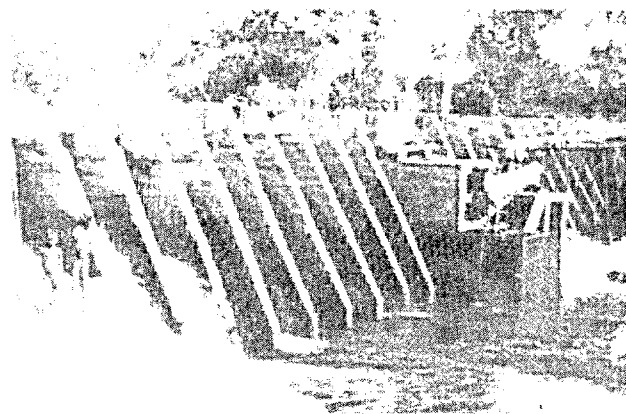


ABORIGINAL HISTORY 1979 3:1



Top: Edwin Verberg; Madeline Verberg, 1977; Ada and Maddie Verberg at St Gabrielle's School, Charters Towers, 1946.

Centre: Ada and Maddie Verberg, friend Nellie, and Madeline Verberg on Edwin Verberg's farm, 1950.

Bottom: Weir built by Aboriginal workers on Edwin Verberg's Adelaide River farm, 1915.

– Photographs courtesy of Magdalene McIntosh

## MADDIE

Magdalene McIntosh and Elaine Rothwell\*

The *Northern Territory Aboriginals Act* of 1910 (later incorporated in Ordinances of 1911 and 1918) was the basis for control of Aborigines in the Northern Territory until 1953. As Rowley<sup>1</sup> has pointed out, the legislation defined an 'Aboriginal' to include any person with an Aboriginal parent or grandparent, and paid particular attention to the 'half caste' offspring of an Aboriginal mother and non-Aboriginal father. The Chief Protector was the legal guardian of 'every Aboriginal and half-caste child' under the age of eighteen years.<sup>2</sup> By deliberate policy half caste children were taken from their mothers and placed in institutions. By separating the generations the policy aimed at preventing the socialisation of such children in the Aboriginal culture.

Magdalene (Maddie) Verberg McIntosh, the daughter of a Dutchman and a 'fullblood' Aboriginal woman, was born in Darwin in 1934. To prevent her from being snatched away from her mother by government officials, her father divorced her mother and paid for Maddie to be a boarder at St Joseph's Convent in Darwin, where she lived from the age of two. Following the bombing of Darwin in 1942, Maddie went with her father and sister Ada to live in Queensland. From 1945 to 1948 she was a boarder at St Gabrielle's Girls School in Charters Towers. On her return to Darwin Maddie lived on her father's property at Coomalie Creek. Maddie's father gained permission for her mother to come and live in a house beside his, with the children, in the official capacity of housekeeper. He wanted the girls to know her. It was during these years, 1948-1955, that Maddie was able to learn about the culture of her Aboriginal mother's community.

\* Students in Dr Bruce Shaw's anthropology course at Darwin Community College in 1978 were asked to write a short ethnography of some aspect of social life in the Darwin community for their major assignment. After reading sections of the *Northern Territory Aboriginals Act* of 1910, I (Rothwell) wanted to show the profound influence it had on the lives of people classified as 'half castes'. To do this, I sought the cooperation of a friend, Maddie McIntosh, who told me her life story.

<sup>1</sup> Rowley 1970:230-232. He also notes that 'The recent trend has been for the special definition of person as "Aboriginal", "native", or "half-caste", etc. to disappear' (1970:341).

<sup>2</sup> *Northern Territory Acts of 1910 (No. 1024)*, South Australia. Section 9 says:

9.(1) The Chief Protector shall be the legal guardian of every aboriginal and every half-caste child, notwithstanding that any such child has a parent or other relative living, until such child attains the age of eighteen years, except whilst such child is a State child within the meaning of "The State Children Act, 1895", or any Act amending or substituted for that Act.

(2) Every Protector shall, within his district, be the local guardian of every such child within his district

(3) Such local guardian shall have and exercise the powers and duties prescribed.

Maddie met and married Lorry McIntosh in 1955. They spent their first years of married life at El Sherana where their two daughters Dannylynn and Lynda Louise were born. After the mine closed the family made their home in Darwin, but due to Lorry's work commitments the couple grew apart and separated. In 1974 Maddie began working as a Field Officer for the Northern Australian Aboriginal Legal Aid Service.

Maddie views the problems of the race relations situation in the Northern Territory from a 'western' perspective, as do her fellow workers. For example, while Aboriginal communities are prepared to pool their money to bail a relative or friend out of jail, the Aboriginal legal aid workers insist that if Aborigines want the Australian culture they must obey Australian laws. Yet Maddie shows sympathy for their problems. To her it appears highly questionable whether jail is the answer for youths who repeatedly commit crimes. Her solution — finding what each settlement has to offer in the way of employment for the Aboriginal boys who are not practising traditional ways — could be a better way to reduce offences. She insists also that Aborigines must be taught to understand 'western' values and the importance placed on individual ownership of material goods in Australian society. Maddie is distressed by the attitudes of many police officers today, although she can understand why they become frustrated in their work with Aborigines.

*Reminiscences of Maddie Verberg McIntosh*

I was born at the Darwin Hospital on the 8th of April 1934. My father Edwin Verberg was a Dutchman and my mother Madelene (Anmilal) Verberg a fullblood Aboriginal of the Kungarakan tribe. Dad named me Magdalene, but always called me Magdalena. Today everyone calls me Auntie Maddie or Maddie.

Dad was born in Holland and when he was a teenager he went to America on a windjammer. While Dad was in America, he married a white woman and they had six sons and a daughter. When the marriage broke up, Dad decided to make a fresh start in life in Australia and came to this country about 1910.<sup>3</sup> Dad owned a property at Adelaide River from about 1915. He built a dam between the high level and low level bridge so he could irrigate his farm to grow vegetables all year around. He had a citrus grove where the war cemetery is today and told us that after being successful for some years people became jealous of him. Government men started calling and later they condemned his farm stating

<sup>3</sup> On arrival in Australia he called himself John Clyne, but as this sounded German he was threatened with internment during World War I. He then produced papers proving that he was Dutch by birth and a naturalized American, and afterwards used his correct name (personal communication, Tom Calma, Edwin Verberg's son-in-law).

