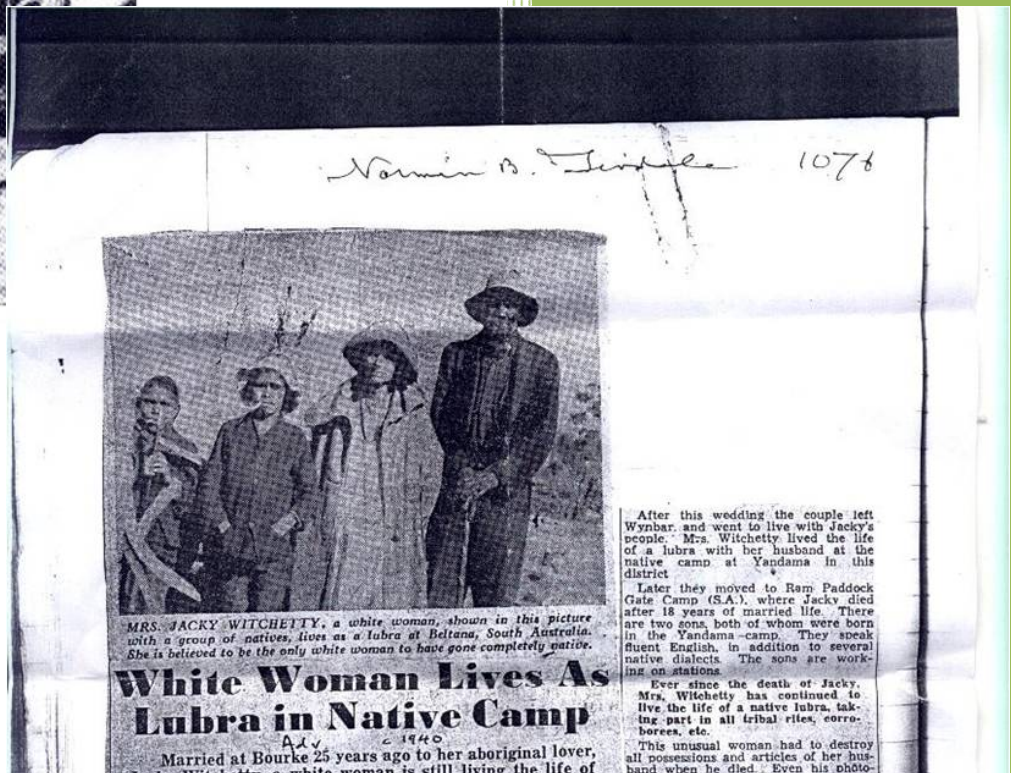




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Thesis Title:

White Lives in a Black Community: The lives of Jim Page and Rebecca Forbes in the Adnyamathanha community

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Life Writing Chapter Eleven

Jim comes to Adnyamathanha Country

Iga Warta, Flinders Ranges 2005

I sat comfortably beside Cliff Coulthard in the morning sunlight at Iga Warta, where his family had established their homelands and a cultural tourism enterprise, just west of Nepabunna. Looking further west, I saw columns of dust hanging in the still air like tamed willy-willy's, pointing their fingers towards the close valley that folded Minerawuta away from view. Fenced in north and south by craggy ranges, that did not mean that those who had lived in the cleft of the land saw nothing.

Cliff leant forward from his plastic chair and moved a stick across the fine grey gravel. He pulled his hat low against the mid-morning glare, his beard nodding at the explanation he gave as he drew a figure of a bird in the dirt, and stabbed his stick at its open beak.

'...if you look at a map you can see the hills make the shape of a beak: that's Yurlu, kingfisher beak. Minerawuta is right in the middle of the beak, where the food goes down into the body, so they would have preferred to be there, between the two ranges. Then there's Crystal Gorge right at the point of the beak. Then the head goes around here, on Mt Serle.'

Cliff dragged the twig around the curving crest of the bird's head, tracing north on the tiny map.

'...And King Bob, he picked the place he wanted to be buried right where the brain would be. Mt Serle Bob – he called him King Bob – was one of the fellows first saw white men coming; he was one who held a spear up at them. He was, like, wilyaru, been through his doctorate in Aboriginal law, and was leader of the ceremony. He was Walter Coulthard's grandfather. He would have died before Mrs Forbes came. He is buried at Mt Serle.'¹

Cliff was Mt Serle Bob's great-great-grandson. I looked northwest, to the distant blue bulk of Arta-wararlanha, Mt Serle.² I imagined King Bob's bones sleeping quietly in the dark ground, beneath the patch of scree that might be Yurlu's eye.

Hawker, Flinders Ranges 2001

Mt Serle Bob's great grandson, Ken McKenzie, told me about Mt Serle Bob's Dream. Ken had come to call at the plain 1950s bungalow which served as my adequate, if uninspiring, manse in Hawker. Ken peppered his memories with song and sermon, and warmly addressed me as 'Sister'. I changed tack in the conversation to ask about Jim Page. That's when I heard about the dream.

'I'm just wondering too [about] when Mr. Page came to the community: how was it for the community to take him in?' I asked, less than adeptly.

Ken considered this, watching me steadily, his full round cheeks set in their familiar smile. His dark eyebrows knit for a moment, than his face relaxed, his cheeks sagged a little, and he began to speak again:

'Well what they said [was that] there was a Lutheran minister first at Mt Serle but there wasn't much done. The people didn't really take it in. But I was always told too that Mount Serle Bob had a dream. Like he dreamt, you know, [when] he was worried what was happening to the dark people. He thought the udnyus were killing the Aboriginal people (the Yuras) [and he worried]: "What's going to happen". But he - this what Dad said - he went off to sleep. In his dream, he dreamt about what Arra Wathanha said to him. [He said] "Don't worry about your people. I will raise them up and make them into leaders. But I'm calling you to be with me. But [in] three days - few days time or three days time - I'm sending someone to tell you more about me". So Mt Serle Bob woke up out of a dream and he says "Arra Wathanha! I dreamt about Arra Wathanha!"... He said "I dreamt about this great yura miru - great man - that said that all the tribes - all over Australia too, they would be - he would save the Adnyamathanha tribe, and they would all survive and he would make them into great leaders in the future". The amazing part about it is that we see that today: Aboriginal people are in ATSIC, Aboriginal people are leading. So that prophecy of Mt Serle Bob has come true.³

Even though I was recording all this, I needed to back up and check what I was hearing. ‘Yes, so, Arra Wathanha is the person that...?’

Ken knew what I was trying to ask. ‘God’, he said. ‘What it means in Adnyamathanha [is] “the man in the highest”.’

I felt a thrill, like I had uncovered the Holy Grail. Perhaps Arra Wathanha was the name of God, known to Adnyamathanha before any missionary stepped foot on the land. Proof that God was with them, from the beginning of time, after all.

‘And are there stories about him?’ I asked, bluntly. I was full of assumptions, and had forgotten about Jim. Ken answered, telling me what he thought I needed to know.

‘Well that time [Mt Serle Bob] had that vision from *Arra Wathanha*, a lot of people say too, he come along and said to old Mt Serle Bob “*Nachu michi Arra Wathanha*: that’s my name. I am Arra Wathanha”. Some people say ‘Why couldn’t he say he was God?’”, but I suppose he had to talk to old Mt Serle Bob so he could understand. If he talked in Aboriginal it made him understand what he’s talking about. That makes sense. You can see that too?’⁴

I could only nod, still taking it in, the easy way that Adnyamathanha philosophy accommodated this new thing into itself, into its own logic.⁵ Ken rushed on into a tumbling flow of syllables to a low soft tune. The only pattern that resolved in my brain was an occasional ‘*Arra Wathanha*’. When the buzz of the melody fell silent, Ken lowered his eyes from the corner of the ceiling, and fixed my gaze again.

‘It means:

Once my heart was heavy,
I was living in sin,
but I gave my life to Jesus,
and he took me in.

Means the same thing.’

‘So that’s the name for Jesus?’ My questions were hardly nuanced.

‘Yes, his name for Jesus.’⁶

Ken knew these things from his father, Malcolm McKenzie, third son of Jessie James and her husband Fred McKenzie, or *Marinduna*. Fred in turn was the sole surviving son of Mt Serle Bob and Polly, although he went by the name of his genetic father, a Scotsman called McKenzie, who had worked for a time in the Flinders, as he moved about the country, forming his liaisons on the way. Like the father who raised him, Fred was a leader of Adnyamathanha ceremonies. The last one.⁷ In his photographs, Fred wears his felt hat with the brim turned up like an ANZAC, his chin stubble roughly shaved and a wooden pipe elegantly tipping from the corner of his mouth, its bowl looking warm and smooth with frequent cupping. Mt Serle Bob, Fred, Malcolm, Ken: all these generations of McKenzie men knew that when missionary Jim Page arrived, he was the one *Arra Wathanha* had promised.

Minerawuta, April 1930.

Wind as determined as flood water cuts through the weak afternoon sun, throwing up dust and skittering twigs along the ground. The first shivers of the coming winter rattle the flattened tin walls of the humpies, and pick at the twists of wire that sew the rusting flaps into sturdy mail. Young Jack and Raymond come out of their hut and gather up their rabbit traps from beside drying pelts, where Becky hefts the lid onto the heavy black camp oven. Beneath the dark serge of her shirt, her arm muscles tense like bundles of wire as she carries the bulky vessel across to the fire, and rotates it gently down into the bed of coals. She scoops more coals with a blackened jam tin and lets them pour out on the lid of the oven. The pale ash whips away with the wind, and the white coals glow red where they are exposed.

Then the barking starts up. She keeps her head down, reluctant to be drawn to look after the sound, but the boys have already straightened up. Inside the hut, Jack coughs as he moves carefully to the doorway. He leans on the post, and looks out towards the northeast, where the camp dogs are braying as if bailing up an old man kangaroo. They are all pointing up the same direction, hackles raised, and tails down. Finally, Becky too turns to look, although she knows there is nothing to see.

‘*Wongi*’ Jack says, quietly, to himself, but so the others hear. Then louder: ‘Don’t you boys go over there. Set them traps out the other way.’ To Becky he says ‘*Yamuti*, maybe. Build up that fire tonight, alright?’

There is a buzz, higher pitched than usual, running through the camps. Children are walking quickly in groups towards the huts and their mothers. Men are stopping to talk to each other, and beginning to gather at the *Wimila*. Becky can see Fred McKenzie already sitting cross-legged at the men’s meeting place, sheltering his pipe with his hat as he packs its bowl. Dick Coulthard stands near him, thin where the other is solid, looking out under his narrow hat brim, while the other draws all vision into himself. The *Arruru* leader, north wind man, turns his back on the cold south wind and lets it blow over his seated form. Dick, the *Mathari* leader, south wind man, leans his thin frame against it. They are gathering the Council, all the *wilyaru* of both moieties, although it will be Fred who speaks first. Becky sees him lift a burning stick from the fire that whips low on the ground before him, and he bends toward it, lighting his pipe. He passes the flat tin of plug tobacco to Henry Wilton, who has taken his place beside Fred. Henry begins to scrape at the solid resin with a small knife. Fred leans back, drawing in smoke through the graceful stem, and watches the men arrive.

Jack has joined the other men around the fire at the *Wimila*, his long fingers clasping the grey ration blanket tightly around his hunched shoulders as he stares at the darting flames. He is standing near Ted Coulthard, who calls Becky 'sister', and Becky sees how Jack stands lightly on the ribbed earth, while Ted is solid as a tree trunk against the wind. Becky cannot hear the men talking, and could not understand them if she did. She shivers: the dogs still bark and howl. She sees some of the young men – Angus McKenzie, Fred's oldest; Walter Coulthard and some of the others – throwing stones at the dogs to quiet them.⁸ But even they will not go over to drag the dogs home. They know to stay by the fires. Sometimes, when she dares look, Becky thinks she can see something moving in the grove of *minera* that has so spooked the dogs, something big, and bear like. Or perhaps she only sees the fearful shapes in her imagination, drawn in the dust for her by serious-faced women who will not be put off by her high laughter.

