah and came to Taree to live.

My grandmother used to live in Platts Estate, Waratah. They would come and get me and take me down there for breaks. I liked it but then it was too much going away from home. And that's just about all, you know. There was John and Joan after me, Marge is the oldest and they took her, that's what happened. *The welfare took her first and your mum was able to keep you guys?* Yeah, well that's how we came to live in Taree. More or less run away from everything, you know what I mean. And then it took us a long time to find her, but lucky we did find her. And she is so much like Mum, it's not funny. She's got a lovely family. Five girls and one boy. And all that time the boy lived in Port Macquarie and we never ever knew. They used to go through Taree here, she never knew we were around here which was sad in one way.

Dad was very strict with us, and mum worked. Dad worked, he was a bullock driver, he used to work for Charlie Holden. He was a Taree man and we sort of grew up with the Holden family you know. We went to school at Purfleet but we had a lot to do with the Holden family because they were a white family and they lived in Taree.

Holiday times we would go out and camp in the forest and you know, the bullocks would drag the logs in. When they would get the logs he would go to Bulahdelah at times. We used to go out there some times for school holidays

We used to swim along the river all the time because we weren't allowed in the Taree pool. That's nothing, at least we weren't getting anybody's piddle in our mouth.

When the steamers used to come along, they used to throw money over to the kids and they would dive in. Were you part of that too?

Yeah. I even got a photo of myself on the wharf in swimmers.

You sit down and it would take you full 12 months to listen to all the stories, you know. Cause things were so good then. Not like today. Like, it's a better outlook in life but it's up to yourself. Well, Sue (Susie Russell) and I done some 17 years with kids on motivation camps, right. And we got to know the kids and even today, as rough as they are, they give us a cuddle and a kiss and say 'Hello Aunt'. So Suz and I won their respect.

When it comes down to it, if you respect kids, kids will respect you?

Yes, that's right and you have to be a kid with them, you know what I mean. If you like to be a stand over, forget it. No we enjoyed running around with the kids, Suz and I. Still like it, they're offering us a camp now, Warner and them up at Nowendoc. They going to have a camp up there or something. What we gonna try an do is get kids to sit down that don't go to school. Warner is going to try an help them like that and he asked Suz and I to help him. So we're gonna and we're looking forward to it. We hope it's like when it gets a bit warmer.

I liked painting landscapes. I liked landscapes. Faith and I used to go hand fishing a lot and we were learning how to hang a net but it got too boring so we gave that away. But we used to love to go hand fishing, handline. We used to go out with Col and Horace on 3 an 4 o'clock in the mornings down the river, but outside of that, that's about it.

I used to do it like (*painting landscapes*). I did like it, sit down to draw with Pat Davis-Hurst and Ray. We got a class going together when she lived in Cowper Street and we used to go up there once a week. Sit down and have the day all together and do paintings and landscapes all that. I've got to do a painting for a young fellow we know down Raymond Terrace. Yeah but they're all mine there around the wall and in the hallway. But we used to love it. There used to be about 8 or 9 of us in a group and we'd have a lovely time together which was good - but haven't been painting for ages.

Any really bad experience that you can now laugh at? Well, to me it wasn't really bad because you had to take it on your chin. Either you accepted it or... We weren't allowed to be cheeky back to somebody, and if they told Dad, he'd give us a hiding for that.

There was times when, you know, we would see other kids when we would come into town. And we'd see other kids going in the shop. But it never, ever worried us. They'd just tell us to go and we'd go. You'd never stand there and cheek or throw stones or anything, you know. But we just all took it on the chin. We really didn't know which was right from wrong in them days, did we. You know, if you went to somebody's house along the river bank and you asked them for a drink of water and they would say 'no you can't have it', well you just walk away.

But I was a real tom boy. I used to wait for me brother, Horrie to take his trousers off. I'd get in and I would play marbles, things like that, or shanghai, run around the bush with a shanghai around my neck. But it didn't worry me. Even today it don't worry me. So I like to live to myself and do me own thing. I've got a lot of friends, a lot of white friends. But I find that if you respect other people they'll respect you. Black and white.

When my girls were little and they was going to school, Col and I made them go to school and they loved school. Always said a good education is one of the best things and later on in life you'll need it. Well now it is coming to pass because Yvonne, she's a nurse, that's the eldest one. Frank, he works as a teacher's aid in Raymond Terrace Public School, that's the middle one. And look at the job Col's (Colleen) got (co-ordinator Aged Care). We always told them you gotta have a better education than what we had. But Col (Colin), he wasn't wild or anything. He never drank or anything like that. My family had a good upbringing and that was our main aim. But now we can sit back and it all worked out. We always say that's a good education and they thank us for it. Col, she loved school that much she used to iron her socks. I had me babies here in Taree but when they got like bigger, older, and Col's first day of school, she was 5, that's when we left Taree (for Raymond Terrace) cause I said I want more for them in life than what opportunities I had.

We got married in the Church of England here, Taree not Purfleet. So we went away and we lived in Raymond Terrace and then when Col took his heart attack, he was a foreman at Steelmains at Hexham. When he took the

heart attack I said 'I think we'll pack up and go back home to Taree'. Cause me brother was up here and John, me two brothers and that's what we done. We come back and we was back here for two years and he died in me brother's arms on Crowdy beach. He took a heart attack. Then I worked right up till I was 70 and when I gave up work, I took a heart attack. It was not a really bad one but it was something that I had to give up work and now I am living a boring life cause I'm not allowed to do gardening or anything like that. Only like plant things but not dig or anything like that.

I enjoyed my growing up in Taree, because Taree was different then. My father was one of the first to get his permit to go in Fogs pub. I was a pantry maid there at that time when Dad got his pink slip to go into the pub. *His dog tags, that's what they called them eh?* Yes. That's when the Pioneer bus used to come in and I was a pantry maid and used to have morning tea waiting on them.

When we was going to school at Purfleet when we were round about 10 to 12, we had to leave school at 13 and get jobs in town, right. But the manager's wife used to get us and teach us hygiene and how to work. We thought it was bad then but today. Like my generation is different to the generation today and they like good living people. They're clean and things like that, which was good. *So it was a good lesson to learn – hygiene?* Yes. Look after your babes, like when you had your babes and all that.

How do you want to be remembered? Well they always say I'm not going to leave them and even some of the women at aged care today. Because I'm the silly one and they reckon when I go they not going back. So that sounds good to me.

I joke with anybody but if I don't like a person I can't take to them and there is nothing in my books to say you've got to take to everybody. So they take me as they find me and that's it.

So what was the first job you had again At Langley's hospital, used to be maternity. You know where Dick Smith is now? *Near the church?* That hospital was there then. Where that building is going into Kmart car park. And

then I left there. *How did they treat you?* Good. As long as you done your work. That was sister Langley then and Sister Basham and she come from Glenthorne Road. Left there and went to Fotheringhams pub. I was pantry maid there. *Did you like that job?* Yeah. It was only getting morning teas. It was really good. I liked it. *And what was the wage there?* 20 pounds, and that was more than at the hospital. And Miss Swivellbank owned it then. They were Pommy people.

Then I got pregnant with Yvonne, me eldest one and she was 12 months old when I got married because at that time I didn't want to get married. They went back to England and she wanted to take me and Yvonne with her and her husband. But I was too headstrong with Col then. *You two had a good life together?* Yeah. We had a wonderful life.

So then you worked in and out between your kids or you didn't work any more?

No, no, no. Like then when I had the 3 girls and then when they started school and Colleen started school, then we left Purfleet and went back to Raymond Terrace. I joined the baby sitting union in Newcastle so I was baby sitting then. I used to get \$80 for 3 days which was good. The little fellow, he was 6 months old and when he turned 5 that's when I left Terrace and came back to Taree. I didn't mind because it was my own pocket money. Now young Maddy, he would be about 19 or 20, no more than that, same age as Gary.

Who was Maddy, Maddy Everingham? That was the boy, the baby I used to look after. Like he was about 5 when we left Raymond Terrace and came back up here but he still remembers me which is good.

What sort of work were you doing when you retired at 70? I was doing domestic work for Faith.

I done 17 years in the schools. We loved it, Suz and I. We've been everywhere. Like on camps and that which was good.

I have been as far as Katoomba, Brisbane, and just about all around the areas here. Like down past Bulahdelah at that resort down there and then out past Cessnock. Went out there and saw all the Aboriginal sites and all that and they got like cabins where we used to stay and things like that but we loved it. I'd still do it if I had the chance. ♦

AUNTY SUSIE RUSSELL

I never met me grandparents, only me own parents. We never went back to meet them. My mother and father died in Walcha where she lived. When we came here I was only 7, went to school here, grew up here, had my family here. I lost my mother when I was only 13 and my brothers were overseas fighting in World War II. I had 4 brothers over there, 2 in the Middle East and 2 in New Guinea, so I grew up here on Purfleet with the elders. Left school when I was 14 and worked in the Taree area.

I had a good life, more or less, growing up. Our Elders made us strong, taught us well. Taught us to do things ourselves, to grow up strong to be independent and that's what I've been, all my life I've been like that. I left Purfleet after I had a family and lived in Maitland for a while, then came back here to Taree. I still love Purfleet, I always call Purfleet my home, doesn't matter where I am. I loved growing up here. We used to live in a tent just up above the garage when we first came here, they were very strict in my days. When my father drove down by horse and buggy from Walcha or Walbrook, near Walcha, we were only allowed to stay for a fortnight and then we had to get back off the mission and go back to where we came from. But when we came back for the next school holidays, we were allowed to live here and we've been here ever since, I grew up here.

Dad used to MC a lot of dances, Armidale, Walcha and different places like that. A couple of chappies, Ronnie Marr and Charlie Edwards used to come up to the dances they had in Walcha and tell my parents about the beach and we more or less came down to see the sea, that's how we come to come here.

I grew up well, I learned well and I been working all my life. I worked in a lot of places in Taree. I used to work in Yarads when they only had a little store where they are now and now they're one of the leading shops in Taree. We used to have to walk to work every day, go across in the punt and then walk home. Our school days were very poor. We didn't learn that much out here on the mission school cause it was only a little school. Both Shirley and I decided to go back to TAFE, I was 61 when I went back to TAFE. We done a 2 year course and I started working in schools like Manning Gardens. I worked there for a while amongst the Koori kids. Then Shirley and I have been on 17 camp trips with children. Most of them we used to do voluntary, just to get away and

see different places, then they started paying us cause we used to supervise the kids. We've been just about everywhere, Dubbo, Valla Park, all the different places and we had a great time with the kiddies. Most of the young women today have got families that we supervised in our camp trips, we had some great times with them.