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that there was a disease in the citrus trees.<sup>4</sup> Dad eventually lost the property to the government. The government burnt out the orchard which consisted of 448 trees.<sup>5</sup> He also had a farm at Coomalie Creek and one just outside Adelaide River which he named the Valley of the Moon. Before the First World War, Dad lived on his Adelaide River property which he farmed with the help of a group of Aborigines. Peter and Ada, a married fullblood Aboriginal couple who had a little boy, were among the group who worked for Dad. Peter got bitten by a death adder in the pumpkin patch and because Aborigines did not know how to use a tourniquet and cut themselves, he died. Dad wanted to take over and

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to the Darwin office of the Department of Agriculture for the following extracts from the Curator's card file at the Botanical Gardens (1920-1935): Citrus canker (*Pseudomonas citri*) was discovered to be present in the Northern Territory in 1916. Trees that were found to be infected were destroyed in 1918 and compensation paid. In 1920 the Curator of the Botanic Gardens reported on gardens infected in Darwin. In 1922 after an official visit by Mr. Gerald Hill to inspect orchards and gardens where citrus plants were growing it was decided by the Government that all citrus plants were to be destroyed in the Territory . . . One of the most serious outbreaks appears to have been found at Verberg's place on the Adelaide River. Verberg wrote a very antagonistic [sic] letter to the Administrator at Darwin (at that time Staniforth Smith) noting that since Allen, who had inspected the orchard, was not a qualified Entomologist [sic] refused to take any account of his opinion that his orchard was infected. He furthermore noted that he valued the orchard at £4,000 and wouldn't sell it at that price since it was the only commercial orchard in the Territory . . . A further letter from Hill to Allen reports on additional samples sent from Verbergs, Flynn's, and Svenson's gardens. All of them showed what Hill considered to be definite signs of the citrus canker . . . Apparently they thought they might get away with only destroying the infected plants but this was not found possible. They eventually had to destroy all of the citrus trees in the particular orchard in which they found it. There were three of these noted, at least the beginning, and under the heading 8th November 1921 these were listed:

1. With Verbergs place on Adelaide River "This is easily the premier citrus orchard which has ever existed in the N.T. The plants consisted of all well-known grafted varieties of oranges, mandarins, and lemons, on the eve of bearing or actually bearing at the present time and all four years old or more. They were well planted in approved distances and pruned on expert lines. There are furrows for irrigation between all of the rows and the irrigation works had been completed and are in use. The health of the trees was phenomenal for the Territory, obviously chiefly accounted for by the presence of irrigation and the general suitability of soil and situation". . . . pointed out that Verberg had been quite a service in showing that irrigation was possible on some of these soils and because of his great industry and keen disappointment in this loss he was recommending the highest amount of compensation that could be paid. Payment was made on a basis of £2 a tree for healthy trees and apparently £1 a tree for infected trees. Verberg had 448 trees, 219 of which were healthy. He drew compensation ordered at £867.

<sup>5</sup> Maddie's account has telescoped two events: the burning of the orchard after World War I and the government's takeover of the property during World War II. When Edwin Verberg returned to the Northern Territory after 1945 he was told the government intended to keep the property. He was offered £16,000 in compensation but wanted more, so he took his case to the High Court. While the case dragged on Verberg lost money. Finally the Court ordered the government to pay him £7,000 (personal communication, Tom Calma).

look after Ada and her son Edwin but the tribe said 'No'. We were never told the reason for their decision but I think it was to do with some superstition because Ada did not marry anyone else. However, they said *pudji* (that baby girl) in the *bindji bindji* (Ada's tummy) can be your promised wife. Dad accepted the offer of the baby girl whom he named Madelene at birth and she later became our mother.

The name of Mum's tribe is Kungarakan<sup>6</sup> and they have nearly all died out now. Mum and Uncle Edwin are the only fullblood Aborigines left from that tribe. There has not been anything written about this tribe but perhaps that is because it was only a small group. At the moment another tribe called the Maranaggu tribe are trying to claim Mum and Uncle Edwin's land. They claim that because they live off it the land is rightfully their land. In fact, there has been some 'land right' stealing going on for a few years. The group owned the inland area of the Wagait Reserve, one tribe has the coastal area of Wagait and Mum's tribe used to be on the inland area. My aboriginal name is Anmilal the same as my mother's. Not everyone gets an Aboriginal name, only if the tribe thinks you are worthy of such an honour. A lot of fullbloods today have not got an Aboriginal name. Mum lived with the tribe on Dad's property when they worked for him and then when the group went off to Mt Bunday Station on walkabout, she would go with them. Dad looked after Mum like a daughter even though she often wandered with the tribe. She was a free sort of spirit and she was only about fifteen years older than us.

In those days, no Aboriginal woman was allowed to keep her half caste children, so Dad divorced Mum to keep us. It was common for any half caste children found in Aboriginal camps to be taken away and put in an institution.<sup>7</sup> Dad, who was sixty-four years of age and always busy working on his farm, found it difficult to look after us properly so he sent us to St Joseph's Catholic Convent in Darwin. Ada my sister was four and I was two years old when we left home for the first time. As there was no Stuart Highway, we travelled home on the train and Dad always met us with his horse and old green buggy. Dad came to see us each time he

<sup>6</sup> Tindale (1974:229) describes the Kungarakan tribal location as: 'Northwest of Mount Litchfield on midwaters of Reynolds River and on Adelaide River headwaters; an inland tribe extending to the western side of the Tabletop Range divide; northeast to vicinity of Rum Jungle and Batchelor'.

<sup>7</sup> Bleakley (1929:15) noted that the 'object of the home is to save these half-castes from the degradation of the blacks' camp, properly care for and educate them, and fit them to take a useful part in the development of the Territory'. Yet proper facilities were rarely available: he said of one centre that 'it is freely admitted that the housing of 76 children, of different sexes, in a house large enough only for one family, is not satisfactory'. The two main recommendations that he made regarding the future of half castes revealed popular opinion and attitudes of the time: '(a) Complete separation of the half-castes from the aboriginals, with a view of their absorption by the white race; (b) Complete segregation from both black and whites in colonies of their own and to marry amongst themselves' (1929:28).

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shipped his produce to Darwin by train. When he went overseas to Singapore on business trips he brought us back dolls and toys. As Dad could afford to keep us in the convent we were very lucky, because most other coloured kids were sent to the Retta Dixon Home, Bathurst Island Catholic Mission, Goulburn Island Methodist Mission, Roper River Church Mission, Groote Eylandt Church Mission, Croker or the Oenpelli Church Mission. These children were separated from their parents at a very early age and that is why many of them do not have any real family today. They just don't know which area they came from in the Northern Territory, so they can't even start to look for their family.

I must admit I hated it at the convent as the nuns were very hard on Ada and I because we were coloured kids. There was real discrimination. Once when there were eggs missing from the fowl house, they reckoned that I had pinched them, but I don't suck eggs. As punishment, they dunked my head in a trough of water up and down, up and down, up and down shouting at me all the time not to tell lies. Another time when I was only a little thing, I was told to carry an earthen holy water container which I dropped because it was too heavy and a piece shot up and cut Ada. The nuns tried to tell me I wanted to kill my sister and locked me away in a dark room where I was very scared. I'll never forget those times and I'll never forgive them. We used to tell Dad what they did to us but what could he do? He was an old man who couldn't look after us properly, so he used to tell us to be good and he'd be back in Darwin to see us soon. Despite this, Dad was very kind to the nuns. Dad paid full fees for us, but because we were there he supplied the convent with pineapples, mandarins, oranges, lemons and grapefruit although Ada and I rarely got any of the fruit. I remember the weekends well. The nuns were always praying and Ada and I were always hungry so we used to hang over the fence in Cavenagh Street and ask day kids that we knew to go to their home and get us some food. We had enough friends to keep us going. Dad's visits to see Ada and I during my time at St Joseph's were the only good times that I recall of my days at that school.