They had drawn something like a kangaroo, but big as a donkey, they said, standing up on two short back legs, with big eyes, a short tail, and a pouch in which he stuffed his victims, their blood sticking to his fur and drawing a cloud of flies after him.⁹ 'Yamuti,' they had whispered emphatically, 'like this-' and they made a snarling growling sound. Becky had not laughed any more. When the wind drops towards evening, and below the barking of those infernal dogs, if she listens she thinks she hears a grumbling, rumbling sound. So she tries not to look, not to listen: teetering on the edge between fear and ignorance.

Nepabunna, Flinders Ranges, 2001

On the northern side of Nepabunna, I visited Gertie Johnson in her new house, a stylish curved corrugated iron affair in cream and terracotta tones, set with wide windows overlooking the convergence of creeks that lead to the Nepabunna waterhole. I knocked on the newly painted door.

‘Who is it?’ Breath whistled past teeth, and I could hear the scrape of a chair and footsteps scuffing the floor.

‘Granny Gertie, it me, Tracy. Murray Muirhead’s wife,’ I called though the dense security mesh. I did not share my husband’s surname, but knew his name would be fresh in her memory from recent funerals he had conducted.

‘Ah, Murray. Tracy – Tracy! Come in.’ She opened the door to me, lips smiling beneath her hooked nose, her white hair straight and at irregular angles, intensifying the rich brown of her face. I nodded at her daughter, who was already putting the kettle on for a cup of tea. Gertie and I prepared to settle ourselves at the table, with photographs and tape recorder between us.

I was missing my own children, and had Gertie’s great granddaughter climbing on and off my lap as we talked. Gertie told me about the ‘teddy bear’, and showed me its picture in an article by anthropologist Herbert Basedow which showed a prehistoric wombat-like creature called diprotodon he believed had co-existed with humans in the Flinders Ranges.¹⁰ *Yuras* told linguist Dorothy Tunbridge about it in the 1980’s, the *yamuti* that ate people but couldn’t bend its neck to look upwards. Only the *urngis* or clever men could see it.¹¹ Surely Becky would have known the story that Granny Gertie told me:

But my old father reckoned that we had a couple of witchdoctor, see and some people - my sisters - went around to Blinman. They went round to Blinman this way. They went around to Blinman. They camped at Blinman. They camped at Angorichina; they camped there and come round there. But they say that at

Angorichina they reckon that Yura there buried was [a] witchdoctor...He reckoned that he followed them up right back to Ram Paddock Gate.....And then while we was there we didn't do anything about it and we just [thought] something was talking. While we shifting, we come to that little creek there [at] Ram Paddock Gate. This little [creek], when you come to the Ram Paddock. That creek. We come to that - even them two people them old people here. Them two. My aunty and uncle, they come too. We camped in that creek...But the dogs used to bite that problem place. And we camped there one time and my father heard this, and the thing is coming up again, this rumbling. That Mrs. Forbes believe 'It's there, it's there'... Grumbling that place. Dad went there with the stick and he wanted to kill him but he can't see. It was teddy bear and he killed all the kids.¹²

There, in Gertie's gleaming new kitchen, a dinosaur had lumbered towards us from prehistory, scaring Mrs Forbes, killing children, and chilling the air around us. 'She knows this thing', I thought, watching as Gertie closed in on herself, her mouth a grim line. She knew this thing of nightmares and of science, and called it 'teddy bear' with warning in her whispered voice.

Pulling back the apricot curtains her nieces had made for her, Gertie pointed out the window towards the trees in the creek, and told me about the tree down there where the 'witchdoctor' from Marree 'tied up' the 'teddy bear' so it couldn't cause further harm. She told me if you put your ear up to the trunk, you could hear it grumbling, but that I mustn't go near there in the late afternoon.¹³ I never have.

Beltana, Flinders Ranges, 2001

Inside the smoky whitewashed walls of the old Australian Inland Mission hostel at Beltana, Keith Nicholls told me the same story:

...they had a big story about that. Just prior to that, the wise men of the camp, all the old fellas reckoned they needed something in the camp. So they went to Blinman and they dug up a grave of old Lango Tommy. He used to work on Warraweena when my Dad was a boy: shepherd he was, him and his old girl...He died of course. He was years older than most of them. But they had this, he was one of their head men, one of their leaders and supposed to have been a very

knowledgeable old boy in the Aborigine world. So they went over there, this party, and they dug up his grave and bought the bones back to Ram Paddock Gate and buried him there again. Buried his bones...About that time this influenza struck, you see. They decided that was a bad move, to bring his bones back there. They blamed that.¹⁴

‘They didn’t bring them back again?’ I asked.

‘No I don’t know whether they did or not but I do know they cleared out from Ram Paddock Gate,’ Keith said. I took another sip of the hot sweet tea he had made me, and was glad for its warmth in my belly.

Minerawuta, April 1930.

Becky sets down a pan of water on the ground from the bucket she has drawn from the well. The dogs lap noisily at it, slaking their hoarse throats, and drawn near to camp by the smell of stews nearly ready to eat. The light will soon be gone: but for now, its last rays pattern the ranges to the west with alternate reds on rock face, and dark purple where shadows lie. The Council is showing signs of finishing soon; the tight clump of men shifting, and breaking away into smaller groups.

Suddenly, like a wave breaking over the community, the chill of evening descends and it is like the whole community draws breath. But it is not the cold, or even the defiant shout of sunset that freezes everyone in that moment. Standing; bent over cooking pots; snatching up peg dollies; caught in a friendly nod making the rounds of the camps at dusk: all thought is gone save for the vision erupting in the western sky. Three figures hang in the sky; three human forms looking down on the wire, wood and tin twisted into dwellings; on the patches of dirt worn bare around small fires and on *mulkara* grounds; on a people who are family, who are community, who scrape to survive on the dry pocket of ground. Fred McKenzie is watching carefully; his son Angus clutching him, but not afraid to look. Women, fixed for a moment, are now

putting their heads down and moving inside their huts, shoosing their children before them. Becky grasps her sons' shoulders, and turns them to the doorway, but doesn't follow them. She watches, as this epiphany starts to fade. She has no idea why she feels warm in the cold night air, only that she does, and is glad.

Jack is calm as he sits down on an upturned kerosene tin by their fire. His breathing is quiet and soft.

'Jack?' Becky prompts.

'Fred says we'll be alright. You seen that.' It was a statement, not a question, and Becky nods. She'd seen it, whatever it was. 'Fred says, like Father, Son and Holy Ghost, like that old pastor Kramer said. Coming to let us know they looking out for us. Something good will happen now.' His brow wrinkled slightly. 'Don't know what for. Maybe that old *yura*. Maybe rain to drink.' His expression turned wry. 'Maybe pair of shoes for the frosty mornings coming up soon. Not everyone got boots made for snow, hey Mrs England?'

He laughed at her then, and she felt good all through. With an easy chuckle she handed a bowl of hot rabbit stew to Jack, and ladled out three more for herself and the boys. She even scooped out a mess of bones and lay them in the dust for the dogs, which had stretched out with their heads resting on their paws, asleep under the blanketing night.¹⁵

6th April 1930, Copley, Flinders Ranges¹⁶

Jim Page is on his way to Copley. Snaking along the rails through the generous valleys of South Australia's mid-north until the land levels into plains lapping against

mountain ranges, Jim relaxes to the easy ter-tunck! of the trains rhythm, sorting through the events of the journey.

At Peterborough he had broken his journey to receive donations from the good folk who supported the UAM there. Bundles and bundles of clothes: such a mixed blessing, and such unwieldy baggage for the trip ahead.

He had crossed the plains of broken promises – the blanched Willochra plain where the loading ramps at the station at Bruce still reflected its glory days as a wheat bowl forty years before. Then the familiar spreading skirts of Quorn, where he spent the night with Matron Hyde and Sister Rutter at the UAM's Colebrook Home for the children they had 'rescued' from further north. The sisters had urged him to write of miracles in the lives of their twenty-five children for *The UAM Messenger*; but he could not help but notice Gilpin, the thirteen year old boy tubercular and sweating alone in a cot by the kitchen alcove.¹⁷ The twelve hundred pounds Matron Hyde prayed for God to provide to improve their shabby buildings would not save him, if it ever came at all.¹⁸

Colebrook Home, Quorn, 2003

'But life's like that...' Clara Brady stood in the close cream kitchen of Colebrook Home, her jaw as firm as ever and her gaze direct as she told a group of school teachers the lessons of her life growing up there. I watched from the edge of the group clustered in the old kitchen, supervising my toddler playing outside at the same time. Clara threw me a smile every so often, from one Christian to another.

There was a blackboard above the fireplace in the dining room – two forms to sit at one for boys one for girls – where the sisters would write things for us to pray for, 'cos we were a faith mission and taught that if you believe your needs will be supplied, then they will.¹⁹

I didn't know whether to gasp or laugh at the stories about a load of cabbage falling off a truck by their door when they needed green vegetables, and excess bread from the baker being delivered to them one long weekend when the Home was out of flour. Sometimes these things happen. But this Home had twenty five children to feed, far from their homes, in a town that didn't want them.²⁰ I had asked Aunty Clara about this precarious position before, and she had replied with the same conviction.

'I said as far as I'm concerned, we're a chosen people not a stolen people. We're chosen: God chose us and you say that because you had that opportunity of everything like your education and learning how to understand other people and that, and the things that you've been involved in. You know, you've seen the needs of people and you had to do something about it. You had to change those needs; get those needs happening. So it's as I said: I said 'You hear people condemning the missionaries,' I said, 'It's I know those people lived - those people that [were] in our mission - well they lived on nothing, you know. They weren't paid wages or nothing...It was faith mission. And they lived by faith and they gave up their lives. They gave up their lives and their friends and family for just to go out to help, just to be part of helping others. ... So well I feel that us people that have been brought up by people [and] have been taught by missionaries and that, have been fortunate.'²¹

I looked for the note of bitterness, but there was none, only a simmering anger against the world's injustice to needy people, and rich compassion. From the first conference of the UAM in April 1930, it had been stated: 'What is a "Faith" Mission? ...a Mission that does not permit the appeal to any human source for financial aid, but persistently appeals to God in prayer, and depends on Him to supply every need.'²²

And Clara had lived what she learned:

'You're as good as anyone else; you have to work harder to prove it. You can be whatever you want if you fight for it. No point being angry, it makes you bitter and that's just hurting yourself. Instead I say we're the Chosen generation – our parents would have wanted us to go on and achieve.'²³

Which she did:

‘So I was smart and thought I’ll be a mission worker and then I’ll get back to my people. Nepabunna, then Oodnadatta and thought ‘nearly there’. Even when I was six, taken, I thought I’d get back to my people one day. I didn’t know my mother would die before I could get back, or that I wouldn’t have language to talk to my grandfather then.’²⁴

6th April 1930, Copley, Flinders Ranges

After Quorn, the train had stopped at Hawker – where more than half the passengers run to the pub, and back again, in the time it took to fill the engine with water – and Beltana, where Jim noticed the proudly Mounted Constable supervising events, and heard the strains of a windy pump organ complaining away to the Australian Inland Mission Padre who practised for Easter services.

Jim feels a jolt as the train starts to slow down, and breaks from his reverie. He clears his throat to wake the man still dozing in the seat across from him. The man wears crisp khaki field shirt and pants and is awake in a flash, looking out the window, and then slumping into his seat again.

‘Copley again’, he mutters.

‘Do you know it?’ Jim asks.

‘Here with Elkin a few months back...Professor Elkin, studying the natives out east.’

‘You’re heading there too?’ Jim’s voice is eager.