We used to go down to Trotters Creek, if you know where that is at Glenthorne. That's where we used to have to go to swim on the days with the hot weather. It's the only funny thing I can think of because I never heard of kangaroos or cobra, have you heard about cobra? A dark family, a very old dark family that we used to call our Elders, took me and my sister down there for the day. I kept saying to my sister 'we're going to stay down there all day, what are we going to eat today?' and they kept saying 'you'll see'. But when we got down to Trotters Creek they started pulling the logs out of the river and splitting them up and taking them. So I said to my sister 'I've figured it out, what we're gonna have is fish and chips?' cause they started fishing. And I thought they were using the cobra to fish with but they made a big pot of soup, and cooked a big damper in the ashes, I couldn't eat that. I couldn't eat it, and the old lady was gonna belt me with a stick cause I wouldn't eat it and I sat down under a tree with a great big piece of damper, and golden syrup and I ate that. But that same lady, I used to live with her most of the time when I didn't have anywhere else to sleep after mum lost the house. My father had left home. She used to always be cooking this cobra soup and she used to be always cooking kangaroo soup, I couldn't eat either, I still can't eat it. The son, I always see the son eat it and a couple of the sons eat it.

But I had a good life here, but very sad losing my mother, who had a mental breakdown. One of my brothers got shell-shocked in the Middle East. She had a mental breakdown and the saddest part about my life was her not being here when they did come back from the war and they did come back. But that was the saddest part of my life. I used to go to Morrisset to see her quite regularly, it's very hard when you've got to go to a mental home to see your own mother. But that was the saddest part of my life.

We used to do a bit of painting over at Pat Davis', oil painting. I've still got a few pictures at home that I done, but I gave most of them away but we stopped doing that. And I liked it too, very much.

I've never ever seen them make clapsticks, my parents didn't never ever talk. My father came from Walcha, he was a black tracker. He never told us about Aboriginal culture, until we came here and started learning about it from our Elders, the people we called our Elders. Purfleet was such a lovely place, our Elders and our church, we spent a lot of time at church with Uncle Bert and Aunty Elsie Marr, Faith's parents. We went to Sunday school quite regular, and you know there was, I suppose I shouldn't say it, I didn't have any problems with my father and mother cause they never fought and they never drank. I never had that kind of a problem, which you see plenty of today, yes. I think it's so sad for our young people. If they could look back on our growing up I think it would be a better place to live in today.

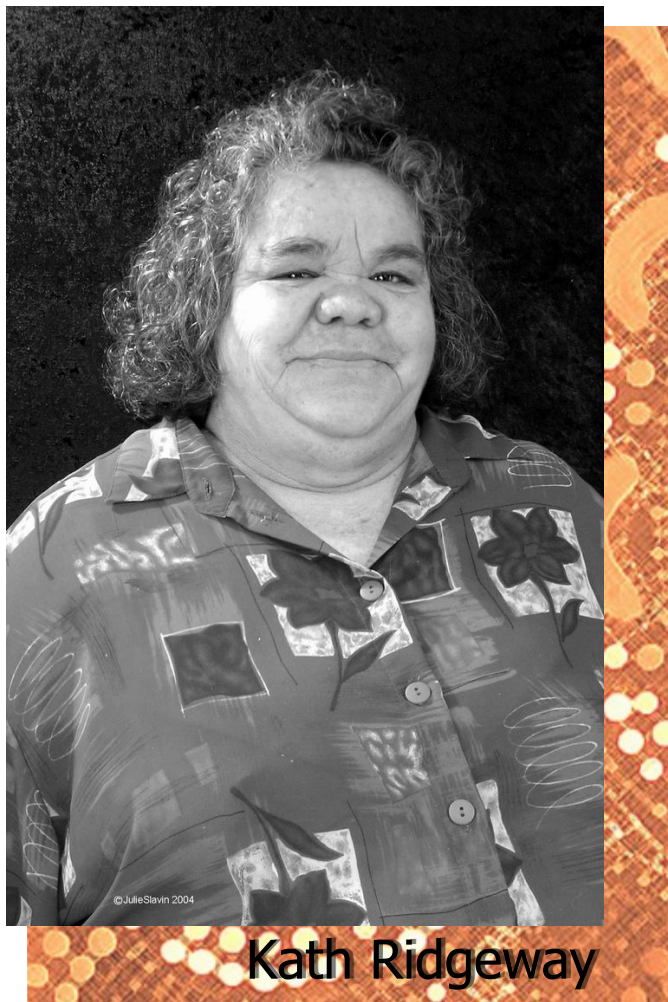
We used to do some silly things when we were growing up. Like I see them, especially grandsons, with tennis bats and hockey sticks and things like that. We used to have to go out into the bush out here and make our own hockey sticks out of a branch out of the tree. We used to cut a wooden box up and make a tennis bat, sort of like we made our own fun. We wasn't allowed to go into Taree much unless our parents were with us. Taree was, I suppose I shouldn't say it but I will, Taree was very prejudice. I think in a ways, more or less it still is today. If you don't mind me saying that. So going to the picture theatre, we were roped

off, like right down the front. And the Manning Base Hospital. Now I've said this in schools, most students I talk to. I had my 4th child when I was allowed to go into Manning Base Hospital, we were put right down the back in the isolation ward amongst different other kinds of sicknesses. Things got better and it is better today. Much better.

Lessons I like to pass on are to be strong and to go out and always work, to try and get a good education and get a good job. We used to talk to them about culture in camp trips, Shirl and I, when we'd be on motivation camps but we don't do that anymore. We used to talk to a lot of the kids, we see a lot that is interested and a lot that's not interested. They've got it there, they've got the education there if they want it.

The best lesson I was taught was to learn respect, to learn respect for yourself and for your Elders and respect people that are around you, that's the best lesson I learnt. It's the only one I think.

I think I will be remembered well amongst my family, I love my children. I have 6 boys and 4 girls, and I think I will be well remembered. I've been good to them, never hit them, I've never sworn at them, and I think they'll respect me for that. I think I better go now before you put me in tears. ♦



Kath Ridgeway

I barely remember my grandparents, my grandmother on my mum's side, my grandfather on my dad's side. I was only six years old then. My grandfather was an old man, very Aboriginal, grey hair and moustache. My grandmother on my mother's side used to go wormin' on the beach everyday. She had an old pipe in her mouth, billy can on her side and a dilly bag on her shoulders. But I don't remember them very much. My mum and dad — my father was a fisherman and a log feller, mum was very much the home lady — staying at home, done the washing. She'd get the water out of the well down at the back. Sat down with one of those old tubs, down on the grass and done her washin'. It was over at Crescent Head, that's where we lived, right down the water, he had his own block of land there, built his little home on. They were good days, Mum and Dad lived on one side of the creek, my Grandmother lived on the other. So we were back and forth between the two families. Yeah, it was very good, had the water close by, just go and do a bit of swimming or what ever, go across to the beach and catch worms. Oh, it was very good.

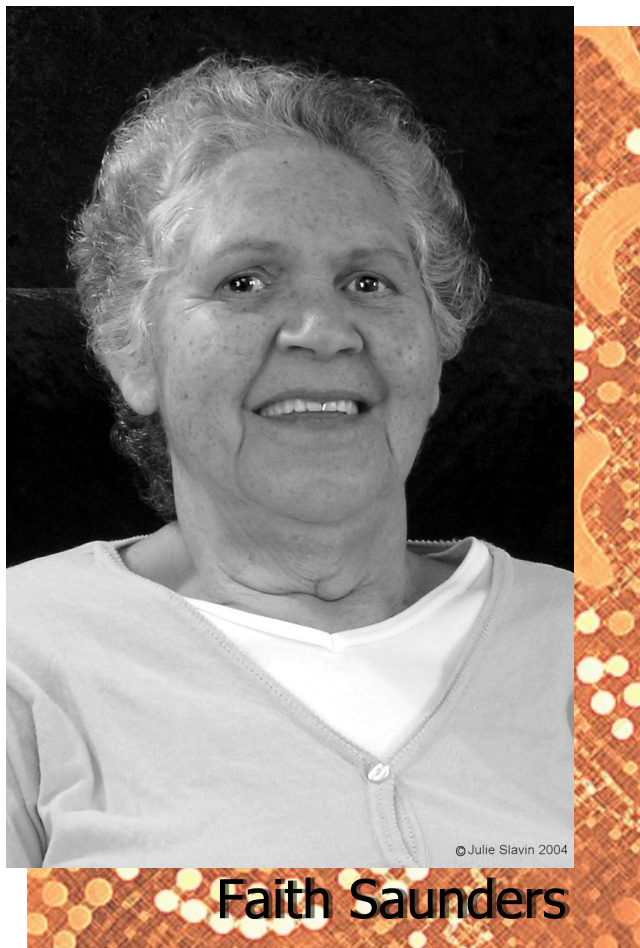
Funny thing I remember, local lads pinning me up the clothes line. Cause I was a bugger of a girl and I wanted to follow them everywhere and they didn't want me to go, so they pinned me up on the clothesline. About ten minutes I s'pose, next person came along and found me. It was the longest ten minutes of my life.

When I was 18 I moved to Purfleet then married a Purfleet man when I was 20. Got married, went to Sydney for a couple of years worked on council. Couldn't handle the city life so we come back up here and he took up his fishing again. Did pretty well in the fishing business. He's gone away from home more times than he was at home. Lookin' after his boats, he used to fish with Horace and Colin Ping.

I'd like my children and grandchildren to get some Aboriginal knowledge into 'em instead of just learning the white man's way all the time. Learn some Aboriginal Culture, we had to do it a bit late in life, we still learning about it. Like them to do it now while they're young. *(Did they stop you when you were young?)* Not that they stopped us, there was no-one around to do that sort of thing then. Eddie (Lobban) talked language but I didn't know him then.