After Japan entered the Second World War in December 1941, most of the women and children were evacuated from Darwin to Katherine or interstate. Dad would not allow us to be separated from him, so he eventually came in and collected us from school. It was the 19th of February 1942 and as we were travelling along the highway track near the 'ten mile', we heard planes in the distance, then they came closer and then there were very loud explosions. It was frightening but exciting but Dad would not take us back to see what had happened. Although I was only eight, I can still remember the war planes. When I see old war pictures, the noise that goes with the old Spitfires is exactly the same as the noise I heard on that day. Once we arrived at Coomalie Creek we stayed there for a while but Dad had troubles as the Australian soldiers used to fire at our farm. He told us it was because of the Australian attitude to new

Australians. Dad always hid us in the fertilizer for protection when the shooting was going on, but he wasn't scared. He never was afraid of anything. It was us, always us, protecting us all the time. I don't have good memories of the Australian soldiers as they caused further trouble by looting from the homes as soon as families had been evacuated.

Dad had fought in the Spanish American War of 1898 and at the end of the war was awarded a pension of \$100.98 (American money) a month until the day he died. The army took over the Adelaide River property but because of Dad's experience as a soldier and a farmer, he was offered the position as chief of farms which the army were using to grow vegetables to feed their men. Dad refused the position, he said, 'No, where my girls go I go'. Dad got us on an American convoy which left Birdum to go through to Longreach in Queensland. Dad, Ada and I travelled to Longreach where we stayed with Mrs Moo-Fatt for a year. Mrs Moo-Fatt was Harry Chan's sister-in-law.<sup>8</sup> Dad left us with her and joined the American Army. He was an old man then, seventy or more, but he was accepted as a guard for the American Army at Garbet out from Townsville. He was always proud of his armband which he had worn in those days, even to the day he died. Dad was like a millionaire during the war years with his pay and pension.

In 1945, Dad enrolled us at St Gabrielle's at Charters Towers and paid our fees himself, no Aboriginal grants or aids. We were the first two Aboriginal girls to attend this school, but by the time we left three years later, there were six coloured students. The teachers were prejudiced, I tell you now! Ada used to notice it and point it out to me. Dad, who was white, went on his own to enrol us at St Gabrielle's. Later, when Dad returned to the school with two little darkies, Archdeacon Norman's face dropped as they could not believe it, but they had to accept us as they had already taken the fees. This was a Church of England girls school. The Brother's School, 'All Souls', was not controlled by prejudiced people as they allowed boys from Palm Island to attend as well as many of the Darwin Chinese boys. We enjoyed it at St Gabrielle's and stayed for three years.

Although the teachers were prejudiced, it did not worry me as I got older. I began to realise that if I was going to let it worry me I was not going to get anywhere. What did it really matter if they were prejudiced? We proved that we were as good as them. I broke the school swimming record and my name is still on the trophies in the school library. We must have proved ourselves as they accepted us back the next two years. On holidays and at school, Ada and I used to fight a lot. Dad would say, 'I'm going to send one of you two girls to a reform school', but he would always look at me. Ada would pinch and belt me because I wouldn't mend

<sup>8</sup> Harry Chan became the first elective president of the Northern Territory Legislative Council in 1965, and was mayor of Darwin 1966-1969 (Barr *et al.* 1978:15).

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the holes in my brown rib stockings, but later she would darn them. I did not mind suffering a bit, as long as she did the work. What's a bit of pain! She often used to get on my back because I was lazy with those sort of jobs. After the teachers got to know us and like us at St Gabrielle's, I would say it was the happiest time of my childhood. I was good at art work and enjoyed it at school. I can do faces well. Dad paid for us to do all the other things at school like tap and ballroom dancing, Girl Guides, tennis and I learnt to play the piano while Ada learnt singing. I was no good at playing the piano from books, I wasn't interested. I got a cyst which remained on my hand for years where the teacher hit me in the same place with a ruler every lesson. I can play by ear though. Ada was not too good at the piano but she could sing. She won first prize in the Eisteddfod at Charters Towers and it was in competition with all the other schools, we were really proud of her.

When Dad came back to the Northern Territory after the war, he brought us with him. In 1948 schools reopened in Darwin so Dad sent us to St Joseph's again but it was only a few months later when the nuns decided that they were not going to have any new boarders, as the fees did not meet the costs of running the boarding section at the school. Ada was sixteen and as she was leaving school I think the nuns told Dad to take his other daughter too. I was a bit of a rebel at the convent when we came back. I didn't like kneeling, I used to get dizzy. The Catholic service was so long, a lot longer than at St Gabrielle's and I remember how they had treated me when I was a little thing. I used to refuse to get down on my knees, I wasn't a Catholic and it hurt me and I never forgave the nuns. I never forgave them because it is something that I could not forgive. They were preaching Christianity but they did not practise it. As far as I was concerned, (I was only a kid but even to this day and my children are the same) we have a deep seated feeling of right from wrong in the way that you put yourself on a plane in life and you must practise what you preach. My time at the convent turned me right off religion. Often now, the Mormons come around home and try to convert me, the Seventh Day Adventists, everyone wants me to become their religion, why me? Am I such a bad person? Everyone wants me. I cannot believe that there is one true religion. I do believe that there is a God, he helped me during Cyclone Tracy, he can't think I'm too bad!

We were the only family in our area with a roof still on our house after the cyclone. There were about eight killed around our neighbourhood. I tell ministers and priests I have a sense of values. My morals may not be very high but I do as I want to do and I don't ever try to do the dirty on anyone. I have my own set of rules. When I'm afraid I pray to the God I feel I know or when my kids have been sick I pray and when they are better I remember to say 'Dear Lord, thank you very much'. Now that God, that's the true God because I believe that religion comes from within, not what I read in a Bible.



As we were leaving school, Dad got permission from Native Affairs for Mum to come and look after us so that we would know our mother. He never blamed her for anything she did when she was young. Dad took us to the Darwin Hospital to get Mum. I was thirteen then and I didn't know her but Ada recognised her straight away. Ada remembered Mum from the time she was in hospital with T.B. and Mum used to come and visit her all the time. Mum came to stay and brought her two little kids Edna and Elizabeth who were war babies. Ada and I lived with Mum and our new sisters in a Sydney William hut.<sup>9</sup> Mum treated Ada and I like younger sisters and would always stick up for us if we were in trouble with Dad.