‘No, done there. Meeting up in Marree this time.’²⁵ The man sits up, and looks harder at Jim. ‘What’s your interest then?’

‘I’m a missionary with the United Aborigines Mission. On my way to Mt Serle.’ It suddenly seems like such a grand task for one man and a bundle of clothes, and Jim’s shoulders drop. The man is quick to notice.

‘Ho, man. Elkin seemed quite impressed. The people are already quite civilised, although they do still have magical beliefs,’ he says, a little to himself.²⁶ ‘You done this kind of thing before?’

‘I was itinerating in the Musgrave Ranges,’ Jim says strongly, and realises he hasn’t answered the question. ‘Mostly I’ve been in deputation work for the Mission.²⁷ But I’ve just come from lending a hand at Swan Reach.²⁸ I haven’t been to a new work before,’ he finishes, quietly.

‘Well, you’ll find hills, a bit of a camp, and some old fellas. Mostly half castes. Which makes that magical stuff all the more intriguing, don’t you think? Now why would they hold with that, if they’ve got the wherewithal to speak English and read?’ The man pauses, with a frown. ‘They were asking for a missionary, thinking you might stop ‘em drinking and swearing.²⁹ Elkin’s a reverend himself, of course, but he’s got his own ideas on that.³⁰ Thinks your sort should be building on Aboriginal religion, not wiping their ways out.³¹ Can’t see quite how myself. Can you?’

Jim avoids a direct answer. ‘We want to win the natives for Christ: you know, show them the love of God.’

‘Well before you do, have a bit of a listen to ‘em. Write down anything you hear, and send it in, eh? They’ve got some great stories, snakes and two fellas traipsing round the country, and that bogey monster!’ He shivers, and laughs. ‘Good luck mate,’ and settles back in his seat as Jim collects up his things and shuffles his ungainly luggage towards the carriage door.

The station at Copley is no more than a wooden box with verandahs, and there is no platform, only flat bare ground. A young man saunters towards the hissing train from the shadow of the verandah, grinding the gravel softly with each step, gazing nowhere in particular. Jim feels this is no arrival at all.

The only destination is a two storey wooden pub directly opposite the station. He inquires after a room from a disinterested young girl, and leaves his things there in a pile on the sinking mattress, before heading to the bar, to put in his order for dinner. There is no choice: roast mutton is the standard fare. On a whim, or perhaps to rally his spirits, he orders a beer, and takes it to a table to wait for his meal. Nobody will notice tonight, he reasons, and tomorrow I will begin for the mission.

Jim does not hear the other gentleman enter the dining room until the chair across the table from him is being scraped back across the sticky floor boards.

‘Evening.’ A large fair hand extends towards him, and he gulps his mouthful of tough mutton in order to politely make acquaintance. The hand he takes is rough, and strong around his soft narrow one.

‘Evening.’

‘Mind I join you?’

‘Not at all. Be glad of company.’ Jim smiles, knowing he has just given himself away, although the man does not seem to notice.

‘Name’s Coles. Norman.’³² And you are?’

‘Page, Jim Page.’

‘Just in?’

‘Yes. You’re from round here?’

‘Yep, out the track east of here. Patsy Springs, that’s part with Burr Well. Got some business down the line to attend to.’ Coles crooks his finger at the sulky waitress, who takes his order, and disappears.

‘Cheers then.’ Coles holds up his glass, and Jim clinks his against it, relieved at this easy introduction, and suddenly eager for the promise this new acquaintance might bring. He asks questions about Coles’ holding, a little too eagerly, but Coles seems happy to expand at length on the condition of the country, and the movement and price of his stock.

At his third beer, Coles pauses in his effusive analysis of the weather patterns and fixes on Jim’s empty glass.

‘You’re not having another with me?’

‘No, thanks.’ Coles eyes him. Jim tries to slide past the moment. ‘So, who is looking after your place while you’re here?’ Coles relaxes, and takes up the conversation again.

‘Usually Ron and his missus – Ron and Jaquie Whyte.³³ That’s my partner on Burr Well. They’re away just now, so I’m on me own, with just the niggers.’

‘Aborigines work for you?’ Jim asked, and again Coles eyes him sharply.

‘Yeah. Some of them *niggers* are hard working fellas.’ He watches for Jim’s reaction, then continues. ‘Some aren’t. Only hire them if I have to. Only pay them if someone makes me.’ He smirks. Jim ignores it. ‘I even got one who’s got a pommie sheila. How’s that!’

‘Who’s that then?’ Jim is eager to repair their alliance and share the gossip.

‘Mrs Jack bloody Forbes, she calls herself. That’s what they say. Never seen her myself, but her old man’s a pretty handy fella. Must be, eh?’ Coles grins wetly, and misses the sudden frown that crosses Jim’s brow.

‘Are there many Aborigines on your place then?’ Jim asks, changing tack.

‘Bloody hundreds. Seems like thousands. So many some damned society wants to send a missionary to look after them. Over my dead body. Bring the missionaries in and they’ll all be lining up for a free feed. Nah, better they get dispersed to the stations that want a bit of labour. What’s your interest, anyway?’

‘You won’t believe this,’ Jim says, evenly now he is cornered. ‘I’m the missionary.’³⁴ The pause he expected comes, and he waits it out. Coles busies himself folding his napkin, and downing the last of his beer, looking anywhere but at Jim. Finally he straightens up.

‘That’s it then. Well bugger me. Maybe if I’d have known you weren’t some snot nosed preacher I’d have written them a politer note. But you get my point man. I got a place to run, I can’t be having darkies and their bloody donkeys and dogs cluttering up my waterholes. Sheep won’t go near them, or if they do they won’t get away from them.’ Jim hears him out, choosing his reply carefully.

‘Look, you seem a reasonable sort of man. I can see your predicament. Maybe if I could just be out there with them for a while, we could sort something out?’ Jim knows it sounds weak. He wants to talk about responsibility to care for and feed these lambs of God; he wants to say Jesus has died for these children who were prey to the ravages of the Devil, and the wages of sin. He wants to launch into his Deputation spiel about white Australia’s shame, but in the rude dining room of the Leigh’s Creek Hotel, the words will not come. Instead, he takes his cues from his foe, *the foe I call*

friend, he thinks. The friend he needs to have tonight in this speck of a town on the edge of the range.

Coles shuffles his chair back, and stands with some trouble beside it. Jim stands up too, and holds out his hand. The other takes it, and leans on it a moment before he shakes it, looking blearily at its owner.

‘You’re alright, mate. A bloody missionary. Still, you head out there like you say, stop with them on my place for a few months, and you’ll see what it’s all about. Get your bearings.’³⁵ But I don’t want no bloody mission bringing in all and sundry and giving me a bigger headache than I’ve got already. That’s it, really.’ He looks bewildered at himself and Jim takes the opportunity to rest his hand on the big man’s shoulder a moment, then lets it drop.

‘It’s been a pleasure meeting you, Mr Coles. A blessing, you might say.’ And he allows himself a small smile. ‘Thank you for your hospitality, and I’ll see it’s not abused. Goodnight.’

When Jim lies down on his thin mattress, he can’t sleep. Hundreds. Thousands. And one Mrs Jack Forbes among them.

There is no point delaying. With the sun up and folk stirring, Jim secures a push bike after a string of conversations around the dining room lead him to a deal with the mailman, who turns out to be the same lanky young man who took his bags from the train. Merton Lewis – Mert – wheels the old rattler towards him, gesturing over his shoulder to the east and saying,

‘That’s the track you want. Hundreds of ‘em out there. Thousands. You’ll find them, or they’ll find you at least.’ Jim wonders how young Mert knows his business already, and makes a mental note about the town. Everyone knows he’s the missionary alright, and probably what he had for breakfast too. With the rest of his roll of notes, he fills his bags to bursting with provisions from the shed beside the pub which serves as a store. It smells of sweat, and rancid butter, although the tin walls are still cool with the morning air. He ties his bags inexpertly either side of his wheels, front and back, and wobbles precariously along the rutted road. He hopes Cole has left on his business already, and does not watch him from an upper window of the Leigh’s Creek Hotel.

Hawker, 2005

‘But what would they have called the pushbikes in those days, Bob?’ I asked, looking in at the door of the back yard shed where Bob McRae held court. His grey hair was wild about his face, which set into creases like some fantastic troll. His blue eyes glittered as he thought about how to answer me. I was impatient.

‘Treadlies?’ I suggested.

‘No, no: ‘grids.’ ‘Got your grid.’ That’s what they were.’

‘Why grids?’

‘Don’t know. But that was it.’ He was going to make me work for this.

‘And what did they have in their tyres?’ I continued.

‘Speargrass, rags, anything really to pad it out. Wheat, with a bit of water, and phew!’ he shows an expanding grin with his hands. ‘Anything they could get.’ There’s a pause again, so I looked instead at the neat shadow boards and labelled drawers while Bob decided how he would wind me up. This is the man who gave

young boys hammers and chalk to pulverise to smithereens when they're getting too rowdy for their mums, and let toddlers up-end each of those neat drawers, only to spend hours tidying them away after the visit. It was Bob who sat in bed with my infant godson, and fed him chocolates, while Bob polished off the Port, and waited for the soft reprimand from his saintly wife. Bob turned to grin at me: he'd thought of something.

'I'm thinking this missionary, Jim, wouldn't be used to riding: he'd get pretty sore. Oh yeah. Sky pilot, eh? He'd be a sweaty arse I reckon. Want plenty of lard on that seat, I reckon.' Bob was the king of ambiguity, and I reasoned this sky pilot should leave it well alone.

Bob leared. 'Ooh, yeah, you'd want to rub plenty into that seat', and he rubbed his bum.

Copley, April 1930

There is only one track, and it crosses wide snaking creek beds, and recrosses them, until Jim wonders if he has reached the other side or not. He sweats, but the wind dries his shirt and lifts it off his back, tugging gently but insistently at his chest and his shoulders. Jim feels each twist of hard rope in his tyres slipping against the sharp rocks of the track. The frame echoes with each dull thud, and he takes the uneven vibration through his wrists and elbows. He is puffing now, and looking only at the path before his wheel. When he stops to slash some water into his hat, he takes a moment to look around, gasping. Behind him the track slips away quickly, covering itself with trembling tree tops and plump folds in the hillsides. In front of him, it is the

same. He exists only on this short tongue of beaten earth, without beginning or end. The land has swallowed him, and he can only persist, waiting to be spat out on some shore of arrival.

From the crags that hem in his approach, Jim is barely moving. Dust plumes from his wheels and is gone in the airy gusts that roll and break about the valley. His progress seems impossible, a second hand ticking against the planet's tides, a whisper amongst the stately dance of the spheres.

Port Augusta, 2001

Elsie Jackson tells a good story: it's her job, after all, as an Adnyamathanha Aboriginal Education teacher to enthuse High School children in Port Augusta about their own, and others, Indigenous culture. She says:

'This is what makes me cross when I hear people saying that the missionaries that were up there stopped Adnyamathanha people from speaking in their language. Well, we didn't.³⁶

It is hard to imagine anyone stopping Elsie from doing anything she set her mind to.

Our interview is interrupted by phone calls for Elsie, and she holds the receiver close to her thick black hair, sitting squarely with her solid frame behind the school desk, raising her eyebrows at me when she thinks her caller is taking too long. She returns to the interview, and I readjust the microphone on her lapel.

'You were telling me about when Mr Page came?' I prompt, unnecessarily.

Yes. I was told a very long time ago how this young fellow came from Sydney on a train. He came through here to Port Augusta and then up to Copley where our people were. He came to Port Augusta and asked if there was a train running to Copley, which there was. When he got to Copley he was talking to the mail truck driver and asked if there were Aboriginal people out there in the Flinders. The mail truck driver said "Yes there are lots of them". About 4000 Aboriginal people were there then, and our poor fellow had his push bike with him! (Laughs) In those days the road was just a cattle track. They used to bring cattle or sheep, and maybe camels along it. And that was the only track he had to follow. So he got his push bike out, poor fellow, and went driving out towards Nepabunna. He didn't know

where he was going, but he just trailed along and came to this big paddock of people there.