I'd like to be remembered for just being me, being around kids, around the school doing things for kids. Just what I do for other people, particularly kids. I done it most of my life from the time my eldest daughter started pre school. Thirty seven years ago, that's when I started working with kids around the schools. Not just Koori kids, white kids did it in Taree High. Went away out west with a group, went away on Aboriginal studies, mixed black and white.

Nothing special, mine's just an ordinary life like anyone else, just got out and made myself available to help the kids at school. If you help the kids maybe they'll turn out to know a bit more about their culture or whatever. A lot of them are learning it now. I have nephews coming up from north of Maitland learning up here cause there's nothing going for them down that way. So there's a lot of 'em want to get into it but they just got to find the right sources to get to where they want to go with it. ♦



Faith Saunders

Faith: Not a lot of memories of grandparents, grandfather was dead before I grew up. My grandma was a midwife, she looked after the women and delivered their babies. And one day I stuck a tack up in my nose and oh, my mother nearly went silly. She's screaming and she was making me cry so she took me, my grandmother was next door see. There was Uncle Bill's, Russell's house and when we walked in she seen how mum was going on and she said 'Elsie, stop that' she said, 'you're frightening the child'. She asked me where was the tack and I told her which nostril. She said put your finger on the other one and blow and it was simple as that. That's what I remember about her. My parents, I had lovely parents, my father was a pastor.

My father was Bert Marr, his brother was Pat Marr and Uncle Digger, Bossy Marr they called him Dalkai. He was our Elder years ago and we all lived under an Elder. He was a very strict elder too, he told us what we had to do and what not to do and we dun it. We wasn't running around the mission all night like kids do today, we were in bed before dark. When our mothers or fathers whistled, every father and mother had a whistle on the mission that was different, and every child knew that whistle. When we'd hear the whistle we'd say to one another 'oh that's your father you'd better go home'.

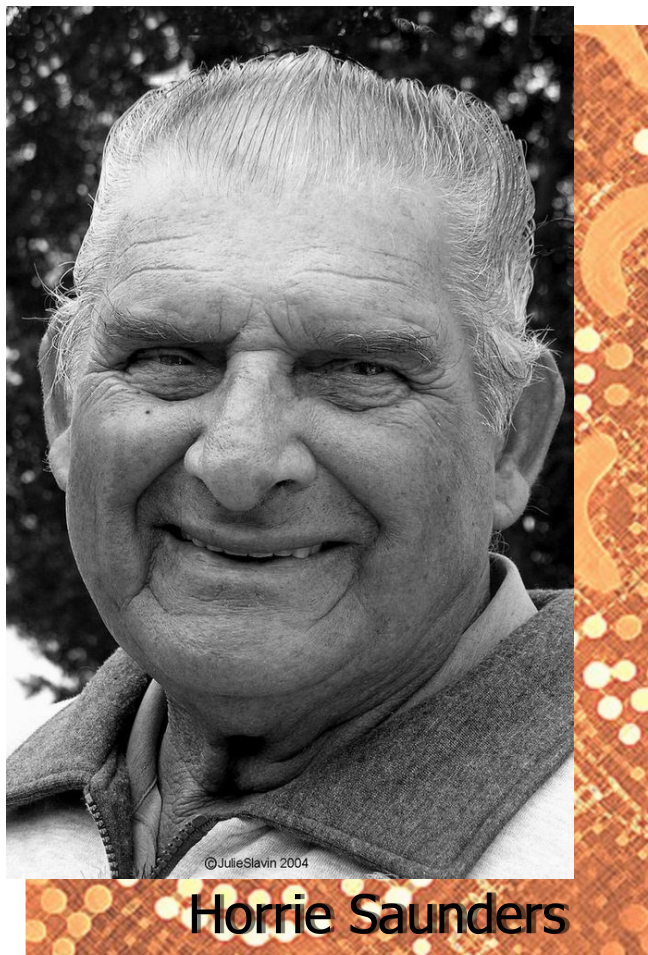
Horrie: I remember a little bit, Ralph. My grandfather died before I knew him. My grandmother, I was only very small, can't remember much of it of those days. But they say it was the good ol days but we used to have to carry water from the creeks and wells and all that sort of stuff. That's all I remember, carrying water, I don't remember any good days.

Question on Blood Line. They always known as Bapu or grandfather, poppa, that's what we used to call them. And Gran was either Gran or Nan, that was what we always call them. We was taught to respect our elders and we never forgot because if we forgot you'd get a hidin'. So you made sure you didn't forget, that's the main thing I remember.

Uncle Horrie: the worst one I can remember and the funniest thing, we had a horse. I was harnessing the horse up at night for the old fella to go to the pictures and her name was Dolly, that horse. She had a habit of stamping her foot and I'm there putting a collar on her neck and me toe! The next minute I'm looking down, was crying, my toenail's gone. My big toe. I never forget that night, something I'll remember for the rest of my life cause my toenail grew funny after that

Aunty Faith: it was about Valerie, my sister was only little. Rexie Morris was up at the house for the day and mum had some soup cooked in this big pot. Instead of going out and throwing the rest of the hot soup out, she threw it from the door. There was a dog and it went all over his little back side and scalded him. Valerie and Rex decided to be nurse and doctor, so mum said, 'take him to the garden and get some dirt and put water on it. Wet it and make it like a poultice, put it on his backside'. They got some cloth and they wrapped him up and for all the world looked like he had a nappy, a nappy on this dog, walking around looked so funny. He never lost any hair, it healed up good. It was a remedy the mud took the heat out straight away.

I done some drawings at TAFE and I done em at home as well. I've done a lot of needle work, they're beautiful, all around the walls I done. You'd think they are paintings but they're done with the needles and I done a lot of knitting. For every grandchild that was born I knitted a cot blanket, and I done squares and put em together like that. I loved doing it, it was good therapy.



Horrie Saunders

Uncle Horrie: I could vouch for fishing nets, cause that's all I do. Very skilled, takes years to learn how to make nets. I made fishing baskets, I had a go at that, which wasn't very successful. We done basket work when we were going to school, making those little baskets for carrying fruit and stuff in. That's what we used to do in our school days. Drawing an all that I was no good at, I was behind the black stump.

Aunty Faith: my sister again. We were late having our tea, and didn't matter what time we went to bed. Dad always made sure we had something to eat before we laid down and went to sleep and it was bread and jam. I goes off to sleep and I'm sound asleep and I'm feeling in the bed behind me. I'm saying to my mum, (there was 3 of us in bed together), 'mum Valerie put jam in the bed' and she said 'well where?' 'Oh just behind me here' and when she looked it was guna. *(laugh)*

Uncle Horrie: One time ago a farmer was growing melons up at Slaters' Hill and we knew these melons was just about ripe. Anyhow, a mate of mine, we was sneaking up along the fence. And next minute me mate spotted a gun coming over the log, he said 'the farmer Slater's there, come on lets go'. We're

running flat chat through the scrub and 'BOOM, BOOM', 2 double barrel shot. Me mate sung out, 'eh I'm shot, I'm shot you go ahead I'm shot'. But at the time we was flat chat going but all we could think was getting away. When we thought we got down in the bush and sat down by the river looking at one another and we both burst out laughing. We couldn't think about laughing when we was running but after we thought about when he said he was shot, he was real sad saying 'you go, don't you get shot'. And when we finished we landed there together, *(laugh)* fella wasn't shot! We was a funny thing but we was about to charge on them melons, we knew they should've been ripe.

Aunty Faith: My mother told me. She said this when we was growing up. 'Beware of the hairy man.' she said 'When you walking along the road and a car comes along, just run away and hide cause they'll ask you to get in the car and you don't want to do that. Or they'll coax you with lollies or something like that.' But she said 'no, run away'. She said 'the hairy man will get ya and put you down in the hole. And when ya down there screaming and crying for your father and mother and when your father and mother comes along to get ya, you'll run the other way'. She said the moral of the story is that 'he's a molester, he's a molester'. I never forget it as a child, the way she told it, the Hairy Man. They told us that when we was little.

Uncle Horrie: I could only say, the best thing I could say is respect your Elders. I used to get morning sticks for Aunty Helen Lobban. All she could speak was in lingo, in the language, and she'd speak in the language to me. I learnt a lot but when I went to school, the manager which is our teacher, said 'don't come here with that gibberish, I don't want to hear it in this school'. So we lost our dialects over them years. And when we were home we'd speak in the language. We could talk in the language in them days when we were kids. When we went to school that manager fella, he didn't want to have a bar of it. So that's how we lost it, very sad. But our culture, we lost a lot of our dialects that should have been carried on to our young people, passed it on. I'd like to see it taught again, passed on to our young people. Language is identity.

Once I went down the south coast, fishing, and when I got down there I stayed with the Campbells. Old Tom Campbell was alive in them days, the old father, and he asked me what was your bukwi or totem and bukwi means your meat. He asked me, he said 'oh

you got to go up and stay with your people' and that way our people never married into their bukwi or totem. That's how they kept the blood line so pure and that's what I like to see taught today. Because young people today are gonna marry their close relations, because they really don't know their bukwi or totem. That's what we gotta pass onto our young people, cause that's what kept our blood line clean.

Aunty Faith: Going to Sunday School and being reared up in the Sunday School. Like our kids are today, which I'm really pleased to see. Our older lot always went to Sunday School now this lot of kids is the same. I reckon that's the most valuable lesson because they carry it with them and never forget it.

Uncle Horrie: The most valuable is to love one another. Without love, you know something is the most basic thing being taught to love one another. It's hard to understand that you could love another fella as much as you love yourself, that's what the word of God says. That is the best thing I ever been taught. My father in law told me that was the basic thing in life cause all our people, they all close, they shared everything. They had and they knew how to love one another because besides they wouldn't be able to live with one another, they had to do it. They had to share with everything they had. I remember the old fella always hunt for wallaby or kangaroo, he was like Uncle Warner is today. He always supply the bukwi that was the wallaby or kangaroo, he always supplied and kept the mission in meat. We had an open verandah all right around and you used to see wallaby or kangaroo hanging up for people to come and get what they want.

