

A STOLEN GENERATION STORY

around the desert as a clan for about two or three years, never coming back into the Telegraph line.

The old tribe that we were with decided to go to Newcastle Waters for the annual corroboree. My mother's European name is Priscilla and when we got there the policeman knew who she was and who I was too. The policeman gave my mother a job as a housemaid at the police station and they gave my stepfather a job as a yard man, cutting wood. They did that to try and keep us there because I was mixed.

So the policeman's wife started dressing me in all these European clothes. My mother had to go to work from the camp and every morning I had to go with her and my stepfather, that was the rule. The police were worried that I might run off into the bush. My white grandmother was worried too, because I was growing up fast and she was the one who was putting the police onto my mother hoping to take me away from her.

The policeman who my mother and father were working for had an old ute, one of the first cars that came out. This was in the early 1920s. He used to take me and his Aboriginal tracker to Birdum, which is now called Larrimah, to help him do the mail.

About the third time that I went with the policeman to Birdum, in about 1928 or 29, when I was 10 or 11 years old, I woke up to what was going to happen to me.

When they opened the train door and I looked inside and saw that the train was crammed with nomadic Aboriginal people, all with shackles around their necks and ankles, I knew that was the end of me and that I would never return home again.

They put me on the train and another policeman was waiting there to take me away. They took me to Darwin and of course I was lost then, I didn't know what was going on or what was happening.

I remember the last time I saw my mother was when she was running after the train, wailing and crying out

for me, along with all the other mothers whose children were being taken away. When the mothers would chase the train, they would cut their heads with rocks, bleeding for their children because they knew they would probably never see them again.

People in towns where the trains would leave from knew that there were children being taken away because they could hear the wailing of the mothers.

The coloured girls and boys were already separated when I got to Darwin, they had drafted them all. The girls were sent to the islands, some went to Croker Island or Groote Eylandt and they sent the boys down to Pine Creek. I just happened to get there the day after they had drafted them and from there they took me down to Pine Creek where I joined the rest of the coloured boys.

In about 1930-31 they sent a truck from Alice Springs to meet all the prisoners (children) coming down on the train to Birdum. The old guy that picked us up had a truck, like you pick up cattle with, except this time he was using it to pick up child prisoners.

When we came down to Alice Springs I was just frozen, real cold. I was wearing just one nightshirt and a jacket. We were barefoot with bald heads, it was terrible. In Alice Springs they tried to teach us the European way, I suppose their idea was to make us forget about our people and try to integrate us with the white people.

But they didn't give us that chance because they kept us separate all the time and we weren't allowed to mix up



with the white kids. But we still snuck around with them, we had a lot of white kid friends.

I left school in about 1934 when I was 16. While I was in Alice Springs my family was still roaming around out bush. The nomadic people in those days had to roam around on foot, no vehicle or nothing.

You might wonder if I was scared when I was taken from my family at Newcastle Waters?

Too right I was! Because I was taken away from home, I didn't know what was happening or what was going on. I blocked out all my feelings for my people because I found it easier, I didn't have to grieve then, if I ignored my feelings. Despite this, I had no feeling for white people because they weren't kind to us like my people were. We lived in little shacks at The Bungalow, sometimes there would be up to 20 or 30 of us crammed into these shacks with only a bucket to use for going to the toilet. We were like sardines in a can and in winter we would freeze.

I don't know why the Superintendent or Manager, who managed the half-cast kids at The Bungalow, took such a dislike to me, but the result I got from that is that I'm now deaf.

He flogged the shit out of me all the time and for what, I don't know. I couldn't make out why this bloke was getting into me like that all the time. "Is this the way you learn white fella way?", I thought to myself. I ran away a couple of times from there but I couldn't get a lift back, I didn't know how to get a lift back to Tennant Creek because there was no transport. There was an old lady who used to feed me behind the hill, we also used to sneak off sometimes to hunt for witchety grubs to supplement for our meagre diet.

The boss bloke that looked after the coloured kids had a wife and two white daughters and to us kids, we were all the same. We were all one family more or less, they were our friends, the white kids, colour didn't make any difference because we didn't know any different.

When we were in The Bungalow we would keep our language alive by secretly talking to each other when the white supervisors weren't around. We all spoke Walpiri, Waramungu and other languages to each other. I was the one that was getting the hidings all the time for things like speaking our own language, I got more of a hiding from the Superintendent with a bare hand than a strap.

Anyhow, instead of them sending me



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