...He came to this place where the Adnymathanha people were camping - we say 'Minerawuta' or 'Ram Paddock'. Our people saw him coming on a pushbike and they wondered: "Why? What's this fellow want? Is he a ghost?" That's why the kids ran off and took off to their family. The men in the olden time, the elders of the area, were really strong in their culture. They went and met the young fellow and started to talk to him. I don't know how with the language. Our people must have known just a bit of English in that time, although our people talked lots in the Adnyamathanha. 'Yura ngawala' they call it. They welcomed him into the camp and he started sitting there and talking to them. He stayed with the elder men. He looked after them because the women wouldn't have anything to do with that part of it. He told them who had sent him, and that he'd been sent to tell them about the Gospel, but mainly to work with them first. This is at Minerawuta, not Mt Serle. Mt Serle's still over there.³⁷

Angepina station, near Copley, April 1930

Becky has heard the news racing like wildfire around the camp. The missionary! The missionary is here at last! Jack and Raymond have run off with the other children, to see this marvel their mother has told them about. A teacher! Learning to be educated! Writing like their Mum! Old Rachel Johnson is setting her fire to rights, ready to join the crowd; May Wilton too, with a swarm of children at her skirt. Jean Clarke lifts back the blanket that serves as door to Becky's hut.

'You coming? He's here, you know, just like you said he'd be.' But Becky feels suddenly exposed, after months of waiting. The thought of a white missionary at *Minerawuta* is like a mirror to her, and she sees herself in frayed clothes, hair cut roughly as she could reach it behind her back, her cheeks coarse and showing spidery red veins. Most of all, she sees herself framed in a tin and sapling hut, dirt for floorboards, cooking on the ground.

'I'll be there directly', she says, non-committally, and sees Jean shrug as she drops the blanket and leaves Becky alone, in the dim light.

Becky hears him, though. Not words, not a strong deep voice lifted above the rabble of children, but something as sudden and hidden as a birdcall, lilting of London in the dry, shifting air. A Londoner! Becky does what can only be called peering, holding up a corner of the blanket to watch, unseen, as filigrees of Home trace their way into her camp.

It was true Jim had been found. Topping a rise, children had streamed towards him, and he had held up a hand shakily above the handlebars and called out 'Hello!' They inexplicably turned tail and fled back the way they had come. None were fully dressed, although all had some piece of clothing draped about them, he noticed. Suddenly the fire in his thighs becomes too much and he dismounts his bicycle, and wheels it. The children are nowhere in sight now, but a still group of men in trousers, shirts and hats are observing his slow progress towards the gate closed across the track. Jim wonders if he should wave again, or call out some religious sentiment like Will Wade would, but in indecision opts for neither. He is as silent in his approach as they are in their waiting.

Jim can see that the men are standing on the other side of a fence line, beside the wide farm gate he must pass through. He is sweating now, with nerves, thinking *How can I open the gate without my bicycle falling and me looking like an inept fool?* So he halts before he reaches the gate, steadying the bike with one hand and a hip, and raises the other arm high in greeting. There is no way they haven't seen him, yet there is no movement, no responses. Having stopped and waved, Jim can't go any further, and he feels rooted to his side of the gate, in a kind of fear, and an overriding politeness. Which is just as well. The others are in no rush to meet him, not yet.

‘That one’s there now. You gonna get him?’ Ted Coulthard’s camp is close to the road: he and Winnie and their nine children are often the first to meet visitors travelling through the Ram Paddock Gate. They have been watching the man for about half an hour, and are impressed that he has stayed put, just moving into the shade at the side of the road, but otherwise, waiting.³⁸ But now Winnie tucks the younger children back into their hut behind her, and Ted addresses the senior man, Fred McKenzie, again.

‘You gonna get him?’ Fred’s movements are measured, testing at the thin, pink man standing awkwardly on the track, switching at flies in sudden jerks. Fred pokes at his fire; packs his pipe. Squats down at Dick Coulthard’s fire, where the two men watch the ashes in silence. Dick breaks the reverie, talking low in quick *yura ngarwala*.

‘How do we do this? What’s he coming for?’

‘He’s the Missionary. He can teach the kids *udnyu* ways.’

‘What for?’

‘Get those other *udnyus* off our back. Let us keep this camp here. Get those rations for us.’ Fred looked across the gate, where the shining man is still waiting.

‘Doesn’t look much, *innit*? This still *yura* place. He’ll be a right one for us. Look, he’s waiting for us already!’ With discreet movements of their heads, they are both able to see the white man, whose clothes are the same musty colour as the dirt, except for where large dark circles have formed under his arms, and around his crotch. He stands awkwardly leaning against the frame of his bicycle, balancing its uneven weights, quite still. Quietly waiting.

Dick scowls back at the fire, but a series of shrugs, and hand movements, give Fred the sign he is waiting for.

‘You’ll see. I’ll tell the others.’ Fred stands up, and moves on to where Ted waits outside his hut.

‘Time to meet that fella. We’ll send our boys out, while the others get ready. Tell Winnie too.’ Ted moves off, throwing a glance towards his son Walter, who follows quickly. Another young man, Steve, appears beside them, carrying thin spears. The two talk intently over the spears for some minutes, while nearby Winnie takes up a wailing song that rises and falls among the trees. She does not look at the white man, standing rigidly holding his badly balanced bicycle beside him. Jim hears only sound and some sort of rhythm like stones being tumbled in a river. He sees a woman stout as a gatepost herself, her body swelling out under her chin and falling with her skirt. She sways slightly, on thin legs, like she is making the breezes herself.

And then she stops, and, covering ground remarkably quickly, calls out, in English:

‘Where you bring that thing from, then?’ She is pointing her lips at the bicycle, and so he answers weakly,

‘Copley.’ The woman walks away, and his spirits fall. Just then he is startled by two young men, stamping towards the gate, each holding reedy spears nonchalantly pointing at him. They bark into the air, and Jim no longer wonders how he might open the gate. He will stay where he is all day, he thinks, if need be. The young men gesture at him now, making loud sounds, and he thinks he hears the word ‘name’ amongst them.

‘Jim. Page. Mr Page. I’m the missionary...from...’ and he feels very feeble. From where? Of all the places he might have said, his birthplace was the only one that made sense. ‘...England.’

A number of men are forming up behind the two young ones, and one has come forward to open the gate. Now they wait, watching Jim. He moves into the space they have made, limping as the bags tied to the bicycle thud into his shin as he tries to walk beside his flimsy machine. He risks letting go one handlebar to hold out a hand in greeting, and the metal contraption clatters to the ground and he stares at its ruins in dismay. Hoots of laughter go up from the small crowd of men as they move to surround him, and someone has dragged the bicycle away, and others are shouldering his bags and grinning as they move with him towards the small fire where the two old men are waiting, joined now by other old men standing with collections of spears and long boomerangs held loosely in their hands. Bike, bags and Jim are all deposited before the two leaders, *Mathari* and *Arruru*. Fred is grinning broadly now, and even Dick has risen to his full height, like a slender mulga unbending. Jim sees his bags and belongings rapidly disappearing on thin brown legs, as the children reappear, and then disappear again, but he is more surprised by the soft green fruits being pressed into his hands, and one of the young men pushes his spears against him too, willing him to take them.³⁹

‘*Nangga*’ the old man with the tipped felt hat extends his hand to Jim, and Jim cannot shake it for the fruits in his hands. He puts them down at his feet, wipes his hands on his trousers, and takes a deep breath while he does so. When he offers his hand in return, he is composed again. When Fred takes it, Jim feels the dry warmth of the older man’s hand, and a kind of hope floods through his body.

‘Nan-ga’ he tries. More laughter, and the soft rattle as spears come to rest on the ground where their owners have let them fall.

'Fred, Fred McKenzie. You'd be our missionary.'

'Yes', is all Jim can say, before the spears are taken away from him again, and one of the young men is standing in front of him, pointing at the bicycle, with a grin splitting his face.⁴⁰

'Hey man, you fella going to need a donkey. They never lie down, just bugger off up them hills!' Jim laughs with him, and they shake hands.

'Jim', says Jim with relief, into this smiling face.

'Walter. Walter Coulthard,' says the young man, clapping Jim on the shoulder.

Becky sees all this. Sees the worn out relief on the young man's pale face. Sees the sag of his shoulders. Sees him close his eyes as his hands close around the tin of tea Winnie has thrust upon him at their campfire, where the community is milling around the stranger. He has so little with him, she thinks, remembering her own trunks that are still a prize possession. The children, over their initial fear – 'He's so white!'- swarm around him again, and are gaily spreading the provisions and clothing out on the ground. Their mothers are shifting their weight as they turn to mutter to each other, slowly following in their children's wake: he has so little with him, much less than the mailman drops off on a good day.

Suddenly the air is torn by a terrible shriek, and the children flee again, while the concertina they had discovered rolls in the dust in their wake. Becky sees Jim hurriedly retrieve it and, grinning, play some soft notes on it for the men. Fred has a turn, then Henry Wilton. Becky's stomach relaxes, and her tight lips part at last. The men have sat down and are passing the concertina amongst themselves, when Becky finally makes her way across to where the women are sorting through Jim's things.

Now that the greeting is done, Jim steals quick glances at the group of women bent over his bags. He is not sorry to see the contents of the Peterborough packages strewn about: what else has he to give? But in truth he is looking for something more. A flash of white amongst the black skins, or maybe some strident Cockney tones. An ivory form in rough skins, or perhaps the button boots of Daisy Bates. Something like a nightmare, or a dream, surely, this Mrs Forbes? He looks around at the men he is sitting with, and wonders which of these is Mr Forbes. Which of these strokes a white thigh, or cups English breasts?

Jim doesn't notice Becky for some time, and when she stands up and pushes back her felt hat, his eyes narrow in spite of himself. Full skirts and a blouse like the others, and a misshapen wide brim hat, but a sharp nose, narrow cheek bones, and an undeniably English gaze meets his boldly. She could be one of his mothers sisters! Her skin is not white, not exactly. It is creased and worn by squinting at the sun and wiping sweat, and shadows gather in these places. Her hair is dark under her hat, and her eyes could be black, looking out under clearly defined brows. His hand gestures recognition, but she turns away, letting the soft and broad bodies of the other women engulf her tiny, taut frame. He can make out now an occasional twang in the conversation when she explains some item of apparel to the others. Jim thinks she must be enjoying herself at this strange kind of jumble sale.

Becky *is* enjoying the scene, now she has seen him. *He's got no right to judge me*, she thinks, feeling the power of her new position. *In fact he's going to need me, poor bugger.*

‘What do you think, then?’ Jean asks, noticing Becky’s jubilant mood.

‘Alright, I guess. A young fella: you better watch out, eh?’

Jean giggles. ‘I’ll be too fast for him. Looks all tuckered out. Anyway, them missionaries all no smoking, no drinking, no taking them girls, *inni?*’

‘That’s right. Going to have to behave ourselves now. That good, eh?’

Jean’s face is serious again. ‘Yeah. That’s good. Good for them kids. Good for them young fellas. Maybe we get them rations now, right way, not them fellas making us work for them.’

‘Don’t know about rations,’ and a smile spreads across Becky’s face. ‘Don’t look like he can carry much, that one. Too skinny for *yura* tucker!’

Jean is laughing again, and several other women listen too. Alice Coulthard, the mirror image of her brother Fred McKenzie, who is still playing the concertina with Jim by his fire, speaks up in her gentle voice.

‘We’re going to have to give that poor bugger donkey buggy, you know. Don’t look like he got nothing of his own.’

With a mix of disgust and pity, Rachel Johnson drops the soft packet of butter she was holding on the ground, where its golden oil runs out into the fine, soft dirt.