Aunty Faith: I would like to be remembered as a good honest person, that loved everybody, treated every body the same. (*You've taught a lot of kids*) Yeah that's right, and they haven't forgotton. There's kids your age (early 30s) coming up and saying 'you taught me this and taught me that'. I was at the football in Wingham one day and (Frog) came up and said 'Aunt, this is my children' and I said 'gee I'm glad you brought your children to see me'. He said 'Aunt, you know when I needed someone you were the only one that was

around, you was always there for me'. When I first went in teaching, they said 'you're not doing this for praise, you won't get no stars in your crown or anything like that'. But if a child comes up to you and says that he remembers what you taught him, that's the reward.

Uncle Horrie: I would like to be remembered as an honest man, I never robbed any body for nothing, in my entire life. If there was a halfpenny to be divided amongst the crew it would be divided, so it was pennies and halfpennies in them days. Every penny and halfpenny was counted for, I kept a book for pays and all that sort of stuff and everyone was always satisfied. Never any arguments about pays or anything like that.

When I got down there in Sydney the minister for agriculture, he come and told me outside that I won the award and I didn't want to know about it. And when I sat in the seat, I heard I'd won it and I was disappointed for coming and telling me, I wanted it to be a surprise. He blew it out of proportion, they get all excited these Gubbas.*

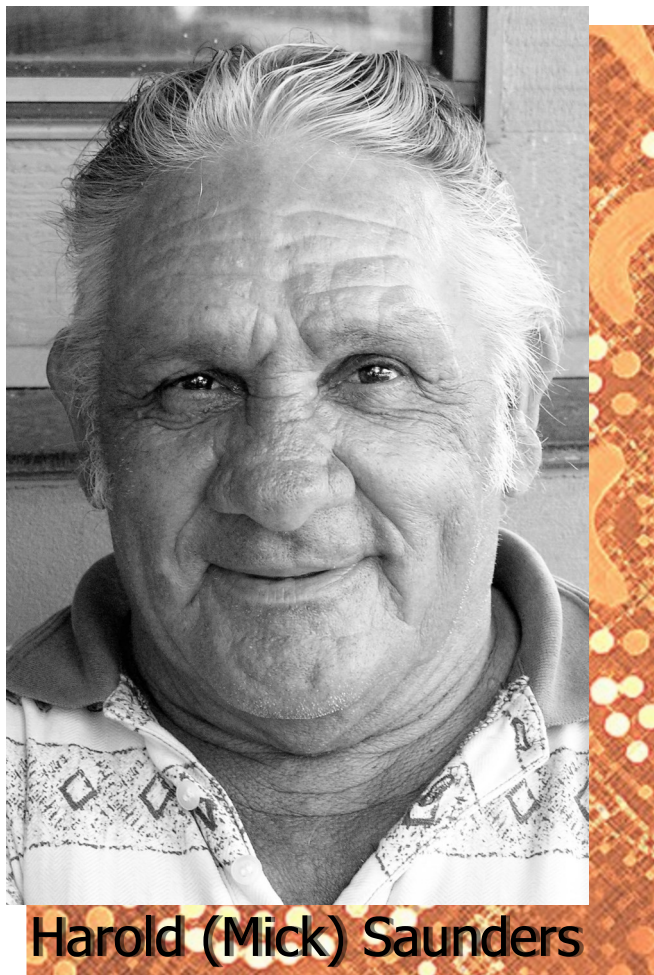
*FOOTNOTE: Uncle Horrie has the title from ATSIIC for the Oldest established Indigenous business in Australia.

1999 NSW Aboriginal Business of the Year, Horace Saunders Snr. Family Fishing Businessman.

ATSIIC 2000 inaugural Many Rivers Regional Council NAIDOC Community Achievement Awards. Certificate of Achievement, Awarded to Horace Saunders for Many Rivers Regional Council Person of the Year.

Auntie Faith got an award from the Queen; To Faith Saunders, greetings, where as her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the 2nd Queen of Australia has instituted an Australian Medal to commemorate the Centenary Federation of Australia I do by this warrant Award you the **Centenary Medal**. By his excellence command John Howard, Prime Minister.

Boys Town Family Care - Family of the Year 1998. ♦



Harold (Mick) Saunders

My grandparents that I know of is my great grandmother, that's granny Matty Saunders and me grandmother, me dad's mother, Lisa. Lisa Maher married a Maher grandfather Digger Maher who later married Herb Ritchie from Bainbridge, Kempsey. I don't recall my mother's grandmother or grandfather, I never seen em. Or my mother's father or my mother's mother, I never ever seen em cause I was born in the '40s, '43. That's the reason why I really don't know me background on me mother's side, either grandmother or great grandmother. Just we know our great grandmother was an Maryanne Perry. Mum's great great grandmother, her husband was a Mears and they're buried out at Bungwahl where they lived, that's the other side of Forster towards Bulahdelah. And we only knew them lately because we was told our family tree about them. Something we didn't know but we know now cause we was told. But I was told we was related to the Mears from Cundletown, Ronny Mears and Neville and Ronnie, that's how we know we were related to them.

Grandparents, they were somebody we didn't know about, I didn't anyways till the later years, but as I said we knew about em through Uncle Fred Bugg cause he told me the

Mears was related to us, but that's on me mother's side.

My mother never drank or smoked. One of the best women around here to rear kids. We were all reared on the breast, we were never reared on the bottle but we drunk milk later on in the years from the managers down there. Dad was a good man, he was one of the best. He'd pull motors out of his truck to pieces, put it all back together again. Do a valve grind and everything. He was one of the best around here, cause he took notice and learnt all that white people showed him. All them blackfellas, half caste, quarter caste, they'd pick it up as they go along because it just comes natural to them. But they were the best parents a fella could ever have and I wouldn't ask for any other parents if it all went back to the same day we'd start all over again. They was mum and dad and that's what they was.

(Have you got good memories?)

Yeah, nearly everything. We were born on the hill up here, on top of the hill. Born and reared that's why they call it Saunders' Hill. Where the dog pen is, and old Johnny's shack is. That's where we were born but we lived the life with the manager and we had to do as we were told, be in before dark, or we got the stick around the arse, all different things like that. We got the strap but it was very good here then. Everybody just had a good law. Parents could deal with any kids that played up, made sure they done as they're told, never do it again. But today you can't do that, it's past a joke these days. Because you've gotta fight the law, got to fight the white man, you fight him. Everybody as far as it goes they just don't care cause they want everything their way, and they make the law. We've got no more law to try give our kids some lesson, keep them out of trouble, nothing much you can do about it.

Lot of things happened when we were young. Funny things happened. Uncle Charlie eating my dog meat. He used to get drunk with us you see, up at the old house next door to Kenny's there now. He'd get drunk and he'd say, 'aw you got a feed' and he'd say, 'you got any tinned stuff?', he loved his tinned stuff Uncle Charlie, Charlie Edwards. 'Yeah Unc in the room there'. He got the tin but it got no label, open 'er up and he was eating it. A good tin it was and he turned round and I looked and I said to him 'that ain't no bully beef, that's dog meat', it was Chum! He said, 'I went down the road that night' he said 'and I looked up at the full moon' he said 'and I howled all the way home at the moon' *(lots of laughter)*. That is fair dinkum, anyone can tell you that yarn

around here about dog tucker.

The only thing we was interested in was fishing. I threw a few boomerangs, I can throw a boomerang. The only other interesting thing was horse riding cause we stole horses and that. Yeah, we stole them, yep we did. Bill got his car going, course we stole em. We didn't care, we rode em down to the ground too. They was old nags after we finished with them. Just old bridle on around the nose, noses in the bit for a bit, broke bit, yeah we rode em, them horses. Uncle Frank an em they had plenty of horses, we had horses on the mission but we still went away and stole other horses because some of them were better to ride and faster. Like Karuah, like the one I used to ride at Karuah, when I was 15 and went to Karuah. I used to ride him, he was a good horse. Only used a bridle and a rope bit on him too, Farley's horse. Anyway, a lot of things happened around here in our times, fights around the gambling rings.

Was mending nets one of your chores? I helped mend a couple (*fishing nets*) but didn't have to. We had other fellas, like Warner an em to do the nets but I very seldom done it. But I was there to clean the boat out, take the fish out of the net. Just me and dad, went mostly on me own. I had me legs then, before I lost them, had them taken off me, cut off me, got em caught in the fire. We used to catch plenty of fish, me and dad, down Old Bar passage. But them sort of days are gone now. Hardly any bank left now, the bank's gone away, used to be plenty of oysters, not many oysters left. Every thing's going down and out here around this place because the white man has taken over properly. He's getting' right under us and he's going to clean us right out. But we're still not going to lay down and let him do it. But, the best part about life was when you was young, we enjoyed it. Even when I come back from Sydney with a new pair of legs and I still went huntin', fishing, full of water, got in the water, wore about six pair of good legs out. New legs, thousand dollar legs but I still worked but today I'm bugged, I just don't work no more, just relax and drink grog. (*laugh*)

The truck out here. Pop's red Ford, ah brown Ford, ute, me and Erb. Herb was the driver and Uncle Herb, me, Herbie, Nuggett, Bibby, Lloydie we went out to kills and the forestry huts was out there then. Lionel Atkin broke in, I climbed in through this little window, we got all the petrol and filled the truck up full of petrol. We went out to the Lookout for a ride and yeah, that's right, old

Herb, he had to give Lloydie a drive and what happened, Lloydie ran off the road down an embankment and head to the bush. And a tree stopped us from going down this big gorge. Anyways, couldn't get out, the door was locked, they locked on us. Uncle Herb went bang, bang and punched the window, broke the window and cut all his arm open, bleeding like a bullock. But when he broke the window the door come open, it was on our side. The funniest part about it, he give old Lloydie a drive, Lloydie Russell a drive and when Lloydie seen Uncle Herb with blood pouring out of his arm, that's when he went into a fit, because he's anaemic. He didn't like blood, yeah, kicking it in there, he fainted he did. There's we trying to drag him out of there to get him out and him stretching back and kicking and fitting there. And of course he seen all the blood run out of Uncle Herb's hand. When we did get him out, he come to, he come back into real life again, he said 'what happened?'. They said, 'you rolled the truck Lloyd, that's why we're here'. I got a busted arm from busting a window open (*laugh*). Yeah, that's one we can laugh about, old Lloydie Russell. He's in Karuah now, he lives with my cousin, Maureen.