Dad lived by himself in an old sheet iron house. Mum had a hard life, she and Dad worked hard. Dad was old and every time he got wild with her he'd kick her out and she'd end up in Bagot.<sup>10</sup> Later when he'd calm down he'd go and beg her to come home again. She was shunted backwards and forwards, she had no security. Dad didn't have sex with her, instead she was like a young daughter. Dad threatened to kick us out but I just used to laugh and say, 'You can't kick me out, I'm too young'. I was a rebel, I was the only one who could stare him in the eyes. Dad had a blind belief that you couldn't tell a lie and look a person in the eye. He always said that anyone who didn't look him in the face was shifty so I'd never backed down, I always looked him in the eye. Dad never hit us, he was hard but kind. I was closer to Dad than the rest of the family. Dad was also strong willed and stubborn except with Mum, Ada or me. But apart from us, once he had made a decision he stood by it. During the depression years, Dad used to exchange vegetables for meat with Bill White who owned the Mt Bunday Station approximately six miles away from our place. This arrangement was quite successful for a long time until Bill White's goats got into one of Dad's vegetable patches on the Adelaide River farm. Dad shot all the goats, loaded them on his truck and drove to the Mt Bunday Station where he threw the goats at Bill White's feet. Dad told Bill White that he could take Dad to court for compensation for shooting the goats, whereupon he would in turn charge Bill White the same amount of money for damage to his vegetable patch. The two men never spoke to each other again.

Another time was when Dad was at the Adelaide River pub: the barman charged him five pence instead of the usual four and a half pence for a glass of beer. He questioned the new price and was told it was because of a tax increase. Dad drank the beer but never entered the hotel again, instead, he bought his beer wholesale in Darwin and drank it at home or

<sup>9</sup> The term 'Sydney William hut', perhaps derived from a manufacturer's name, is applied colloquially to temporary army barracks.

<sup>10</sup> An Aboriginal reserve established in 1938 on the edge of Darwin, now surrounded by suburbs. It has long been a refuge for Aboriginal visitors to the city.

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made it on the property. Dad had money but he wouldn't spend it. For a long time our beds were made of the farm straw stuffed into calico covers. They were comfortable to sleep on, so we did not mind. We used to make our own bread and damper and salt the meat which would go hard like concrete, in fact almost white. There was plenty of food and we ate well.

Mum, Ada and I worked hard on the farm and Dad made us work in overalls. If blokes ever offered to carry a bag of sugar or rice for us, Dad would say, 'the girls are big enough and strong enough to carry the bags'. He made us dress like men and would tell people that we were as good and as strong as men. If anything broke down, us girls would have to fix it. Dad taught us how to pull carburettors to pieces, operate the timing on the magneto of the rotary hoes, start the pump and drive the tractors. We were our own mechanics. Sundays were fun because other teenagers would travel from around the area to Coomalie Creek in an old Blitz truck. It was an all day trip and we would spend our time with them swimming together at the Coomalie Creek bridge. We weren't allowed to have boyfriends though. So, if Dad heard us outside at night, he would come out of his house dressed in one of those American flannel nighties swinging a pitch fork or firing off the shot gun. Dad was famous for that!

The farm produced peanuts, fruit and all types of vegetables. Every Friday we brought our produce into Darwin and sold it from our shop which was where the Koala Motor Inn is now. The front entrance of the shop faced Daly Street. We sold tomatoes, cucumber, cabbages, lettuce, beetroot, carrots, pumpkin, watermelons and lemons. We supplied the Darwin Hospital, the Mitchell Street Mess, Qantas Mess, Shell Oil Company, Haritos, the Administrator, Tang's store plus deliveries on the route to town. By late Friday we would have sold everything then we'd go to the pictures. Darwin was a city to us and it was good to come in each week even though we travelled at twenty-five miles per hour in Dad's old truck. As we got a bit older, Dad allowed us to go to dances at the Catholic Palais. He used to leave us there honour bound to stay and he'd go to the pictures. About eleven o'clock, he'd collect us and then we'd all walk back to the shop together. On Saturdays we would travel back home again.

There was always a lot to do on the farm. We never got sick, we had a healthy life. We started with Dad early in the morning and worked in the garden, then in the heat of the day he rested like the old Aboriginal men, but the women and us, Ada, Edna, Elizabeth and I would go down to the billabong to find mussels or swim. At three o'clock we'd all go back to work.

The men used to outpace us. They would hoe two rows as we women did one. Dad never employed Europeans as there was always enough of us around. Dad used to pay the Aborigines the basic wage even when the

white man was still fighting for it.<sup>11</sup> The cost of their flour, sugar, tobacco and tea would be taken out and they would be given the rest. Dad would buy second-hand bikes for the Aborigines so that they could ride to Batchelor and Adelaide River to gamble because that is how they used their money. Dad understood the ways of the Aborigines and allowed for their different way of life. The Aborigines used to be off without a moment's notice for a few days or weeks if a relative turned up or just if they felt like leaving, then one day unexpectedly turn up again to stay on Dad's farm. Dad could not rely on them staying for any length of time but they did work well when they were with him. In the wet season, the men would make fish spears and the women worked on their baskets and mats if they needed them, perhaps a mat to play cards on or sit on in the camp. Ada and I used to learn from them, which pleased Dad. The Aborigines used to use their skills to help Dad. They slatted bamboo to make a lattice wall on the verandah around the house and it was the Aborigines who helped Dad build a weir at Adelaide River between the high level and the low level bridge before we were born. Every wet season the river used to come up and run over all the vegetables but it did not wash the soil away. We didn't worry though, because when the water ran through the house we used to pack everything up on the vehicle and go up and stay in the little hut we'd built on the Batchelor road. When the water went down we would move back home and carry on the same.

I like western food best to live on, but Aboriginal food is nice. I can eat it and I can find it. Oh yes, and a lot of Aborigines today can't find it because they don't know what to look for. We were lucky on the farm with Dad, we went out fishing and shooting. The Aboriginal women, especially Nellie who lived on the farm, would take us kids out on the river and teach us to catch bream and yabbies. The women also used to put their hands in the roots in the river and pull out a file snake, hold it firm, put the whole head of the snake in their mouth and jerk it and kill it like that. It is called a file snake because the outside of the skin is like a rasp, rough as a rasp, it has no scales. It tasted okay. We used to catch flying fox by shooting them. The brown ones were the best, we would find them in the jungle and bring them back to cook in hot coals. When the body and wings went hard, we would gut them, then put them back in to cook. I didn't like the smell of the flying fox although they tasted good but bandicoot and goanna were better. We spent a fair bit of time in the jungle. The jungle was off the creek on the right hand side of the Batchelor road.

<sup>11</sup> Rowley (1970:233) notes that the payment of wages in such circumstances was quite uncommon.