‘I’ll have a word with my old man’, she said. ‘But you’, and she looked directly at Becky, ‘you better look out for that one.’

Becky senses the shift in the group. The women watch Rachel now, their bodies aligned with hers. A frown creases Becky’s brow, and her stomach clenches beneath her loose blouse.

‘But he’s not my *artuna*.’

Rachel’s reply shoots out as her lips point back towards the group of men around Jim.

‘He’s one of yours, alright. *Udnyu*. Maybe you his sister, mother. You got to look out for that one.’ No one else is speaking now in this tight conference of women.

Away at the fire, both Freds – McKenzie and Johnson – lift their heads to watch.

‘Alright.’ Becky drops her gaze, and the group begins to move again. She stands, chewing on her lip. *They’d wanted a missionary too*, she thinks, with a mixture of resentment and panic. Now she had to make sure he didn’t fail.

Leigh Creek, Flinders Ranges, 2005

Granny Gertie lay in a hospital bed, and the skin of her hand was soft where I stroked it. There were photographs of her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren stuck to the green lino walls. She had been here for some time, but you could not think she was ill. It was only her body growing frail; not her mind, and not her will.



Granny Gertie Johnson in Leigh Creek Hospital.

Photograph courtesy of Tracy Spencer

Thinking back on her teenage years at *Minerawuta*, she suddenly exclaims:

The missionaries came to us with nothing: we had to give them everything. We had to give them a donkey, and cart to get the rations: they had nothing.

How true. The Adnyamathanha took them in, gave them a community to belong to, and a task to believe in. Gave Jim a cart, and a donkey, and in return he gave them white patronage that delivered rations once a fortnight. A fair exchange. Without them, Jim had nothing.

Minerawuta, April 1930

The men had erected a makeshift structure for Jim of tin and frayed canvas, not far from the *Wimila*. He had asked for a brush shelter too, where he might have church meetings, and while the fellas had shrugged at this request, they had put up two poles for him, reasoning he could fill in the rest the way he wanted. A fire pan had been given to him, and children had brought a stack of kindling, and now were stand around hopping from one foot to another as they watch him go about lighting it. Shadows begin to lengthen, and he is a long way from an evening meal.

‘I’ve brought you a lump o’ cake and a mug of tea.’ The words ring like a bell, wrenching at his gut as he turns to the source.

‘Thank you.’ And for a moment he doesn’t say anymore, staring at this tiny petite apparition that brings everything of his childhood flooding into that moment.

‘You’re from London?’

‘Bow Bells. But I’m from here now. You met my husband, Jack Forbes, earlier.’ So one of those men had been him. ‘The tall thin man, short beard, getting on now. Anyway, pleased to meet you. I’m Mrs Forbes.’ That last she speaks with some dignity, rounding the sounds of her name. Then she leaves the tea and camp oven cake on the ground by his climbing fire, and hurries away across the flat.

‘And I’m Jim. Jim Page. Mr Page’ he calls after her, but his words do not carry, and besides, his attention is suddenly taken by a ferocious chorus of barking away by

a grove of trees. Taking a stick from the fire to light his hurricane lamp, Jim gratefully picks up the morsels and takes them into his shelter. The rest of the community watches his shadow moving like a giant across the canvas in the gathering dark; watching too for lumbering shapes in the darkness in the *minera* grove. Mothers bend low over their sleeping children to feel for soft and steady breaths upon their cheeks. *Yamuti* not take them tonight.

Jim is writing again by a cantankerous lamp, trying to capture the events of the day. But his words seem like scribbles of one learning to write, unable to stretch the familiar terms to encompass what had happened to him.⁴¹ Really, he doesn't know what had happened. He can't make out any pattern, except then he was outside, and now he is inside this camp. He tries to remember anthropology he has read, who does what when two tribes meet but fails and can only write 'Met natives. Have built me a shelter and Mrs Forbes has brought me some cold tea.'⁴² It's neither a letter nor a report, he thinks, and abandons the gesture.

Watch him sleeping, in the loose weave of shade from the moonlit night. Beneath his eye lids, his eyes are flickering, fast. The day replays and replays, sifting and sorting, finding patterns that resolve into a dark iris of a bird, perched above him, blue wing feathers glinting in moonlight that pours towards Jim's tent from around the preened folds of *Arta-wararlpanha* mountain, Mt Serle.

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Life Writing Chapter Twelve
'Brethern, pray for us' ...Opening of Copley'⁴³

Minerawuta April 1930

It has been like this the past two days. Jim lies in the swayed arrangement of sacking and sticks the men have made for him under the leaning sheets of tin, with his eyes closed against the open glare of the country on the leeward side where the canvas does not fill the space of a wall, until the chill burns out of the air and the sun picks where it can at hair and skin protruding from the coarse blanket. He lies, clinging to a fantasy of privacy, until she comes rapping on the tin and dumping a billy of water by him, and her sons tumble silver grey kindling noisily beside it. He dreads her coming, and longs for it. Her voice is quick and sharp, its vowels dipping into his memory and dragging him back Home. He doesn't move until he can no longer hear her short and determined steps crunching the scrubby undergrowth. Her disappointment in him hisses on the morning's shifting air. This morning, she has left something light on the

blanket that only just still covers him. Finally he turns awkwardly to begin his slow entry to this naked world already humming with a thousand small sounds all around him, and something papery falls with a soft rustle to the floor. He leans to pick it up, and realises he has misjudged her. Mrs Forbes is still standing by his lean to.

‘Mailman come today. Thought he’d look in on you. Said the chaps at Mt Serle are asking after you, and that you’re welcome to call in on them. There’s a length of canvas by the road, when you’re ready to put up a proper tent. And that letter came. Found you fast. Mailman comes back through on Sundays, early on, if you’re wanting to send a reply.’ Then her footsteps in their brisk tattoo, quickly receding.

He turns the letter over, and the surprise of the addressee winds him for a moment. The address on the front has been crossed over several times, until finally readdressed to ‘Copley’ in a broad heavy hand, over the finer, slanted letters below. She was a friend of the family in England, no one in particular, a kindly girl becoming an old maid, pious in her church, and dispensing an errand of mercy, no doubt.

He drops it lightly again onto the floor, where it rests oddly propped on the prickles and shale he has not bothered to clear from his ‘floor’. By this evening the envelope will be yellowing and crisp, creased by the day by no particular action. It was what this place did to him, sucking at him from its never ending vistas, until his lips were too cracked to close, too painful to force into another pathetic attempt at communication. Each day he hid behind his shelter until various ones came to get him, then he’d follow like a camp dog, all his bravado of the first meeting dispersed to the four winds as his clothing had been that first day. He would take his leave when the afternoon cooled, and head’home’. But any privacy is a myth, of course, and

he knows it. With constant offers of donkeys and guides to take him to the defunct ration depot at Mt Serle, and now an invitation to visit and – blimey! A letter from the other side of the world – there was no way to imagine he is lost out here. It seems everyone has discovered him, and is watching for his next move.

He opens the letter carefully. It contains polite news of relatives, and weather, and the faintest hint of curiosity in the ‘colonies’. Nothing really. But it calls forth from him a decorum more ingrained than his unshaven whiskers, so that he reaches for the pad of paper and writing things left unmarked with reports of his arrival and work, and instead writes out a London address on the top corner, and commences with civilities. He will only let the merest hint of his circumstances show, like she might a petticoat.

...the campsite is delightful, with a waterhole nearby and pretty hills all about. The neighbours have already requested to make my acquaintance, and I intend to honour their invitation once I secure a transport. The evenings are brisk, but the days mild and sunny, perfect for travelling. The Natives are very polite and helpful, and it seems I shall have an enjoyable time helping establish a healthy home for them all here. Of course, they know little of their Saviour, but I intend to commence Church with them this Sunday, which, I believe, is the day the mailman will also visit again, when I can farewell this rough note to you and look forward to your reply again should you have the time and inclination to write to one so far on the edges of His Kingdom...

Having begun the letter, he does not seal it, but tucks it under his blankets, away from the drying air. He might, he thinks, like to tell her more of his day later, now that he has set its course. A church service on Sunday! That at least will be some news to share with his neighbours at Mt Serle.

Now Jim turns to the billy of water, and with his back to the open world around him, begins to make his toilet. He does not look up; he does not see Becky watching for signs of movement at the missionary’s camp, her face unreadable under her low felted brim.

Ram Paddock Gate July 2001

I had been to see the remains of the camp at Ram Paddock Gate/Minerawuta many times, but this time, I wanted to camp there. Not just anywhere, but where Jim's camp was, over the road from the rest of the settlement, the road which formed the common boundary between Mr Whyte's Burr Well station, and Mr Greenwood's Angepena station. It had been a stock route then, more than a road, technically a neutral territory.⁴⁴ This was probably not his first campsite, since to begin with, My Whyte had reluctantly agreed he could camp with the community on the Burr Well side of the road. Only later did he renege, and banish Jim to the other side, where Angepena was happy to host him, but on the condition he did not 'permit or encourage the natives there.'

I could get my Subaru off the road to a spot some ten meters back from the remains of Jim's camp – forked sticks in the ground to carry a rough cot, cut stone blocks for a fire place, slate for a flagstone in the doorway. The rest would have been canvas, and wooden poles. I hauled my khaki swag onto the ground, leaving it rolled up to sit on, as I prepared a fireplace and went scouting for kindling and logs.



I wasn't sure if I should camp here, or not. So I sung out a few times, hailing the country around me, hoping my benign intentions were apparent. Even so, I listened hard. Rene Mohammed told me how, as a child, she didn't like to get out and open the gate across the track 'Because we thought the teddy bears up in the trees might get us... They said they made a sound like a baby crying but we never heard them.'⁴⁵ Granny Gertie told me even Mr Page knew about the 'teddy bear':

'Oh you know, he used to really say that [it] mustn't [be] here. 'You mustn't be plucky with it you know, you've got to be really pray'... But everyone seen it, even Mrs. Forbes!'⁴⁶
And then she had fallen silent, and finally added, in a whisper:

'Oh yes it was. Little kids was [dying]. I know— one, two, three, four kids, four kids died there when they was really sitting up too, innit. Yes, and some more.'⁴⁷

As I returned to my campsite dragging a fallen branch, I was conscious of the children's cemetery, over the road and well beyond the crumbled campsite remains. Towards the foot of the hill, and past the *minera* bushes where children fed on the small red berries in spring, was

a large rectangle marked out by large stones. Nearby where two more small graves, marked with corrugated iron.⁴⁸ All buried in 1930, in a whooping cough epidemic, that took the young and the old.

The next morning I wrote in my notebook: 'I felt safe all night, waking to turn over in my swag and aware of the clear light of a two thirds moon in a clear sky. Odd to feel so safe.'

There was no mention of the whooping cough epidemic in the one report Jim sent to *The Messenger* magazine from 'Angepina via Copley' in May 1930. His report is full of wry jokes and touching anecdotes that illustrate 'The prospects here are very bright indeed.'⁴⁹ The people are 'very polite', the place 'pretty'. Attendance at church services is high, and plans are under way to start a school. Ten years later, missionary Fred Eaton would record the time slightly differently:

'...it was a very sorry scene that met the missionaries [sic] gaze when he arrived at the camp. The people were semi starved in condition and they were just living in rags rather than clothes, without a bit of soap to wash them...As the missionary looked over the people it seemed to him they were indeed as sheep without a shepherd.'⁵⁰

Harrie Green, who joined Jim and Fred at the end of 1930 and had a proficiency with tooth extraction, did comment on the high degree of sickness among the people.