What lesson would you like to teach the children? Bush tucker. The most you know about, fishing, about all the plants in the bush, the fruit in the bush. Plus your wallaby, kangaroo, the meat you eat. You must always remember that food is there for you and to know how to get it. Because one day this place here is going to come to a near end because of white people fighting with one another, killing one another. Because something is going to go on very shortly so we got to teach an prepare em for some day when that comes around. Not to play with fire for a starter. (*laugh*) Not to play with the fire, not to play with guns. Make sure you knew how to use it, but I taught meself on the gun. I learnt and I learnt the easy way because it was bush and you could do what you pleased with a gun in my days. But not shoot around where cattle was or where there were people, or where people living, and not to shoot little birds. That's something I did, that's pigeon shooting, that was tucker to eat.

A valuable lesson was to obey your Elders and always keep in good touch with em and not to cheek or back answer. Make sure you done all that and be good to your mum at any time. Never back answer or cheek. That's something we never did because we wasn't game to cause we got knocked on the arse. They were the most valuable lessons we was

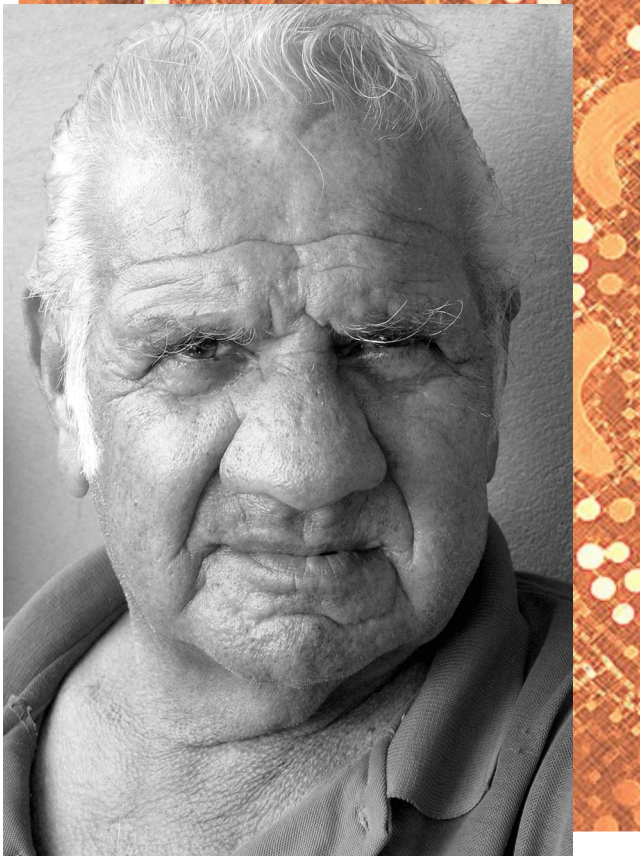
taught and to learn to cook, cause one day you haven't got a mum or a dad to cook for you and you've got to learn to cook yourself. If you don't, you starve. Today, a lot of meat is out of tins. Today's blackfellas, cause they don't know how to cook, young people, they never tried to learn or be taught how to cook. Cause they just plain bloody lazy, that's all and it's what the white man taught em, to eat out of cans. Like Uncle Charlie eating dog food, instead of eating the bully beef and that's what happens to people that don't learn to cook when they're young. So all you little boys and girls, gotta learn to cook cause one day you're going to be doing it yourself because you never know when you're gonna be on your f***** own. So that's all there is to it, you gotta learn to cook. That's the most valuable thing is to learn to cook. That's the main thing cause, look after yourself, respect yourself. If you don't, you just go down the drain and you end up like someone else. You end up 6 foot under. Don't do hard grog, keep away from hard liquor, drinka beer alright! Just keep away from

the hard stuff and you'll live longer.

How would you like to be remembered? Ah, everybody'd remember a person like me because I was such a f***** grumpy old bugger, sleezy ol fella. So I'd like to be remembered as somebody that helped and taught the kids to look after themselves and have a bit of respect for Elder people. And they'll be respected the same way as when they get older and older people and young fellas will respect them. But I don't think it's going to come to that because the way the white man's law's going, it's just making everything difficult for the Aborigines. Half caste, quarter caste, three quarter, they're just making something, pushing them further and further back and into a little square and that'll be the end of 'im.

That's the reason we're here today fighting for em, trying to get em back on their feet, get em doing something they should be doing in the first place, respecting themselves and learn how to look after themselves. ♦

Kenny Saunders



Well, my great grandmother, she come from Hawkesbury River and she lived in Singleton. Then they left Singleton and they came to Taree, and my father, he married Maggie Clark from Port Stephens. And my great grandfather, Charlie Castledine, he lived with us, in Purfleet on the top of the hill, Saunders' Hill they called it. I remember him as a good ol fella, he was Irish. He bought a heap of property down at Wallaby Head for 2/6d an acre and it's never ever been claimed since he went. It was common knowledge amongst our family, for us. We worked all our life. We was fishermen and then we was corkwood cutters. We were a brush and grubbin' for the people who we got the corkwood off. Titady Creek, that's as far as I know now, I forget about a lot we had.

I was named after me father, Ken Saunders. He was a good man. He seen that we went to work, we never lived on the dole. Did a lot of rabbiting with me Uncle Jerry Saunders. Done rabbit trapping with me father. Taught these skills by me uncle and me father. Yeah, we were fishermen and he learnt us how to fish and prawn, our father. I left Purfleet and

went to Karuah when I was 14^{1/2}, fishing nets, with me father, we fished down there.

Good times. Yeah, the fire, we had plenty of fish, plenty of everything. Yeah, they were good days. We were happy at Karuah cause we lived with me mother's sister, Auntie Janey. There was no manager at Karuah, there was only a manager here in Taree. No, we didn't sign nothing, not up here, we signed nothing. Not like a lot of other missions, we went onto. You had to sign your name before you went on and sign your name when you went off.

Mum was a good cook, good damper cooker too. Curried rabbits and curried wallaby. I'm the second eldest, got a sister older than me but I'm the oldest on the Saunders' side. It was hard for us, if we didn't do what we were told we was either hit under the earhole or a stick around us to make us do what we had to do. He (dad) was pretty strict, sent to bed with no tea if we didn't do what you was told to do. She (mum) came to the rescue of me brother Nugget, hand the tucker out the window to him. He (dad) found out but he never worried about it, he just let it go. He was a good man, he worked on the railway, he was an engine driver and a fireman on the railway. He worked on the railways as a labourer till he was a fireman, that's all I know about him. Me mother was a good mother. She was home all the time. She done what she had to do for the kids and many a time I went down there with em and helped to pull the prawn net, with me father.

We had no time to laugh, them days, you had to work. Yeah, I had to work when I was 14. I used to go and get the ice, me and some other fellas used to go and get some ice and have it there for the prawners, in a horse and cart. Don't remember anything like that (funny memory). We had to do what we had to do and that was it. Yeah that's right, what you had to do you had to do. If you didn't do it, well you copped it

I was never involved in anything. I was only involved in work. Yeah, (mending nets) and digging graves, I was a grave digger out from Purfleet from the Mission graveyard to the Redbank cemetery. It was easy (work)

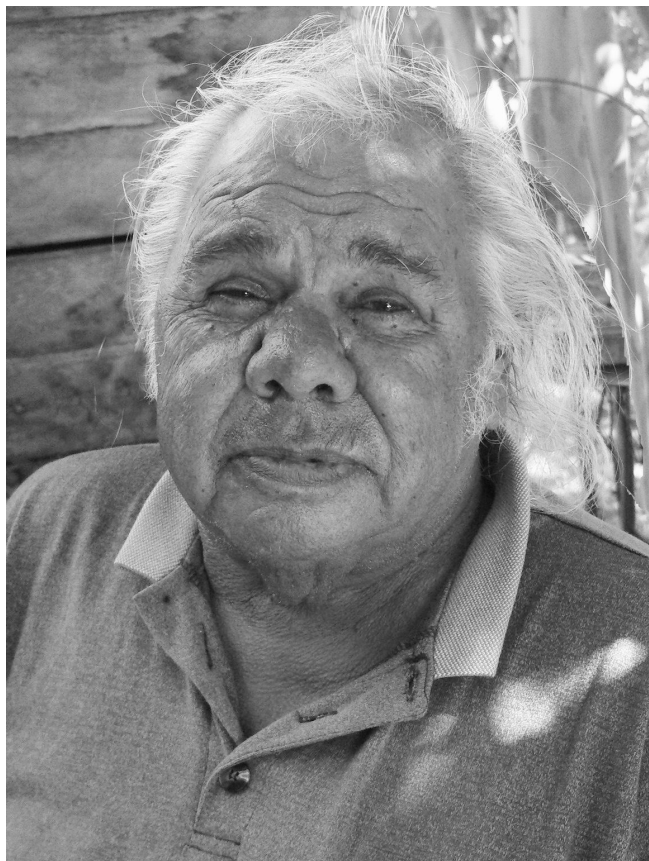
them days cause you had good people working with you. Nuggett and Warner, they done all the mending nets, I done a little bit of it but I just sewed the holes up.

I wish for them (children, grandchildren) to get a job instead of going round looking for the dole, drugs, smoking drugs. I'd like em to have a job, make a whatsaname out of them, a good person. I was taught to do it, wasn't I, I was taught everything. If I didn't do it, I was made to do it. And I lived a different life to a lot of other people. I worked nearly all me life and I'm just going on the way I lived years ago, easy life. Never smoked in me life. Never interfered with me. The only thing what interfered with people when they say, smell this, smell that, they smoke themselves. The same thing with other people, they smoked and they were told to give it away cause they couldn't put up with it. That's their problem, they can't stand them sort of things but that thing don't interfere with me, don't worry me.

How would you like to be remembered? Well, they remember me cause I'm 68 now, I lived that long. Another couple of months I'll be 69 in June, I'll be 69. Honest in a lot of ways. I'm a horse better. I like horses, betting on horses. Just go along about me own mind. Like me beer, now and again. Never drank in a pub for 9 years, only lemon squash.

What would you like to teach the children? Nothing to say (to anyone), no good to say it anyway, it'd never work. A different generation. This generation now hopeless and I'll tell em too. This generation is a hopeless generation I ever known. You can't fix em up. The law's against ya, not like the old days, fix ya up if you didn't do what you're told. The old fellas, you get knocked arse over head (laughs). That's what happened to ya, that's right Ralph. Yeah (the law) should be strict on em. I feel they be getting worse. I don't think any government done it. It's only the do gooders doing it, stopping all this, stopping the elder people doing what they want to do to em and that's it.