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When Batchelor<sup>12</sup> first started up, I used to go out with the Aborigines who collected leeches for me to give to a new Australian who was working at Rum Jungle Mine. He used to put the leeches on his varicose veins to suck the blood out and that would take the pain away. It really did work. He told us that doctors in England had the nickname of leeches because they used to bleed people. Sometimes we would go and collect long yams to take home and boil up, or *bowitch* which is a type of potato that grows on a stick and comes up after the first rains. It was hard to find but we always managed to get some which we would wash, rub off the outside skin and eat. It was very crunchy and tasty. Another fruit we used to pick was the sweet wild cherry plum. We also used to eat the wild skinny sugar cane in the wet season. It was easy to find in the long wet grass and it was really sweet, we'd suck it and throw the stalk away.

Of a night we'd have a corroboree and I used to dance. I would sing or dance at the drop of a hat. I loved it. Dad used to call me little black 'Shirley Temple'. Our tribal dance was with the string. Some of the tribe lived by the tank, another group by the billabong and others just around the farm area. People used to come and go. Dad had tribes from Daly River, Humpty Doo, Marrakai and even from Oenpelli from time to time. They would work just long enough to get a bit of money. To them there was no tomorrow like working for a future. They were happy nomadic people. After working for a while they would sit down to rest, play cards or have a talk. The didgeridoo would be going every night and the sticks clapping and we would all be singing. It was really good fun in those days, but it's not like that any more. The didgeridoo and sticks only come out when they are putting on a dance for other people. Dad had an old gramophone and we all used to dance to the music. The Aborigines liked the Western records like Tex Morton. The favourite songs were 'The Red River Valley' and 'The Yellow Rose of Texas'. They went crazy listening to those seventy-eight records. We could all play the mouth organ, not classy, but we could play tunes, no worries!

Ada and I only owned two dresses each. We used to swop and do all sorts of things to make our dresses look different. We taught ourselves to make clothes. Mum, she may be Aboriginal, but she can sew by hand. She can't cut out from a pattern but she can make full dresses with darts and waist and gee, she is good! She was really good at making dilly bags, she'd shred old dresses until she got the cotton, then rolled it on her leg until she turned it into a long twine ready to make the bags. As I say, this old girl Mum is good even though apart from her name she can't read or write. We were all pretty handy, you know. Well, we had to be! Edna and Elizabeth did not go in for this as much but perhaps they had

<sup>12</sup> Batchelor was established by the government in 1952 to house the workers at Rum Jungle uranium mines (Barr *et al.* 1978 :3).

different interests as they were a lot younger than Ada and I. There was a lot of card gambling down at the black camp and Edna, Elizabeth and Mum used to go down and join in but not me. I gambled once and lost eight bob and that was it, I never played again.

After Ada was married in 1952, Dad took me to Holland. I was eighteen and Dad was about eighty. We had a fantastic time. Dad and I were very close. He showed me the house in which he was born and we also visited his brother. Soon after we came back from Europe, Dad decided I was old enough to go to the dances at Batchelor. There were only white boys and girls at the dances, no fullblood Aborigines ever went along. They had their own corroborees and I don't think they would have been welcomed. I think I was about the only half caste but I always had a good time and plenty of dancing partners. It was at one of these dances that I met Lorry McIntosh. Lorry came from Mt Morgan in Queensland, which is a mining town where he'd done his apprenticeship as a fitter and boiler maker. On his way to Darwin he had worked at a number of places including Manus Island. We got engaged after about six months and went to Rockhampton to meet his parents and get married. Lorry's parents were against our marriage, which got him all confused, so I moved into the local hotel. Lorry suggested that I return to Darwin and he would follow but I said, 'I have a strong pride, I won't go back to Darwin. I came down here to marry you and all my friends at Adelaide River and Rum Jungle know I have come down here to marry you so if I don't get married, I'll never go home'. I told him that Dad gave me money so I wouldn't be his worry. Lorry was a man being torn two ways by his family and me. Lorry's parents believed that once he'd married me he would have to look after all my relations, but this was untrue. As time passed we cared for his family, certainly not mine. His family wanted him to think it over, but Christ, we went together for six months so I mean how long does a man need? I couldn't go back home because all our life Dad had brought us up with pride, we were the Verberg girls. It gets deep-seated inside you and nothing will change you. He taught us to be proud, not proud that we were coloured like they are trying to shove down kids' necks these days, but proud that we were the Verberg girls. We must never bow down to anyone. We must do what we think is right and that is it. Ada and I were stubborn like Dad from the Dutch in us and free and easy going at the same time like the Aborigines. After a week Lorry came again to see me at the hotel, we were in love and we went and got married.

It was a very good marriage, we are still married even though we do not live together. We spent our first years of marriage living just outside Adelaide River as Lorry got a job in a little mine. We were happy there and after a while he got a better job at El Sherana,<sup>13</sup> a uranium mine.

<sup>13</sup> Maddie says this mining settlement was located on the South Alligator River, not far from Pine Creek. El Sherana was an anagram, from the names of Bluey Kay's three small daughters: Elvira, Sharen and Larna.

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This was where I really matured. I was the only woman there for a long time. We lived in a tent at first then in a company house which we built. I got pregnant with my two kids while we were there and when they came along (Dannylynn was born in June 1958 and Lynda Louise was born in August 1962) life was even better. Lorry built a rotunda which was made of paper bark and was cool and weatherproof. I used to have plants all around it, the floor was concrete and we used to have our parties in there. It was a little beer garden. Lorry built swings for the kids and oh, it was good, we were so happy!

I used to spend a lot of my time making clothes for the girls and playing with them. When the neighbours' kids were on school holidays they all used to spend their time around my home. I often used to pile them into the landrover and deliberately drive along muddy tracks so we could have the fun of digging the vehicle out of the bogs. I also enjoyed the times when the Aboriginal groups camped nearby *en route* to Arnhem Land. The men wore cock-rags in those days and the women only wore clothes when strangers were around. One group would go through the Katherine Gorge up through the South Alligator River on their way to Kumpala Station, Jim Jim, out to Nylandji, then to Oenpelli. Oenpelli was a big mission where they would visit their relations. These days they travel by vehicle. One bloke called 'Donkey' had four wives and two of them were pregnant on one of their trips and the babies were born at El Sherana. The babies were little pink things and slept in bark. I used to take milk and nappies down to the mothers for their babies. A lot of Aboriginal women still practise infanticide. They always know if there will be something wrong with their baby. A pregnant woman will disappear from a group, squat over a burrowed-out hole and bury the baby if for some reason she thinks it should not live.

In the booming days at El Sherana, there were about 150 to 200 men. They mined the pitchblende which was the strong stuff, not this yellow cake, that's rubbish. The yellow cake is not as rich. The largest piece of uranium in Australia was found at El Sherana. I saw the men haul it up the shaft. Finally the contract ran out so the mine closed down but we stayed on for another couple of years while Lorry dismantled the equipment with a handful of about thirty men.