'Many of the children got croup, and one died of meningitis. Some of the old people were very sick too. We didn't really have any medicine to treat these people, but my father gave me a home medical book called Vitalogy and this was full of very simple remedies. For croup we sliced up onions, put some sugar on them and left it all night. Some syrup would be left in the morning and we'd give this to the children...The people noticed that I used to look things up in my big black book when someone was sick. One day I was concerned because I didn't know what to do about a particular case, and they said, 'Mr Green, you will find the answer in your Bible!' They had thought my medical book was the Bible!'⁵¹

Minerawuta, May 1930

Jim has no trouble now putting pen to paper: the others in the camp watch the lamplight throwing his bent shadow onto the canvas screen of his tent long into the night. Their conversations about him are puzzled, and pleased, and they have told him so.

‘Well I’m feeling good now, all that pain gone, after he prayed to God for me.’

‘And those meetings, make me feel good inside.’

‘I think this is better way to live, than all that drinking and swearing from those other *udnyu miru*.’

‘I even told that Mr Page about little Gracie, talking in her sleep saying ‘Don’t go away Mr Jesus Man!’⁵²

Jim has much to write about. He has visited both Greenwood brothers at Mt Serle and Angepina Stations: with Mt Serle’s approval, he has negotiated to have rations from Copley delivered to him on a backload from the wool cart, and will distribute them himself from his camp. From Angepina, he is assured a supply of freshly baked bread: this particular blessing is worth a quip, so he writes in his report:

‘There is an old pensioner always at the station who will bake bread for me at 6d. a loaf; also I can get meat at 6d. per lb. that is a blessing and the Lord’s provision. He doesn’t want me to suffer from indigestion.’⁵³

He smiles at that, and his body is relaxed in his cotton shirt, cuffs rolled up, as he leans back on his gasoline drum stool, proud of the record of his industry. And the young converts: Mavis Wilton, and Norman and Sandy and Raymond, who had all come forward to ask Jesus for salvation. And pretty little Rosy. His smile spreads to a grin, before a more pious cast composes his face. *Already winning souls for the Lord*, he thinks. The problem of keeping his own house had also been taken care of, with invitations to share the evening meal with this family, or that. Where they got camel steaks from, he wasn’t sure, but kangaroo tail sounded

promising, more so than the threatened carpet snake!⁵⁴ The well the men had made out of that old mine shaft seemed sufficient for the community, so he was inclined to think this was as good a spot as any for the permanent mission, and Ted Coulthard was certainly of that opinion. It suited him to water his donkey teams here, in easy reach of both the stations he serviced with his carting business, and the rail at Copley or Beltana. Others weren't so sure; Walter wanted to take him over to McKinley Pound, further east, where there was reliable water at *Ookabulina*. It was part of Balcanoona Station, and a number of the men had worked for the manager Mr Ragless. Walter and Sam had been doing some fencing work there, and seemed to think the owner, Mr Thomas, had promised them some land in return.⁵⁵ Jim made a mental note to take the first opportunity that came along to ask the Balcanoona people about that.

In fact, it seemed the men had given quite some thought to what they wanted for their Mission, and from their missionary. Schooling for the children, improved living conditions, and to organise to bring the rations here. Jim is thinking strategically about what they have said, as he rests his pen by its ink pot. In words still drying on the page, he has written 'It will make an impression if these old men yield', and he bends his ingenuity now to plans to achieve just that. He can arrange something with the ration depot at Mt Serle, he is sure; and teaching the children hymns is a start to schooling, at least. He'd see about making a visit to Balcanoona fairly soon, too. *But as well as all this*, Jim thinks, *I want them to desire their Saviour*.

Then he is animated by a thought. That pair of reading glasses he gave the old man's wife... - 'I sank our Father' she had said, mimicking him as she received them – maybe she would help him gather words like he and Will Wade had done in the Musgraves! He feels

very wide awake, despite the deepening dark beyond his tent, and roughly pulls out the tin box beneath his bed. The bed nearly collapses, but he rights it and rifles through the papers in the box. Finally, he pulls out a thin booklet and extracts a folded page from between its pages. The paper is covered in his own handwriting and guessed-at spelling. These were the words and sentences Will had wrung from bemused natives while Jim tried to capture them in sounds on a page, nearly two years ago. He seats himself back at his desk, making a show of clearing a space for the document he has found, determined to rekindle his enthusiasm. He glances through the booklet, which is a children's picture book of Jesus.⁵⁶ Yes, that woman with the glasses, he would show her this, she would help him find how to tell the Gospel story to these people.⁵⁷ They might know more English than the people they met in the Musgrave Ranges, but surely that same approach, to tell the story in their words, and with pictures, would grab their attention and win their salvation.⁵⁸ *And be a school for the adults and children.* He'll ask Miss Turner to see if the Education Department can't send up some blackboards and chalk.⁵⁹

He keeps the piece of paper on his desk in readiness to copy it the next day and send with his report, which is becoming a fulsome chronicle of what he tells himself are exciting times. But before he turns down the wick on his lamp, he pulls out the pages of his letter to England and adds one or two more paragraphs.

Druid Vale Station, 2002

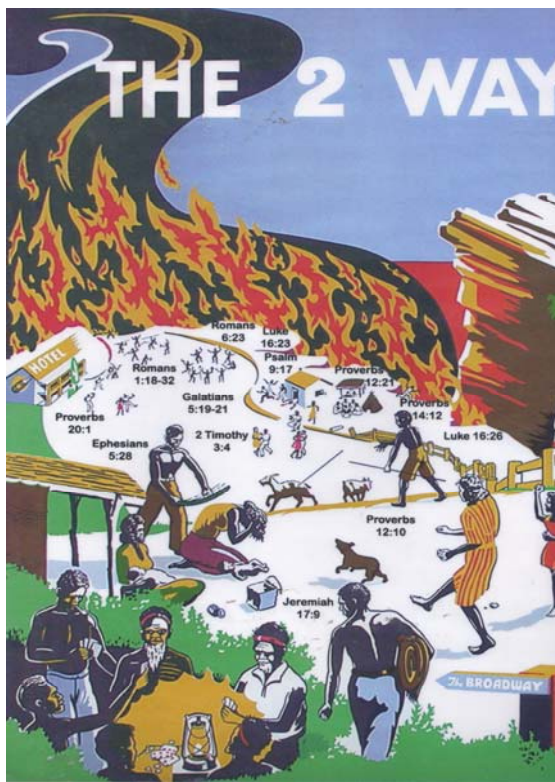
I hunted out the old time singing books. Jim's report says he taught the children 'Jesus loves me', and 'There is power in the blood.' Eight year old Pearl McKenzie, who I later knew of

as an Elder in the Hawker church, and author of the Adnyamathanha Dictionary, learnt ‘Jesus loves me’ by heart only weeks after Jim arrived.⁶⁰ I wondered what Adnyamathanha made of the other hymn, though.

In 1937, Adnyamathanha men told ethnologist Charles Mountford how the Bible contained accounts of sacred and bloody circumcision not unlike the very ceremonies later missionaries called the work of the devil.⁶¹ Mountford wrote:

‘It appears that when the first missionary started to preach Christianity, the native mind had to find a substitute for the devil. Having nobody particularly in their mythology who was as evil as the Christians painted the devil, and *Witana* the cult hero of the *Wilyuru* ceremony being the person that was most dreaded especially by the women, he was accorded the position of the devil. When the missionary started to ask about the various ceremonies, the *Wilyuru* then became the devils job.’⁶²

And yet missionaries sang about ‘the power in the blood’. No quarrel there. Even verses about ‘the blood of the lamb’ made sense in sheep country. The final verse, about becoming ‘whiter than snow’ belies the colonial agenda, but probably meant very little in Australia’s desert interior. But according to Jim’s reports, his camp meetings did have an impact. By

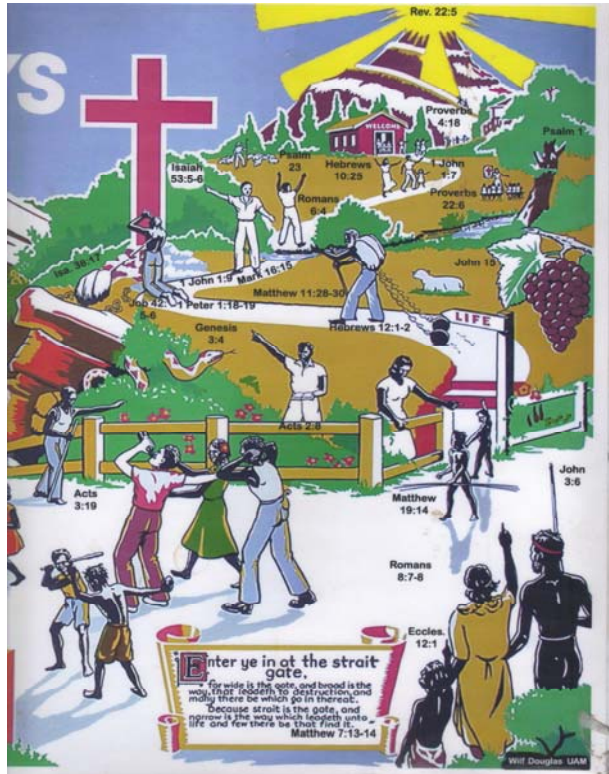


September he quotes Dick Coulthard:

‘I have been to your meeting in the camp, and believe what you say.’ He said ‘I have been a drinker and fighter, and true, the devil’s been in me; but I want to finish up that broad track, and get on to the narrow track.’⁶³

Dick may have had more reservations if he had heard the children singing that the track would take them ‘All the way to Calvary’.⁶⁴ The UAM linguist Wilf Douglas overtly developed this

emblematic motif in the 1950s into the Two Ways poster, to teach the concept of damnation and salvation on Aboriginal missions.⁶⁵



Jim used the techniques of speaking to illustrations and using stones to mark each song learnt, to communicate across the language barriers.⁶⁶ In an article in *The Messenger* in July 1930 entitled 'How the Gospel is Proclaimed to Natives who Cannot Speak English', Jim reproduces the message he sought to give in an Indigenous language in the central Ranges, all of which was 'gone through with gesture to suit the meaning of phrases'⁶⁷:

'Great Father Spirit sorry for men, women, children sitting on the earth.
 Great Father Spirit saw that men, women, children's heart was bad.
 Great Father Spirit speaks to good man Jesus in heaven.
 Jesus, good man heaven, comes from heaven to earth, you understand, as a very small baby.
 See, man Joseph, woman Mary, very small baby Jesus. Set down in big wurlie.
 See three big men, you see camels.
 Angel from heaven speaks to three big men, you see big star going along the heavens, you follow on the ground by camel.'

Big star stops over big wurlie you see digee [baby] Jesus.
Baby Jesus grows boy, young man, Good Man.
Good man Jesus goes into bad country (wilderness) you understand. See Devil devil. Jesus says to Devil devil to finish. Devil devil goes away.
Good man Jesus sees men, women, children with heads bad, hands bad, feet bad, bodies bad, eyes no look, ears no hear, hearts very bad.
Jesus speaks – bad head finish; bad hand, feet bodies eyes, ears finish.
Head good one, hand good one, body good one.
Bad men take Jesus good man, put Him on a big tree, spikes in hand, spikes in feet, thorns on head.
Man puts spear in heart, Jesus dies, spirit goes away. Good man take body and put in rock tomb.
Three sleeps, Jesus gets up and walks.
Men and women see Jesus. Jesus goes to a big mountain. Jesus goes up into heaven.
Jesus blood makes a clean heart. [Translations into ‘Unlagary’ language deleted]⁶⁸

The making of Indigenous theology was never a ‘jug and mug’ affair. Mt Serle Bob’s dreams and visions had made way for the revelation of the Christian God within the Adnyamathanha universe.⁶⁹ Ken McKenzie told me how ‘Christianity [and] the Dreamtime: you can mix it a bit together’ and went on tell a ‘dreamtime’ story of a trinity of beings who led the starving *yuras* to manna in a gum tree, and water from a storm in the middle of a big drought:

‘...Because I realized that in the Dreamtime, they also spoke about an encounter with the Lord. That’s what I believe. Had to be. I mean, the only one [who] could create water, food and that: it was the Lord. So it must have been the same person - disguised - you know.’⁷⁰

I wanted to know where these ideas had come from. Was this some synthesis the missionaries had wrought to graft Christianity onto Adnyamathanha religion? So I asked: ‘Did you think any of the missionaries saw that?’