Thank you too, for listening to my little story. ♦



Garry (Nugget) Saunders

My mother was a Clarke, my father was a Saunders from Singleton. Me mother was born in Laurieton, alright. My father was very hard, he threw me out of the house when I was 14 years of age. I finished up on the other side of Griffith, near Wagga. I hated him for what he did to me, he wouldn't give me a feed. He wouldn't give me anything, throw me out. I hated him for what he did to me. I was away for two years, I finished up in Victoria and when I came back home, I shook his hand and I said 'thanks for making a man out of me' and that was it. Me mother didn't drink, she didn't smoke and she didn't like nothin' in the house. She kept throwin' us out all the time, she was very hard too. That's what I can remember.

Goin back years ago, Granny Matty, Grandfather Castledine, even Grandfather Maher from my Grandmother's first marriage, he was in the war, Digger Maher. I can just remember him, he used to sew the nets for me old man. That's all I remember.

Me old man taught me how to sew fishing nets. I sewed a lot of them with me and me brother Mick, sewed nets for him. We killed a lot of fish with them. Me father taught

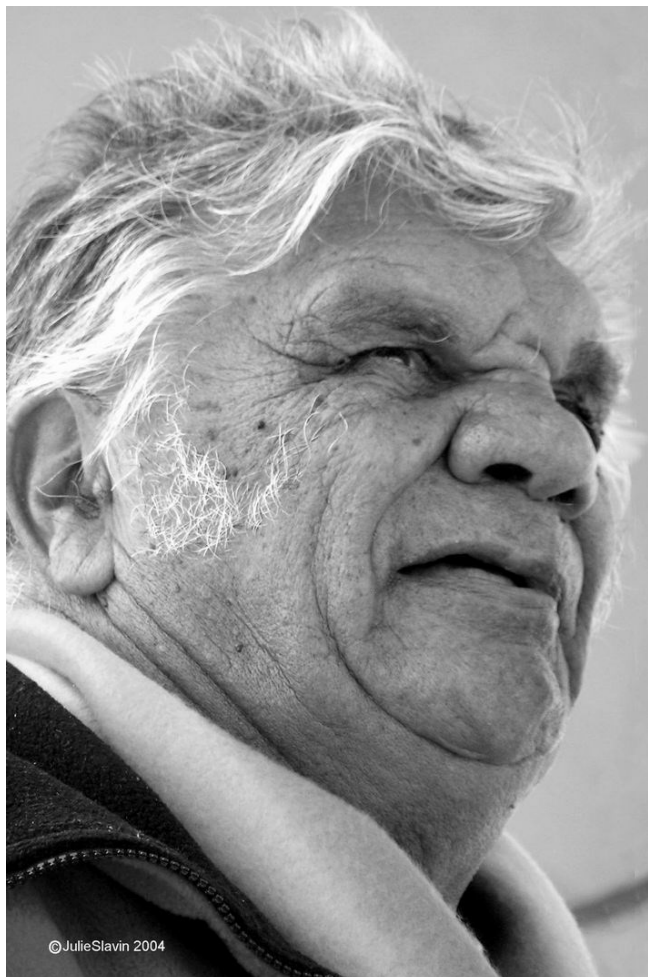
me how to sew them nets when I was young.

One part of it, I went down the Manning River and killed boatloads of fish. My old man had money hangin' out of his shirt pockets and everything. He come back up to Widders Creek where we had the depot. He fell out and we all had to swim for the money, cause it was floatin' round in the water everywhere. *(laugh)* Yeah that was bad. Yeah we got all the money back. Come home, his nephew, Horrace Saunders said 'they're throwing money around in the river' *(laughs)*, 'that's how much money they made they're throwin' it around in the creek down there!' *What about the old man, did he get out of the water?* Yeah, we got 'im out with his old coat on, he never was without that coat. He had that coat that was full of water, yeah. He wasn't too happy about that. *Was he making sure you weren't pocketing any change ?* Yeah he made sure of that!

When I was a young fella, my old man told me 'when you grow up to be a man son, you don't need nobody, you only need yourself'. That's why I've got everything here on me own now today. Yeah, that's what he told me and that's why I've got everything. I told Ralph, I've gone over and over, I told Jamie, I know I told 'em over and over.

Well, the most valuable lesson I was taught, don't take any white man near any sacred sites or anything, and don't tell them about it. You remember that son, that's what he told me.

How would you like to be remembered? Just a Saunders that's all, takin' after the Saunders from Singleton, Kenneth Edward Saunders, he was my dad. He's Ralph's grandfather and they'll always love 'im. ♦



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Warner Saunders

My grandparents, I can remember right back to my great, great grandmother. She was a tribal woman, she couldn't speak English. Her daughter was my grandmother, she could speak English and she learnt me a lot. My grandfather, he learnt me a lot especially in the fishing industry. My great grandmother, she was Wanarooa, Granny Matty Saunders. Saunders come from Singleton. She could only speak the language, she couldn't speak English. My grandmother, she come to live here. I can remember a lot of things my grandmother taught me. How to fish, how to get things out of the water, especially down at the ocean. How to get ocean food and things like that. My mother was born in Wauchope, went to school in Laurieton. My father was born in Singleton. He come here with my grandmother to live here.

We used to go out to the bush with our uncles, huntin' wallabies, kangaroos and whatever for our bush food. There was two uncles, Uncle Jerry and Uncle Frank. One day we went out, when the beagles would stop hunting they'd send us up huntin' wallabies down or kangaroos. So one day we got a bit tired, we said 'oh Unc, we get down here with it for a while', to uncle Frank, so we sat down

there and he's listening. He had a shotgun and he's waiting for the wallabi to come. He heard the dog barking and he said 'oh gee that dog's a long time bringing that wallabi through, I'll go over here for a walk boys', he went over and we heard a shot and we run over, he shot the dog, the beagle. The beagle was on the log scratching herself, barking, so he shot the dog out the road.

I was a fisherman, done all me own fishing nets. Not only that, my father taught me everything that he knew in the bush. I'm very good at anything in the bush. At the moment I've got five Didjeridoos made but I can make boomerangs, spears, nulla nullas that's bundis, all them things. Father used to make paddles, maddy cans and axe handles. He'd go in the bush and make all these things and I learnt from him. Aboriginal art yes, I'm real good at it, traditional art. Now I'm teaching young kids and some men too, some ones in their 30s. I teach them to do all these things you know, I love it teaching art.

Once we was down the river and we used to go prawning early in the morning. We had a couple of Elders and me and my cousins and they was sort of Ned Kellys. One morning these two old fellas, me uncles, Uncle Baldy Marr and Uncle Darby Ridgeway was working together in one boat. So we went down there just before them and one of the boys that was with me tied their rope up onto a tree underwater, their net rope. I thought it was bad at the time, but when they was pulling away they shot all their rope off, Shot all their net off, they didn't know because it's tied to a tree, going in the dark. Oh it was bad to do to two old fellas like that. But now you look back its is only a joke and you can laugh at it cause they was two tricky old fellas. They had a laugh themselves.

In the early days, music seemed to be the main thing on the reserve, you know, on the mission. I learnt to play guitar at an early age, I started learning to play guitar at twelve years of age. But I learnt on the smaller instrument, the ukulele, at eight years, I was eight when I played that. Then I learnt the guitar and started learning other things, piano, learnt to play other things. There seemed to be all the kids on the mission used to be able to play something, or sing something. Music was the main part of the mission. Not only play modern music or old time music we used to have church every night and we learnt our music in the church. Then we became a band in the Salvation Army, we had our own band, Aboriginal band in the Salvation Army. And I think there's still

photos 'round Taree of that band. I'd say I was in my teens them days, I was very young and we was all religious. And then you know, weekends they'd have a dance. We used to live up in the bush and we had a great big dusty place where they used to put a piano out there, get the guitars out and they'd have a dance in the dust, all the old people'd dance. When we was little kids you know they'd have a good time. It was the same with old mission, one big hall they used to have dances in that. They mainly had dances where ever they lived. If they didn't have a dance hall they'd have it where they lived or anywhere. Especially not only the old time dances but the real dances, our cultural dances Corroborees. I used to be in a Corroboree group with my uncles, Uncle Charlie Edwards, Uncle Bally Marr, Uncle Ronny Marr, I was in that group, Uncle Digger Marr. We had our own Corroboree group. We used to dance, do our Corroboree in front of the Elders. The Elders used to sit around and watch us make sure we made no mistake. We used to have to do the corroborees the proper way and I loved that too, dancing. I loved dancing, not only the music, you know the dancing part of it too. Yeah music was very important culture to us in early days, school days.

At the moment I'd like to pass on the language. I'm really set on this, passing on our language, I go to these meetings, language school meetings. Hopefully one day we may be teaching it in schools. Yes I'd like to see the language go ahead.

The most valuable lesson I was ever taught was discipline in the bush with my elders, or discipline with my father when I went fishing in the boat. In them days we wasn't allowed to speak until we were spoken to and that was the most important lesson I ever learned. Cause you couldn't talk in front of any of the Elders, you had to wait till they asked you to talk. That's the most important lesson I ever learnt in my life, I still carry on with it. That's discipline.

I'd like to be remembered as one of the old, I always say when I go to functions. I say 'I'm the old black fella behind the black stump'. Well I'd like to be remembered as an old Aboriginal that was behind the black stump and always will be behind the black stump. But I'd like to be remembered as an Aboriginal, not as anything else. ♦



Oh, I have lovely memories of mum and dad and Nan and pop. I miss them a lot. I have memories of when we was up home in Craven when we grew up as kids about 1/2 hour run from Gloucester down. That's where I was born, in Craven. That's where the Clarkes' come from up there at Craven. They originate from there. Dad was a fetler, a railway worker and mum just looked after us. My uncles worked in the mill down at Craven.

We used to go and pinch fruit down at the creek me and my girlfriend. There's a big navel orange tree down there we used to go down the hill and down the bottom of the hill. The chap who owned the property, he used to watch us coming down so one day we come down and the tree was chopped down and was floating down the river. We followed the tree down till it got up a bit on the bank then we pinched all the oranges off it. So that was it, we had our last laugh about that.