Dad died in 1965 at the age of ninety-six. The Council later named a street in Stuart Park 'Verberg Street' in memory of Dad. He left us a lot of money, a few thousand cash and some bonds. When we moved from El Sherana, we used the money to buy a block of land on the corner of Chapman Road and Chapman Court in Darwin for £700. The house cost us £10,000. It was strong, we put the foundations four foot into the ground and Lorry welded all the pipe himself. He got Nightcliff Builders in to help do the building but he checked their work. The house stood up well in the cyclone, only losing a couple of sheet irons off the roof. We

were happy until Lorry started business for himself. Once he became a partner in Inpact Engineering he worked seven days a week and we never spent time together.

Lorry travelled to Gove, Groote Eylandt and down the track to Francis Creek for Inpact Engineering, often staying away for days at a time. We grew apart. I was at a loose end and became discontented. I moved out of the house and took the girls with me. Lorry helped me find a flat in Progress Drive and helped us shift in and paid the bills until I got a job. My first job was car cleaning at Sutton Motors on about \$54 a week but I worked that into a really good job. I then worked on a contract basis with six people working for me. Lorry used to come and visit us and we went out to see him. We grew closer again. It was better that way. I was independent and free. I rented a flat on Trower Road from the Housing Commission for a year then moved into one of their homes at Jingili.

As the girls grew up, I started to take an interest in sport and took up softball as Danny enjoyed it. We played together for the same club. Then Lynda wanted to play hockey so I had to also learn hockey. I was in my thirties when I took up these club competitive sports. I believe you must play sports with your kids. I have also coached softball and hockey teams. When soccer was being developed in Darwin, I agreed to play soccer in a team and we used to put on charity games. Later, we played in competition soccer and won one grand final as well as the Ampol Cup. The only time I've had health problems was through sport. I broke my ankle at softball and had to have an operation on my knee after an Aussie Rules football match. I went up for a mark and when I came down again, my foot went into the hole from where the sprinkler system operates. Did I cry, I was crying in temper because I wanted to play! I had practised hard and now all I had was a knee out of place. It was very painful and from then on I had trouble with my knee. Nearly every time I played sport it would click out and I'd have to click it back in again. Dr Selvey operated on my knee but couldn't fix it properly.

Our marriage changed from a love affair to a friendship. It's strange but friendships don't make marriages, that's why I say to people fight whatever you do, it is good for you to fight. You can't go through life just as friends. As I got older and wiser, I felt life had more for me. I didn't just want to be a housewife filling my time in with hobbies like photography, painting or dressmaking. Nothing ever goes back to what it was before although you can improve and go forward and bring it to level. Couples should not say, 'Oh I wish it was like it was before'. That's no good because if it becomes like it was before it isn't good enough as it didn't work out that way before, so that's why you always aim to go forwards working to improve your life style. Lorry always cared for us,

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he is a good man. When the first car load got to Adelaide River after the cyclone and Lorry heard that Darwin was gone, he put water, axe, bedding and pillows on the truck and came to find us. He walked for miles to find us, unhurt.

A few days later, he sent a carpenter up to fix new iron on to the roof, and replace a few louvres. I did not evacuate after the cyclone. However, Lorry took the girls to Adelaide River. This was the loneliest time of my life. I used to sleep in the car in town sometimes. I think I was about the only woman in Jingili. It was eerie as there was not a sound. The food which the authorities gave us was very good. The helpers who came from other States were fantastic. It was worth being here to see how they worked. We cooked outside and had plenty of water from the large tanks. There were no real problems. I got extra food at times and took it down to the Aborigines at One Mile Dam. Those Aborigines just lay down in the ditches and the wind and trees blew over them during the cyclone. They had no other shelter.

In my home black is never mentioned as a colour. My girls don't live at home anymore. Danny works for her father in his hotel at Adelaide River and Lynda is at Woodlands boarding school in Adelaide. I never get lonely though or live alone. I let anyone stay who needs a bed. My friends say, 'let them go somewhere else', but where can they go? I have dogs, cats and other pets which really belong to Lynda. There is always someone living in the house to feed the animals when I am away on working trips. I have male friends and enjoy their company, but I would never remarry, mostly because I like my independence but partly because Lorry is still the very best man and my girls' father. I am proud of and love all my family, whom I spend time with quite often. Mum, who had a baby boy — Bruce — when I was twenty, is now married to Jack England and lives at Batchelor. She works hard attending to their pigs, chickens, and garden. She visits us about once a month when Jack brings her into town. Ada, Edna and Elizabeth all live in Darwin. Ada married Tom Calma and lives at Fannie Bay. They have four children, one boy and three girls. Lenore, their eldest girl, is married and lives in the northern suburbs of Darwin. Edna is married to Les Barolits and they have a boy and a girl. Elizabeth is married to Jim Delahunty and they have two boys. My young brother Bruce, who is a qualified electrician, is still single and working around the Darwin area.

### *Maddie Today*

As a Field Officer, my job is to interview clients when they come into the office, to find out if their problem is legal or welfare. There are three solicitors and four field officers. We have courts at Katherine, Oenpelli, Groote Eylandt, Gove, Elcho Island, Maningrida, Garden Point and Darwin. Roper River is opening up this week. Our clients may be having problems



with the landlord, or a car dealer to whom they paid cash for a second hand car which broke down about twenty miles from Darwin. The Aborigines get taken time after time over car deals. They pool their money, buy a car and don't read the small print that says 'Sold as is' so we can't help them if they have this piece of paper. Another example is if an Aboriginal has been in an accident and there is likely to be an insurance claim, we visit them at the hospital to give assistance. We go out to any settlements if we are needed. I only have to be with a group for a week and I can understand their language but when I go away I forget it again. If the lawyer does not turn up at court, I speak for them. One time I got a girl, who pleaded guilty for cutting a white man with a knife, off on a \$200 fine because it was his fault he got stabbed and I put the facts before the court. I also got a man off without losing his license for stealing a government vehicle. I communicate with the Aborigines, then I explain their case slowly and clearly to the magistrate. Another way we try to help is giving young girls confidence to help them in their new jobs and to stay employed. One young girl who started in town the other week was unhappy because her white workmates were showing her how to do things wrongly and she was getting into trouble with her boss. I told her to bounce the bloke who was giving her a hard time right back and let him know that she was there to stay. Anyway she stuck the job and now she gets on well with everyone.