‘I don’t think they saw it, I don’t think they saw it.’⁷¹ Adnyamathanha Christians worked out their inculturated faith themselves.

I asked Cliff Coulthard my question about this synthesis of culture and Christianity. He told me about , old King Bob being a ‘*Yura Urngi*’, a ‘doctor man’ and spirit contact or disciple to Arra Wathanha.

King Bob went up there, went to Arra, right through the sky and went and spoke to God, Arra Watha-nha. And Arra Watha-nha said then ‘Yeah you go back down there and let the people know there’ll be someone come along to help you fellas’. And when he come back down, not very long after old James Page turned up - this missionary – and when he spoke to King Bob, King Bob knew that was the one Arra Watha-nha sent.⁷²

But the next story he told still had me wondering how on earth Adnyamathanha could incorporate Calvary. It was told to him by two *wilyeru* men, Rufus Wilton and Richard Coulthard or Rambler, his uncle.

But Undercross, he was blind. ... when Page did the story about Jesus died on the cross and he was at the service, old Undercross he listened and Page said ‘Lord Jesus died on the Cross’. Anyway one day when the church finished, them two blokes went to get him to lead him back. They were young fellas or young boys. Anyway when they got back to camp and all the other old people asked him then ‘What that missionary say, that *udnyu* said?’ they asked him in Adnyamathanha, *Yura Ngarwarla*. He said ‘Oh yeah’ he said, ‘something about there’s a bloke up there, up the creek there, somewhere, on the cross, he’s hanging up, you know’. But he said it in Adnyamathanha. He said ‘Oh *udnyu* up there under the Cross’, so that’s how he got his name, Undercross.⁷³

Even a blind man could get to Calvary.

Minerawuta, August 1930

It is all so confusing to Jim. He’d written out his message with the words the women had told him, and even taken it with him to Copley when he went to collect his new colleague, Fred Eaton. Fred had been around these parts before, working the stations, but now he returned fresh out of the Melbourne Bible Institute as a new UAM missionary.⁷⁴ It wasn’t until Jim brought Fred back to camp that he heard how poorly Fred and his wife had treated the natives

they'd known before.⁷⁵ Even Mr Nicholls the mailman had pulled him aside, standing square on his wooden leg, and fixing Jim with his one good eye,⁷⁶

'You know he was sacked from his last place up here, because he wouldn't even cook for the black boys working there. Made no bones of it. Few of the fellas round here want to know what he's up to with this caper. Ron Whyte might have something to say too, mind. I might be wrong, but I reckon you have the wrong man there. I'd keep an eye on him.'

'I think you'll find our brother full of the love of the Lord now,' Jim had replied. He knew it sounded pious, and saw the look that crossed old Nicholls' face, but he and Fred were colleagues now, witnessing together for Christ in this place. They had to have a united front. Still, he'd suggest that Fred keep out of Ron's way.

On the bumpy ride to the camp, Jim read his 'Gospel message' to Fred. Fred was easily impressed, but his long forehead had knotted above his heavy brows, when Jim read out the lines: 'Jesus says to *Dulkana* to finish.'

'That's their *Wilyeru* one, isn't it? Fellow dons the horns and does the young blokes, I was told, by an old chap. Mighty shearer he was. They wanted you to tell them that?' Jim had felt flustered for a few moments, and moved on to the next section, peppering his fast soft talk with the anecdote of the woman who had found healing through his prayer and had gone about the camp telling everyone about it. But Fred's comment bothered him. Was there something he hadn't understood when the women had all concurred in fast whispers that yes, he should say '*Dulkana*' for that bad fellow out in the wilderness. 'Out in the bush', he had indicated, sweeping his hand, oh, maybe north east.

'Mmmm. *Dulkana*,' they said, again, so he wrote it down.

Jim tousles little Rosy's hair, pleased at the children's progress with the songs. She picks up her three stones and runs over to where the women are seated on the ground, watching their older children, and nursing their babies. Jim follows her, thinking he might ask about that word again. But he doesn't get a chance. A hand is held out, and waves him over with a deft turn of the wrist.

'Mr Page, you pray for my *yakarti*?' It is Rosy's mother – Eva, he remembers – and she seems to be covered in babies. As she passes her tiny infant to four year old Rosy to hold, Jim can see her chubby toddler laying limply on her lap.

'Who is this one?' he says, feeling the hot brow.

'Harold, my boy. *Viridianha*.'⁷⁷

'Hello Harold. You not well?' He wants badly to wipe the mucus from the child's face, but stalls, conscious of his only handkerchief in his pocket.

'Mr Jesus Man.' The words sound sweet, slurring from the sick child. Jim's hand goes to his pocket and pulls out the square of material, and wipes the child's nose with a few deft movements.

'A bad cold? Has he been like this for long?' Jim asks Eva.

'Little bit, since that – ' her voice became nearly inaudible, '*Yamuti* been grumbling around.' She looks up. 'He blood suck him.'

'What?'

'*Yamuti*,' the other women repeat.

'What's 'Ya-mo-tee'?' Jim asks. There is conversation, then Gertie, one of the young teenagers pipes up, speaking fast.

‘Huge, hairy. Bad one. Like one of them teddy bears, but huge, going to get us and suck out our blood. Teddy bear.’

‘There’s no ‘teddy bear’ hurting this boy,’ says Jim. A blood sucking teddy bear seems a bit far fetched. ‘This is a sickness, so we pray to God to help.’ He addresses the child, and his voice softens. ‘I’ll pray for you now, Harold, and Jesus make you all better.’ He opens his Bible, and reads

And they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God (Mark 10:13-14)

Jim puts his hands on the child’s sticky body, and feels the chest contract before another wracking cough escapes him. Croup, maybe, or a bad cold. He begins to pray.

‘Jesus our Saviour, come close to this boy Harold, and take away this sickness. By the power of your blood, cleanse this your beloved lamb...’ He paused the prayer while the child took a noisy breath, and resumed coughing. ‘...Make him pure and strong to give praise to your name. Amen.’ He stayed in silence for a time until the coughing spasm passed, eyes closed, hands still pressing on the child, willing himself to become a channel of healing. The boy did not sound good at all. When he opened his eyes, Eva was smiling.

‘God with him now. God will keep him strong,’ she says, happy.⁷⁸

‘Jesus loves him too’, chimes in Rosy.

‘Can you keep him warm, and perhaps give him some...castor oil?’ Jim searches his memory for some credible suggestion for a cure.

‘We’ve been rubbing his chest with the eucalyptus oil, but I think we’d be wanting some mustard to make up plasters, and perhaps you’ve got some brown paper you could spare?’⁷⁹

Mrs Forbes voice cut through the nasal accents of the others. He hadn't noticed her there. In fact he'd almost forgotten she was in the camp. She and her family had lately moved camp a little further east. She had not called on him since Mr Eaton had arrived, and he had been occupied with other things. But now the others seem to be listening to her with some attention.

'His little throat's going to get awfully sore, and we could do with some glycerine as well in the stores.'⁸⁰

'Mrs Forbes, you know some things about nursing?'

'This and that. When they want me,' and she nodd her head at the group who nodd back.

'Would you come and talk with me about other medical supplies we might need?'

'By and by.' Mrs Forbes sits back and looks down at the ground, melting back into the group until he can barely make her out under her hat brim.



**From Education Dept files Jim Page and Fred Eaton
with Adnyamathanha c. 1930**

Mrs Forbes does not come to see him. She sends Jean and her Raymond to collect the supplies Mr Page has ordered for her. In a week or two, Harold is recovered, and the women eagerly bring their children for prayer at the afternoon meetings, some of them wearing Mrs Forbes plasters, others without, saying they just needed Mr Page' 'wonder working power'. If Jim was in the habit of writing his reports, he would have included each miracle. As it was, the number of sick children went unrecorded.

The children who died at Minerawuta in 1930 were recorded in the memory of the community. Fifty years later, some of this information found its way into a small book surveying the remains of the Minerawuta settlement.⁸¹ 'Colin Wilton's brother and sister, Gertie Coulthard (Johnson's) youngest sister and Lorna Elliot's sister... Walter Coulthard's daughter and Sydney Jackson's son.'⁸² But there were more: Shirley Coulthard told me 'Two brothers: brother and sister... Oldest two: Enis and Don, his name was.'⁸³ Rosy Brady (nee Wilton), standing on the flat looking over the rubble of Minerawuta, said: 'I got a brother and sister buried at that cemetery.'⁸⁴ Elsie Jackson, after singing the song of the little girl who was lost at Damper Hill, says: 'Whooping cough caught the people there... we lost two of our little brother and sister.'⁸⁵

The epidemic struck not just the children. Keith Nicholls remembered from his mail run with his father, that 'There was an epidemic of influenza went through that killed all the old ones off - well not all of them, but most of them. Quite a number of them died.'⁸⁶ He put it down to the bones of old Lango Tommy being taken from Blinman to *Minerawuta*.

In his July report, Jim had written of considerable unrest in the camp, due he thought to women's gossip about the camp. Clans gathered at Minerawuta for a fight, in which he and Fred intervened and 'prevail[ed] upon them to settle the matter the next day by arbitration.'⁸⁷ 'Truly we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the powers of darkness,' Jim concluded. Perhaps he was close to the truth. Perhaps these disputes he observed sought to resolve the greater problem of the disturbance of the spirit of old Lango Tommy.

Minerawuta, August, 1930

Pairs of small black and white birds dance around each other on the loose patches of ground, chatting in their high pitched fluster. ‘Indi-din-did-ee, Indi-din-did-ee.’ Jim thinks *Spring must be coming*.

When the first baby dies, Jim feels a pang of guilt. His prayers hadn’t worked. But Fred Eaton assures him that infant mortality is common in these communities, why, look at the conditions they live in. When the second and third deaths occur within the week, Jim is distraught. No one comes to the afternoon meetings, but the camp is filled with keening, day and night, and the women are unrecognisable and unapproachable in their pipe clay markings. Nor does he know what he would say to them. He recognises at least one of the mothers who had preferred his prayers to the ministrations of plasters and rubs, even though he had also tried to encourage her to use both. He manages to detain Mrs Forbes once or twice, moving about the camp with the large bag she carried, tending to sick children. She clearly does not want to speak with him. He persists.

‘What is it, Mrs Forbes. What’s killing them? Is it whooping cough?’

‘Of course. You can’t stop it once it starts. That *Yamu* – ...teddy bear brought it.’ He is about to remonstrate, tell her that couldn’t be true. ‘Don’t say its not. I saw it. That’s what this is all about.’ Jim can’t recognise what he sees in her face. But he feels his own skin prickle. He changes tack.

‘Then we mustn’t be plucky with it. We must pray, pray to God to drive it away.’ This is a battle of principalities and powers. ‘Do you think they would like me to come and pray with them?’

She searches his face, before turning her face to look over the camp. 'They'll come and get you when they want you,' she says, moving away. She hears Jim call after her

'Let me know if there's anything I can do.' His voice sounds pitiful and small across the open space, and she pretends not to hear. She has more than enough to attend to herself, in the camp, and back at her own hut.

No one comes for Jim. He watches from a distance as slow groups of people make their way past the *minera* clump to where men have been picking at the loose ground the previous day, digging out small holes in the ground for the children's bodies. Fred had suggested they hold a prayer service anyway, under the shelter they used for their church, although Jim feels foolish, just the two of them. There are still some around the camp, but they do not come near the church shelter either, but sit in silent groups, painted with white clay on their faces.⁸⁸ Jim leaves his concertina buttoned up. He does not want to disturb the cadences of their mourning, resounding against the hill side, and answering back softly across the valley.