We had a go at basket weaving as kids. Then we used to knit with needles made out of sticks, sharpen up the sticks and made needles out of em to knit. For the basket making, we used to get the reeds from out of the creek and just try and doing it like that, little baskets an that. You know we tried as best we could, we had no teacher, we was out the bush living. We didn't have much, we had to entertain ourselves then. I didn't even go to

high school cause we was in the bush and there was no buses running up to Gloucester. So we had to learn by correspondence. I never went to high school but learnt a lot from correspondence.

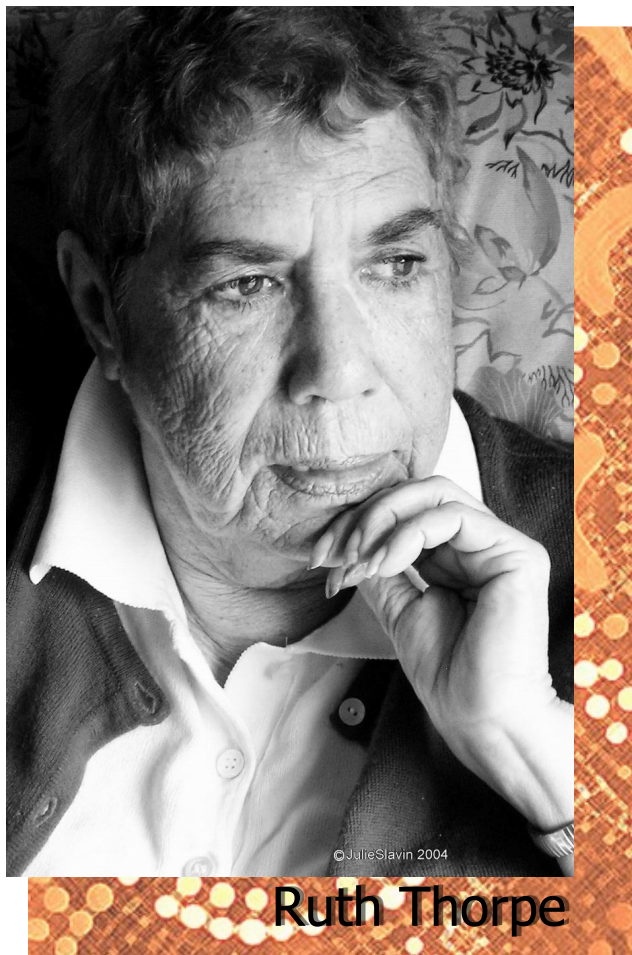
When I went swimming in the creek I got stuck under a log and nearly drowned and they dived down and got me from out under the log. I was sort of stuck under the log and that's why I hate water, can't stand deep water. That's when the bull chased us, chased me and my sisters, it was very scary. We got away from it.

The lessons I'd like to pass on is educate themselves. That's the main thing, education that's what I'd like to see. I'm a support officer at TAFE. Been there since 1989 and think it's time to retire, getting a bit ancient now. It's great amongst the young kids, keeps you going, keeps you young.

Well my mother and father always told us to respect the Elders, respect people and that's what I've done and passed onto my kids too. Respect your Elders and respect other people.

I came down (to Forster) in 1949, got married when I was 18, and settled down and had 11 in the family and reared 3 grandkids up, and still rearing them up.

As people see me that's how I'd like to be remembered, as people see Me! ♦



Ruth Thorpe

My grandmother, her parents, and her grandparents, which I will speak about now, was that my great, great grandfather came from England. He was an Englishman. Sent out here by a convent to work for a place called Dungowan near Walcha and he worked for the Panceys.

While he was working for them, he saw a full tribe of Aboriginals walking by. And one of the ladies was a very young girl. She was very sick so she couldn't follow the tribe and Mr Watson, the man that I'm speaking of, said that he tamed her. He fed her and later on she had a baby to him. He couldn't keep going. He was carrying her on his back and the Panceys gave him a cow to milk for the baby, which he could not look after any longer. He gave the baby to the Panceys who were very wealthy, from England. They reared up the daughter, the girl and she married Charlie Pacey, one of the boys, the eldest boy from Charlie Pacey and his wife. The baby later married him and had 9 children to him and one of those children was my grandmother, Violet Pacey. She married James Barr from Wee Waa, coming down that area from Tamworth. When she went to Tamworth, she met him there. They had quite a number of children, 9 or 10 in that family and my mother was one of those children which was Stella. Stella Barr, who married Harry Thorpe, which was a quarter-

caste Aboriginal (Harry was). He, my Dad, was white, very, very wealthy. He was the best father you would ever meet. I love my Dad with all my heart.

We came from Nowendoc where my parents were married around Walcha in 1926. I was born at a private hospital at Walcha. All my other sisters were born in tents at Walcha. In my family, there was 4 children. But we laugh and joke today saying that Mum and Dad must have had some money for me to be born in a private hospital. So that's the story of that.

And then they left in an old car Dad had bought and we travelled to a place called Mt. George and we arrived there in 1939. Dad worked for a rich family at Mt George by the name of Coopers and I was telling Barbara that he only received \$3 for a months work. So it wasn't much in those days for work and that's from thereon we came. All my sisters and I. We went at the age of 16 and 17, we went to work in Newcastle and I worked at a hotel/motel. I had two lovely ladies which I remember well, Mrs Greenwood and Mrs Pickett. They taught me how to speak correctly, walk correctly and to sit at the table so that I could sit with any member of the society and I loved them both.

Well there was no work around and Mum could no longer look after us and feed us and so we were allowed to go away, all cousins and us, my sisters and I to Newcastle to work. I got the one at the hotel/motel. Actually, I put my age up to get that, cheated I did. But later on I found out I was the right age because when I got my birth certificate, I was three years older than I thought I was. That's the story about that one and so we worked and we battled on working in motels and hotels and that until I went to Sydney. We all went to Sydney and worked in factories. My sister and I and my two cousins and my other sisters came as well when they got old enough. And I worked so hard in the place to enjoy my work. Then I came to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and I was looking after a young fellow that was hurt by a cow by riding in the rodeo and his parents were friends of my parents. They were a white family, a very nice family. I went to see Mrs Mills and I went to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital. Then I wanted to be a nurse and I went back and seen the matron. I was employed as a nurse to train there. But I couldn't because it was so big I felt uncomfortable. I then went to Balmain hospital and from there I came to the Manning Base. I stayed there for 5 years at Manning Base.

I came to the stage of getting my

registered nursing and then I got petrified because I said to one of the sisters that I didn't want the responsibility. So I didn't finish the full training as a registered nurse. But I did four years, just about, and four years was the time and I did well. But I didn't have enough courage to be a registered nurse. And that was my story of me not having enough confidence in myself and now I look back and think oh, if I had only done it, it would have been great.

I did more than four years. I wandered around Sydney just working in different private hospitals in different places because of the training I had had at the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and the Balmain as well. I was a scout nurse at Balmain hospital for four years. A scout nurse works in the operating theatre and she gets everything sterile. She has to tear the paper off and hand it to the sister that is scrubbed up that she won't contaminate nor will I when I give it to her. I have to tie up the doctors gowns in the operating theatre when they scrub, and clean up the operating theatre for the next case and do all that and that's what they call a scout nurse. I loved it. Four years, but I got very home sick. I used to dream out the window and I would get into trouble. I did. So easy to get it out with all those houses down there, looking around and thinking, 'Oh, my gosh, I wish I was in the bush and see cattle walking around and animals and horses'. So I did that and then I came back to Taree and that was in 1969. And it was so easy. I got along extremely well with all of them. At that time there was an Aboriginal place where dark people weren't accepted very well. But in the Manning Base they opened their arms to me and I was so surprised because at that time, it wasn't really what it is like today where Aboriginals get accepted or the dark race get accepted. Luckily at the time a lot of Indian doctors came there as residents and we all fit in very well at the Manning Base. I continued living in Mt. George until my mother died.

My mother had her own home there at Mt. George. My father was killed in a train accident in Mt. George with my brother. My brother didn't get killed but my brother was a ganger on the railway, they called them in those days. He went out with my father in the trike which they called them in those days and I think they still do it these days. They came across the Mt George bridge and just as they was coming into the station, it was a little bit after dark. Jack had to check on something on the railway line and coming around the corner, the train wasn't on time but it was early and it hit right on the lane as they was coming around the corner. It hit my father and killed him instantly. My brother continued on the

work for the thing and he went out to Broken Hill out west, right out west there somewhere but my mother died later on at Mt George.

Yes that's the story of my parents and grandparents and where they come from. Now later, we did a family tree, on the Pacey side, which went right back to Nottingham in England. The Paceys were a very, very wealthy family. And there was a castle involved but they did not see wrong in marrying a quarter-caste Aboriginal girl and that makes me very, very proud of the Pacey family.

My mother was washing in the creek one day. That's one story I think I can remember. She was washing in the creek because there was no water tanks laid on the little house we had at Dingo Creek. Mum called out to me to go and get the soap. I was playing and she made her own soap and as I was walking up the hill I used to get to a certain distance and sing out 'Mum, what was I sent for?' and she'd say 'you know you were sent for soap' and I would say 'oh yeah' and walk along a bit further. And she'd say Barr what I said. She would call out to me again and sing out to me. So yeah that was the time when the funny little things happened in my life. But a lot of funny things happened to me in the nurse's life but not as much as a child, because I was a dreamer and a loner and loved to play on my own. So I never did anything really funny. My sisters did. My grandmother had some cows and the farmer up the road used to give my Dad, poddys to rear up and sell them and they would go halves in the money. Kaleen was sitting on a beast, a bullock, and it stood up and Kaleen slipped off and fell into cow manure. Mum came out and belted her because she had cow manure all over her. I still think of the funny things like that happened, you know that sort of thing. Yes, beautiful memories.

That was Dingo Creek, up Wherrol Creek way. As you go across the bridge there at Dingo Creek going towards Wherrol Flat, the cement bridge there. On your left hand side is a sort of Aboriginal reserve. It was given to the Aboriginals and I checked on this and found it was given to the Aboriginals in 1906 by the Agricultural Department. The head of the Aboriginal department was this Pacey man I was talking about because he was head of the Agricultural Department, from Dungog on to the Northern rivers, up the coast. So who knows? It may have been given by him and his department. So I did read about that. We were living there since 1939, I think, until 1948 or 1949

Yeah, and we went back to Mt George.