We work in with the Social Development department all the time, handling anything from adoptions to funerals. Although our first duty is to the Aboriginal, we are happy to help Europeans whenever possible. A group of girls brought a white girl around home because she had taken an overdose of sleeping pills. I took her to hospital and helped her out, got a job for her as well as a place to live. I helped a Greek woman last week, an Aboriginal woman brought her to me. It's good to help people. As many Aborigines cannot read and write, they really do need our help. Until 1973 Aborigines did not have any legal representation. In those days if an Aboriginal was picked up by the police for offensive behaviour or for being disorderly, he was wide open for insult, ridicule and prosecution. Also, the police did not understand that an Aboriginal's way of behaving is really different from a European's. An Aboriginal is loud when he is happy and even louder with a few beers. We often appear in court for the group of Aboriginal 'metho' drinkers who hang around Rain Tree Park. Each time one goes to court, he is fined \$25 which he hasn't got, so he goes to jail. Legal Aid has an unwritten policy where they bail no one out of jail or pay anyone's fines. A lot of them won't go on a pension as they have a deep seated fear of signing their name to anything. They would rather scrounge for food and go to jail if they have to, where they pay off their fine at \$10 a day. They rather like jail — good food, nice rest, get all cleaned up, then out on the street again. One group would consist of a few white 'plonkies', fullbloods and half castes who stick together. A few are on a pension and they share among themselves.

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There is no truly tribal group of Aborigines left in the Northern Territory. The Aborigines can be placed in three groups. Firstly Aborigines like me who are westernised, cannot speak Aboriginal languages and do not have any tribal culture. This includes all the intermarriages with other races. The second group is made up of those at One Mile Dam, Knuckey's Lagoon and groups who live around communities, buffalo shooting camps or stations. This group is westernised in their work, usually speaking a pidgin English as they have not been educated by the missionaries. They speak a few Aboriginal languages but they don't practice traditional law or culture except corroborees which are held when someone dies. It is called the dead man's ceremonies. The third group are the Aborigines who live on missions and settlements but live in their own area like Groote Eylandt, Gove, Maningrida and Elcho Island. They have their music bands and use the western tools that they like, while at the same time use the traditional law to advantage. For example, if a woman commits adultery, she can be punished to death but the men still like to live our way, like jump in a Toyota utility with a few cartons of grog and rifles to go off shooting.

I don't believe anyone owes us anything. I am not going to say I'm black because the world wants me to say I am black and I can't say I'm white because I'm not. I am me, Maddie, and a half caste. I used to wear bright colours to bring out the colour in my skin. You get out of life what you put into it. The European convicts' descendants don't go around saying 'way back my great grandfather stole a loaf of bread and got put in chains and was treated as a sub-human so Britain owes me for that'. Admittedly, the Aborigines were treated badly in the early days, because by white society they had broken laws and they had to be punished, but that happened before and that is finished, this is the new world. As Aborigines now want the white man's way of living, they must be taught to earn it, its not picnic day every day. In their old traditional way, their wants were so few they didn't have to work, and now with the European way they must be taught to appreciate what they are given, otherwise they won't ever have any sense of value for material goods. It is the understanding times now, the Aborigines must pull their weight and pay their way in life. I get frustrated at times trying to make Aborigines understand that we are not a treasury. We are not funded to fly them around, but we offer help through Social Development, Aboriginal Affairs, St Vincent de Paul and Red Cross.

I'll try anywhere for help in their problem. Sometimes I feel the Aborigines have got too many rights for their own good. The white man creates the monster. If a white man says to an Aboriginal group drinking alcohol outside Woolworths, 'Hey, you mob get on your reserve to drink', the Aborigines will answer 'Oh, we are not allowed to drink on our reserve'. The white man should then say, 'Well, this is my place and you can't drink here' but the white man can't say that, because the Aboriginal has

so many rights. You will never see a group of white men and women sitting and drinking on the hospital lawns, but the Aborigines do and get away with it.

Aborigines drink alcohol because they like it. I feel the problem is due to the way drinking was introduced by the government. Why didn't they talk to communities and offer it to the groups? Fullblood Aborigines were rarely seen in town fifteen years ago. Only the odd stockman came to town and a few did their shopping on the fringes at Haritos. Now that alcohol has been introduced, a lot of them come to town because they are not allowed to drink on their settlements and missions. They must not take liquor on to the land where they grew up. I am certain, had they been allowed to take it to their dwellings without fuss, they would have stayed there and could have been taught how to handle it. Perhaps have a club like the clubs in Darwin with a few pool tables, a juke box, dart boards and keg beer with no spirits. Umbakumba has done this and opens from five to seven every night and Saturday and Sunday mornings. The idea was suggested by a bright young white man married to an Aboriginal girl.

I was going to suggest that the police learn the Aboriginal culture, but I've decided against it. What is the use? Out of all the cases heard a year, there may be twenty out of the lot that involve traditional laws. I don't remember how many cases we have a year, but I know that the other month we had 250 cases for that month. Out of that every charge was a white-man-introduced crime. There was not one assault, but mainly illegal use of motor vehicles. Sometimes they knock off five or six vehicles a night, just to get from one place to another. If the vehicle runs out of petrol or breaks down, they leave it and knock off another vehicle. It does not worry them as they have no sense of responsibility. They also have no monetary or material values from their tribal ways to help them be respectful citizens. One thing I must say though, is I have found that Aborigines from outlying areas are very honest. They tell you straight but I suppose they have to because their mates will not let someone get away with telling lies.

All the authorities today say that Aborigines want tradition. It's not like that any more. The Aborigines don't want it, they only agree with the authorities because they get money. Anthropologists and professors don't believe me when I tell this, because they don't want to, but that's how life is. I tell them the facts. I look at it realistically. It is good to have had a culture that lasted thirty thousand years. It worked when it was practised properly and was a good way of life for the people of that time, but this is the twentieth century and there are no tribal Aborigines left. They enjoy and want the western culture. They don't want the old way. Only a few old ones go out to get turtles at Umbakumba but they use boats with an outboard motor. As well, the old men want to keep up the tribal laws which allow them several wives but the second and third wives are against this tribal system and we have many of them come to us at

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Legal Aid. They want 'out' but we can't do anything to help. These women want a white man or to be left in peace, certainly not to be second or third wife being belted up because of the jealousies of the other wives. The wives lived happily together until the tribal structure broke down, but now this way of life causes big problems. If these girls get into Darwin they stay, as they like nice clothes and the European culture.

Aboriginal women look lazy and useless to European women, but you've got to remember that they have had no education standards in home-making services. Thousands of dollars are spent on homes for Aborigines but, while the government continues to spend money on the upkeep of European homes, no money is set aside to upkeep Aboriginal homes. What a waste of money! The government should build less houses and allow for their upkeep and, as well, educate the women on home-making practices. The women are not encouraged to act like European women. Instead, they are just expected to act that way. Once in their old tribal way, they worked on a system where they didn't have tin cans or paper. Their wants are few. So deep down, it is not in their knowledge to put scraps in bins. The young teenagers are interested in being clean and well dressed. So, it will improve.