We went from Mt George to Dingo Creek and then from Dingo Creek back to Mt George and they remained there until both my parents died. That's about my life really.

I did do a course down at the Taree TAFE with the Aboriginal group, Russell Saunders was teaching us. I did like it but I sort of never got very far because my sister got sick and passed away and I looked after her for three years. So I sort of never did much painting from there on. But I do love art and I am very critical of art sometimes. I am not a very good artist myself. I love art, that's how much I love it. I just walk around and look at it and read books with it in it and it's beautiful.

Well the thing that I'd like to pass on. My father was a great person a very, very knowledgeable person. He'd say to you, 'when you walk, walk straight and look the person in the eye and smile'. So I come from a father who always sort of made you feel important. My mother was a lady and you weren't even allowed to whistle as you were growing up as a child. Girls had to be ladies you know and you had to sit right and had to come to the table and that sort of thing. From her old fashioned grandmother and the family side of the PACEYS I suppose that's where it come from. Now today I say to the kids that the education is the most important. I often say to the Aboriginal children 'do something with your lives because education is very important'. Because if I'd been educated better than I was I would've loved to have been a doctor or somebody important or even a lawyer or something that I could express myself. We weren't lucky enough to get that and the education today is the most important thing for any young person. Especially a child growing up.

I didn't go to Mt George school because my parents moved to a little town called Bundook and it was just between Mt George and Gloucester. My Dad got a job in the saw mill there and he was working so I had to walk 4 km to school across a river. There was a very flat little bridge and the flood used to come up and flow over the bridge and we had to wait until the mill men came down to help us across the bridge when we got home from school. Sometimes we were stranded on the other side of the river until they built a flying fox. It used to bring all the kids across on a flying fox after school. I went to a little school in Bundook which was an all white school and there was only 12 children there. I still meet some of those kids and we're still friends. I went to Gloucester High School and then it got too

expensive and my mother couldn't afford it. So I had to leave that and went to TAFE in Newcastle while I was working in the hotels and motels. That was very difficult, my sister Margaret went to Sydney. One of my family went to Sydney and we decided to go to TAFE in Sydney and we did. The family sort of grown up and we had a very lucky life and very good life, but a very poor life as children, but I was the happiest child. We all were. And I do put that back to my parents, my mother didn't drink and she didn't smoke. Dad didn't drink while we were little. He did when I grew up. I was in my teens when I seen my father get drunk and I couldn't believe it was the same man. I said 'who is this, what's he staggering for?' and I couldn't understand. We all ran outside to see him after he had been to a party only up the road and Mum said it's only your father, he is drunk. So I was lucky, I had a very, very lucky life and I enjoyed my life. Today I still look back in my old age and enjoy my life. Good life.

There wouldn't have been much to think of really because I never had the education again to be a writer or author. But I would have loved to have been able to write a book and I would love to be remembered if I had written a book. That would be my greatest achievement, writing a book. Whatever, so that is a disappointment I suppose. It's not that bad because I look back at the funny things that I went through life with. I never look back at the bad things in life but yeah, that would have been great if I had been educated more and I would look back and think I did something worthwhile there.

Oh I do feel good about having nursed. That's my happiest life because I sit down and I think of the funny things that happened to me when I was nursing and there were sad sides. Oh there were so many funny sides and those funny things that I remember today just make me laugh even on my own. Yes that's another thing I really and truly enjoyed. I would go back and do it all over again. It was beautiful.

We didn't have much to do with Purfleet because it was so far to travel and there was only the old milk truck that came. The bus never went so it was the old milk truck. My grandmother and I used to go to Wingham and I remember going to Wingham with all these pennies she would collect all the time. We would have to go to the bank and get them changed into money. I had a bag of pennies and stupid would carry the bag of pennies. So we would come into Wingham and get in this old thing, I think it might have been the old

milk truck again and we would go to Purfleet to a lady called Georgina Bungie. Her husband and I would play there until granny was ready to go home. That was at Purfleet so that was the only time I'd seen Purfleet. I remember my grandmother going to see a lady at the Manning Base and all the Aboriginal people were downstairs, all in a group. My grandmother said 'we are allowed to go into this place' and I looked around and all I could see was dark skinned people. I said to my grandmother, 'where are the white people?' and she said 'they're not allowed to be with the dark people'. My grandmother was very fair with long red hair up in a bun and green eyes and she didn't look Aboriginal. But I couldn't understand all these Aboriginals at the hospital with no white people with them. And that's the words she said to me and I still think of today. I can't remember going up steps because I was only about 8 or 9 at the time. But I did go to Purfleet but it was to Mrs Bungie. I think his name was Sam I'm not sure. We used to play there as children and my sister. I never went to Purfleet because my grandmother just went there and we had to race on to get the milk truck home. So that's the reason why I didn't spend much time at Purfleet.

I never married. I was engaged when I was 17 or 18 and that didn't come off. I was so madly in love with my young beautiful man I just thought, 'oh no, I'm not doing that again'. I went on and built my life as a career person. In my nursing career I would be there 12 hours a day some days. I never sort of had time to think about kids or that then. As I grew, I did maternity as well, and I used to say to the old sisters that worked with me, 'I'm never going to have a baby, I don't want children' and she would say 'don't be selfish'. I said 'I will be selfish because I don't want to go through that' so I didn't have any children. Today I don't miss children because I've got so many nephews and nieces and that. Didn't worry me at all not having children. I'm not lonely today without them because I've got plenty of nephews and nieces and that.

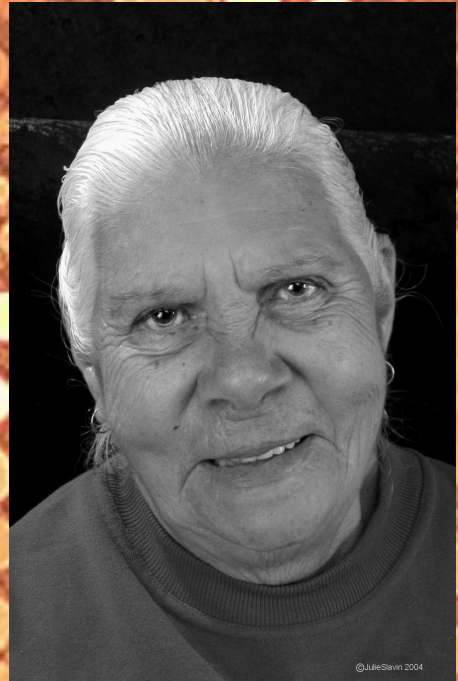
You know it's been a good life and a very poor life because the story about a little pair of tennis shoes. That was a sad story because I was about 8 years old and my mother came over at Dingo Creek where we lived. She is singing out 'Ruth, hurry up we're going' and they were moving to a place called Bundook because Dad had a job in the saw mill at Bundook and I would run. I said 'I left my shoes' and she said 'hurry up' and the truck was starting and the old man that was driving

the truck was saying 'come on, get going'. So I jumped in the car, my father lifted me in the old truck and I cried from there to Mt George. That's where we went and from Mt George to Bundook which is quite a number of miles. I cried and cried I said, 'I left my shoes and they're the only pair of shoes I've got and they were tennis shoes'. She said 'well you'll have to wait a fortnight until your father gets paid when he gets this job, so I can buy you another pair'. I said 'I hate going without shoes!'. I eventually got another pair of shoes, I hate going without shoes. Thirty years later I had my own car and I was driving to Dingo Creek. I walked across the little creek there and went to the paddock where the stump was where I left the shoes. But there was a bushfire gone over it and the stump was burnt down. I was standing there looking for me little shoes thinking God that my shoes got burnt. So all those years later 30 or 40 odd years later I went back to find the spot where I left those shoes. That's the story I always remember because I still think about those shoes. So that was the story about the tennis shoes. And then I still ended up with a pair of tennis shoes when I went to Bundook school. Mum used to make me Kiwi them every night and clean them. I'd have to go home every night and clean my shoes every night. She would wash the uniform out and then I'd have to iron it myself on the fire because there was no electricity. I had to heat the iron up on the fire so that was a hard task but we did it so I'd be clean the next day to go to school. My mother was one of these people, you weren't allowed to make her feel uncomfortable or ashamed. I remember when we used to go to Wingham from Dingo Creek, we only went every month. One of us, some times we'd be lucky if we all went, would be lined up in front of the café in Wingham. We had to sit at the table, not muck-up. If we did, she would take us down the back of the shop and pull our hair and give us a smack around the legs. We were very well behaved at the table and she wouldn't sit with us. The eldest girl had to sort of look after the other kids at the table and we had to sort of walk out. So she was a very, very strict lady but a very, very good woman and I adored my Mum. Well, I wouldn't have got where I have got through my life without a mother like I had, and a father, which was two caring people. ♦

*Other Elders of the local
Aboriginal Community*



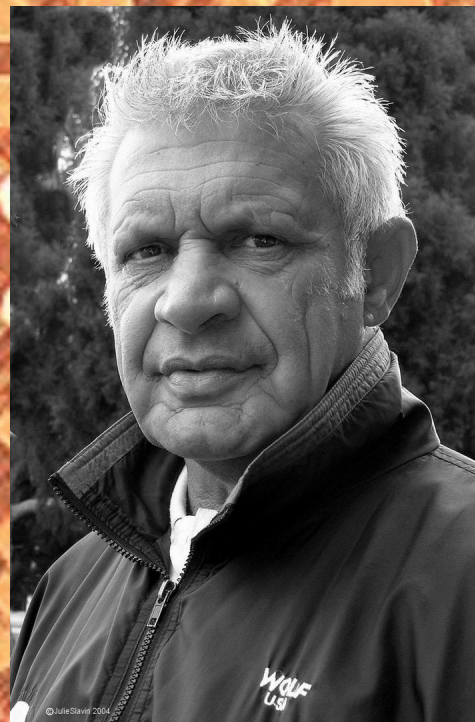
Dawn Baxter



Iris Buckshiram



Marcia Ping



Dave Russell



Pam Leon