The young ones enjoy the aimless way of life. The ones that go to court do not seem to have any sense of fear. Some of the little devils say 'Maddie, what do you think I'll get, what do you think I'll get?'. A lot of them like jail as they think their age group will look up to them when they come back home. As Aborigines do not understand a good behaviour bond, it is better for them to be fined because they are used to being punished immediately. We go out to the prison farm at Gunn Point where boys are completely happy with T.V. and good meals, but I must say that they do miss their families. The trouble starts among the teenagers who have not got work, up to the age of twenty-five when they seem to settle down with a woman who steadies them down. Apart from the main charge of illegal use of motor vehicles, they often steal liquor from people's downstairs bars. Oh, they are real monkeys for pinching liquor because they are idle with nothing else to do and often have not held a job at all. The government aren't really thinking about the Aboriginal boys who are not practising their traditional ways. The girls have no problems. They are now more independent, putting forward their ideas which are being backed by the missionaries. The Aboriginal girls usually prefer to have a white man. A lot of the white men in the districts around Darwin look after their black women and they are not too proud to carry a little half caste or full-blood baby around on their hip.

As to whether the missionaries have been a good thing for Aborigines, is a \$64,000 question. Before the missionaries opened up the government's eyes, I don't think that the government would have interfered. The Aborigines had their own boats to fish and spears to hunt but soon after the missionaries, came the police stations and then trouble. I feel that they were better off when they were ignored.

In some instances today, Aborigines are tribal. But, as I said before, only to suit themselves. There was a trial by spear at Groote Eylandt this year. The police said it wasn't to be, but they knew that they should keep out of the way and not get 'heavy'. A trial by spear is when the victim has to stand up and let the men throw spears at him and he must dodge them. Oh, and they come like bullets! It's a beautiful thing to watch. I watched one when we were on the farm because two young bucks took two of old Donkey's wives bush for a week and when they came back they had to be punished. Members of old Donkey's family worked themselves up at a corroboree, singing and dancing. Just like being intoxicated so they could not see a thing, making them mad and unreasonable, ready to fight. If the victim still remains unmarked, fair enough, it is forgotten. Once trial by spear is over, honour is satisfied in Aboriginal law.

If, however, a spear kills the victim, the police move in and the killer has to face European law. The boys at Dad's farm were not killed, but Andy (who killed the victim at Groote Eylandt last year) was brought to trial. We explained it was trial by spear and many Aborigines from that area chartered a DC3 to come to Groote to say that Andy was a really good man. The judge put Andy on a three year good behaviour bond.

I have written an article on the problems that a defendant has with the police, looking at it from a defendant's point of view. Before I was married, the policemen used to visit all the homes and settlements. A police officer in the early days was not someone who just grabbed hold of an Aboriginal, and he was guilty before he was tried, which it is like today. No, the policeman was our friend. His attitude was good. He was looked up to and respected. From my work, I know how nasty and arrogant police can be, how they hassle people and are often small minded in many ways. This is not a departmental policy though, the department is very fair to Aboriginal Legal Aid. However, it must be frustrating for a police officer because on some settlements the policeman knows whatever he does for the Aboriginal he won't succeed. So often he must get to thinking 'Oh, what do I care if they all kill themselves'. I get frustrated too. I took up smoking last year. I'd buy cigarettes for my clients to have one before a court case and end up having one with them.

Aborigines have a lot going for them today. Especially the children. A white working class man can't get a grant to send his child to a good boarding school like I send my daughter. The poorer the Aboriginal child is in society today, the better chances he has if he knows how to take advantage of what he is being offered. Although many of the children go down to Adelaide to school, they don't stick it as they always feel discrimination against them because of their colour and they feel lonely as they are such a big distance away from their relations for long periods at a time. I feel the government should make it more attractive for Aborigines to learn. They know the geography of their area, so teach them reading, writing and arithmetic, just give them the basis to develop. There has

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been some talk of writing each Aboriginal language to teach them, but it is getting that way that many Aborigines cannot even speak their own language. I know fullblood Aborigines who cannot speak their own language. They are westernised, but still living in the humpy camps. My suggestion is that an Aboriginal teacher should speak their language but teach English by picture reading. Say, 'this is a cat' in her language while pointing to a picture of the cat. The Arunta tribe out of Alice Springs have their own written language and this has proved to be a success. They are proud to have their own primer.

One of the best things about my work is meeting people. I meet people from all walks of life from the degenerates to State ministers. My job keeps me alert and I feel I get my point across about what I've got to say. Everyone accepts me but I have a lot of arguments about one thing. I think that the full blood will accept a white man before a half caste but I'm all right, as they all know me or know of me, but I honestly feel that I am an exception. I do not know the reason for this Aboriginal attitude, but I know it is there. I must have some understanding of them as I spend my life trying to solve one or another of their 'hang ups' or problems. I like my job and slowly, if we try hard, the Aborigines will learn. When the law came in allowing Aborigines to drink in pubs if they wore footwear and a shirt, they conformed. It doesn't matter how drunk they are, we never see Aborigines without their shoes and shirts. Now they learnt that, eh? One bloke came into the office today crying because someone had torn his shirt and it was not until we fixed it so he could keep it on, that he was happy again. It is going to take a long time but it will improve slowly year by year.

I help Aboriginal Affairs by giving talks. I have talked to Aboriginal school children in groups at schools on what National Aboriginal Observance Day means to the Aborigines. I talk from my heart and tell them that for the first time Aboriginal people are starting to be recognised as a race. Until recently, they were always looked down on as Jacky on the wood pile. He always stayed outside while everyone else ate inside. He didn't have the right to drink and vote, but now Aborigines are becoming aware of responsibilities which they may take a long time to succeed in, but it is happening.

I didn't tell the children that hundreds of Aborigines don't vote because they are too embarrassed to ask how to fill out a voting card. We try to enrol as many Aborigines as possible, but a lot of them forget to go and vote on election day. Politics to me is a dirty word. It doesn't matter what party is in, they never carry out their promises. These men are dishonest. I told my boss when I first went to work for Legal Aid - 'Don't ever ask me to lie because that is not to be part of my job'. The supporting mother's pension was the worst thing that ever happened to Australia, because among the coloured people it is not being used

correctly. However, if it is taken away from the mothers the kids will starve. The mothers just don't distribute the money on their kids as they are supposed to, but instead they often give or gamble it away.

The Aborigines in the Northern Territory are better off than those in Queensland. Queenslanders are very racial prejudiced. A person doesn't have to say anything if he is prejudiced. It is always there all around him. You can feel it. It closes in on you when you are near someone who is racist but, as I said before, I'm not ever going to get hung up on being black because more than black, I'm me. I'm Maddie. You know I'm in a no-man's-land. You asked me if I was black or white and I said to you, 'Well, I'm not white', but I jokingly told James Galarrwuy Yunupingu, chairman of the Northern Lands Council, one day that he should get some land for me and he replied, 'But you aren't black, you aren't Aboriginal'. My motto is that if I die tomorrow don't be sad or have regrets for me because I've enjoyed every incident in my life. The good and the bad times have made me appreciate life and I understand problems of others through having had a number of my own.

NORTHERN AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL LEGAL AID SERVICE  
and  
DARWIN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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