Later, some of the Ryan family drift over to the shelter. Davy, who is ill himself, and his old father Sidney, and his wife Annie.

'Mr Page, you sing one of them songs you got.' Jim looks across at Fred.

'All the Way to Calvary', Brother.' Jim gulps, and begins the chords, and soon children have appeared to sing along to the song he has taught them.

...I will travel all the way to Calvary,
I will walk the road that Jesus walked for me,
I will serve Him to the end, for He is my dearest friend,
I will travel all the way to Calvary.

I know the path He trod is never easy,
It cost the Son of God His precious blood,
It leads on to the cross of nameless anguish,
But ever climbeth upward unto God...⁸⁹

They can all see Mr Page is crying.

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White Lives in a Black Community: The lives of Jim Page and Rebecca Forbes in the Adnyamathanha community

Tracy Spencer

Volume three Appendices: Creative Life Writing

Section D: Meetings

United Aborigines Mission. *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-.

Life Writing Chapter Thirteen
Jack Dies and move to Nepabunna

Alice Springs, January 2007

My desk is covered with papers and opened books. I have realised, with some dismay, that all the drama will occur in the final months of Jim's first year, and I feel for him in the midst of it. Like those loyal Gospel writers trying to sort through the collections of sayings, epistles, published accounts, and personal memories to re-present a story of Jesus for audiences in their time and place, I am faced with a weighty decision about what to select and how to weave it on the page. Do you want a sequential narrative, or scenes from the drama of life, with all its polyphonous hubbub complicating the stage? I am trying to make lives readable, after some seventy odd years. I hope they speak to you.

For instance: how will Jim manage to write his upbeat missives to *The Messenger* about children learning Bible verses while other children continue to die in the whooping cough epidemic? How will he write about God's providence for the mission when they are threatened with imminent eviction? How will he faithfully restate his intention to start a school, when the Government will not even grant chalk and blackboards until a schoolhouse has been built?⁹⁰ There must be something within the man I haven't yet glimpsed...a rock of faith under his feet, a vision of a promised land on the horizon, a sense of who he is called to be...but by whom?

Ram Paddock Gate, September 1930

Jim reads the letter from Ron Whyte while the dust still swirls in the wake of the mail truck.

BURR WELL STATION
VIA COPLEY
2nd September 1930.

Mr Page
RAM PADDOCK GATE

Dear Sir,

Owning to the large number of stock depastured by the natives on our country we are compelled to take immediate steps to have them removed.

As this is mainly due to the presence of you and your assistants we require you to remove from off our property.

We regret to take this step, but you must know that we constantly refused your Society permission to establish a mission on our country in fear of such a happening.

We trust you can make immediate arrangements to do this and so save us taking further unpleasant actions.

You might notify the natives that we are taking immediate action to remove their stock and they only remain after this week on their own responsibility.

Yours Faithfully,
COLES AND WHYTE

Per (SIGNED) RON L. WHYTE⁹¹

Jim goes straight to his tent to pen a reply for the return mail.

‘...The position at present is somewhat involved owing to the fact that we have been entrusted with the Government Rationing, also we must negotiate for permission to settle elsewhere.

In view of the fact that we are awaiting and expecting a favourable reply to our request for a reserve in Ookabulina Country from Mr Thomas. I would ask you to re consider your intention until we have received the final and definite word in this matter...’⁹²

Ron’s reply is swift.

‘...We are not acting because of any bias or prejudice, but simply because it is imperative for us to conserve for our own use every bite of feed available.

As you settled on our property without permission or, as a matter of fact, against our wishes, we fail to see why permission from others concerned you so...’⁹³

You can imagine it: gossip in the Copley postoffice, yarning while the mail unloads at each station, garnering a comment here and passing it on there; everyone watching to see how this particular stoush would play out.

Leigh Creek Station, 2002

Leo Coulthard was one of those people who was always smiling. He had driven the school bus up and down the stoney and in parts vicious road from Nepabunna to Copley for over twenty years, keeping kids in line, keeping his humour up, for an hour, each way, five days a week.

It was Leo who was most adamant about how the negotiations for land for a permanent mission began.

Only one that really helped is Balcanoona pastoral people...And nobody wouldn't give them no land, and that was really hard then when they starting and not given any land to settle *Yura*. So two old workers went ...to do all the fence up in Balcanoona... the manager [Mr Thomas] told them this way – 'If you put fences up here with the very low money, very low wages, I'll give you Nepabunna block'.

...Then they said 'Alright'. They never agreed to nothing, they just said 'Alright we'll do your fence for nothing, just for a bit of tucker and for a Nepabunna block'. And you don't hear nothing of that when this old two fellas went and done work and put all the fences up through the roughest area.

...Well missionary come then to take over and they told them 'No, we've only given it to two person. If they say OK for you to stay there, then you can stay there', the boss said. So then they must have agreed, you see. Then they give them that block.

...And only the two person done all the fencing is my old Dad and my Uncle. Then a lot of other people start giving them a hand.⁹⁴

Leo's father, Sam, and Walter Coulthard were brothers. Walter's grandsons, Cliff and Terry Coulthard, knew this story too, and had established their homelands, Iga Warta, where their grandfather and uncles fenced off the property as Mr Thomas had required.⁹⁵

Alice Springs January 2007

I was still unclear just how much negotiation between *yuras*, Balcanoona and the UAM had already occurred when Jim wrote of it, trying to buy time from Coles and Whyte. There must have been some reason Roy Thomas was so well disposed towards the Adnyamathanha, and the Mission, while Coles and Whyte were not. It was true the community at *Minerawuta* had grown; it was true members of the community ran their own herds of donkeys, sheep and goats, for their livelihoods. According to Granny Gertie, it was also true that Ron Whyte objected to Fred Eaton's presence.⁹⁶ And the continuing drought had them all cornered, too closely together, around the well at the Ram Paddock.

Jim sent copies of the correspondence to the UAM, and President Gerard wrote to the Commissioner for Crown Lands immediately, coming to the point:

'...The reply given us was to the effect that the part of Burr well Station where we asked for a Reserve was their best watering ground. We wish to advise you that the natives dug this well, and in our judgement they are entitled to a reserve – some place to call their own...'⁹⁷

As always, the description of the community included special mention of 'one white woman with three or four half caste children.' Disapproval had inflated the numbers. Gerard's letter included the proposed arrangement with Mr Thomas of Balcanoona Pastoral Lease:

'...1st. Mr Thomas grant the ground as a Native Reserve under control of the Aborigine Department.
2nd. Mr Thomas lease a portion of McKinley Pound to us, the United Aborigines Mission as a Reserve for the Natives, while they are kept under the supervision and proper control of the Missionary, Mr. Thomas to have the right to resume control and ask the natives to move out should they become a nuisance to his Station.'⁹⁸

But in the meantime:

'Mr Snell of Angepina Station, has given us permission for the Missionary to camp on his property, providing we do not permit or encourage the natives there, that is to say the

Missionary with his home quarters must be on Angipena property, the natives on Burr Well property and the premises or shed used as a school and other Mission purposes must be on neutral ground of the roadway.⁹⁹

It is all beginning to sound like a marginal Venn diagram. This must be when Jim shifts his camp just across the road from the settlement, and distributes rations from a store built as close to the road's shoulder as he can manage. Every inch and foot matter, in the geometry of this vast country.

Gerard sent copies of his letter to everyone he could think of in the South Australian Public Service, and told them so. The consensus seems to be that since none of the pastoralists want the community on their property, and all refuse to administer rations, the only solution is to create a Reserve and have a Missionary distributing rations there.¹⁰⁰ The job of shepherding all parties towards this end falls to Acting Chief Protector of Aboriginals, Mr McLean.¹⁰¹ He wrote to encourage Mr Thomas to 'surrender portion of his lease so that a reserve might be proclaimed', to ask Messers Coles and Whyte to stay their hand until Mr Thomas had made a decision, and to Jim asking him to investigate the extent of 'useless' donkeys 'and see that they were destroyed.'¹⁰² In the event, none did quite what he asked of them.

Nepabunna 2002

The 'stock' Ron Whyte complained about were the donkeys. I was collecting stories from Adnyamathanha women for an Outback women's writing project, and every story featured childhoods full of exploits with donkeys.¹⁰³ Everybody had donkeys. They ran wild and were free for the mustering. There was the photograph of 'old donk-man' – Ernie Demell – standing beside his donkey; countless photographs of families posed around their donkeys

and carts. Everyone had a donkey buggy, or ‘bun cart’: a clapped out motor vehicle with shafts fitted to the front wheels and harnessed up to four donkeys.¹⁰⁴ The donkeys were transport, for business, holidays, collecting rations, carting water to camp, for children’s amusement through the hills, for carting bodies for burial.¹⁰⁵ It’s hard to imagine a ‘useless’ donkey. I wonder if Jim even told the *yuras* what he had been asked to do. I am sure he did not do it.

Adelaide, September 1930

Mr Gerard and Mr Roy Thomas shake hands. Violet has a sheath of papers in front of her, bearing numerous crossings out. She can barely contain herself. She aches to write the saga of this event for the forthcoming edition of *The Messenger*. But Alfred is right: they can only make a public announcement once the Government departments concerned had all agreed. So instead she suggests he stay on with her after the meeting and dictates his letter to the Commissioner for Public Works so she can mail it poste haste.

23rd September 1930

The Honourable the Commissioner of Public Works...

Dear Sir,

RE ABORIGINES NEAR COPLEY

Following our letter of the 10th inst. and your reply of the 16th, I beg to report on an interview I have just had with Mr Roy Thomas of McKinley Pound (who, by the way, has not yet received your letter). Mr. Thomas has consented to grant a piece of country on the western end of McKinley Pound to a line running north and south, just east of Nepabunna Rock Hole, which is about 4 miles east from the entrance gate on the boundary of Angepina Station.

The conditions are:-

That the ground be fenced with a six wire sheep and donkey proof wire

fence.

The main camp and Mission Station to be situated near the Angepina boundary.

The Native camp and Mission to be conducted so as not to cause any inconvenience to the Donor.

The dogs owned by the natives must be kept in check.

Mr. Thomas to have the right to shoot or cause to be shot any mules, donkeys or dogs straying on his Property.

A well to be sunk on McKinley Pound by the Mission Natives.

Should the United Aborigines Mission at any time abandon the Mission the land to revert to the present Lessee.¹⁰⁶

Gerard, thoughtful as he watches the traffic through the window while imagining the scene in the Flinders Ranges, asks that the Government contribute materials for the fencing, and extra rations for the fencers. He must have been mindful of the Coulthard brothers already at work.

Impatient for a reply, Gerard writes again the following week, but the conditions have changed a little, reflecting the missionary agenda.

‘...Following our letter of the 23rd inst. We are very anxious to have your reply and settle this matter, as Messers Coles and Whyte are still irritated at the Natives and stock remaining on their property...’

‘...[we request you] to send a Police Officer to the Aborigine Camp and inform the natives they can move on these conditions.

They obey the missionary.

Children to attend school.

They have no intoxicating drink on the Ground.

They only be allowed to have one dog to every two adults and any dog found worrying sheep or other stock must be immediately destroyed.

Old and useless donkeys or mules also to be destroyed.

No white men permitted on the Reserve other than the Missionaries, without the permission of the police, missionary or missionary Society.

That they immediately sink a well for the supply of water.

That they erect the fence and sink a well later on McKinley Pound.¹⁰⁷

The reply Mr Gerard neatly knifes open on 4th October, speaks quite properly to the aspects of the arrangement which are the business of the Government. Yes, they will approve the said

improvements to the land – fencing materials – to the value of twenty-six pounds, and expect the work to be carried out ‘by aboriginals under the supervision of the Missioners representing your Mission.’ But first of all they want a well sunk, so they are assured there will be a sufficient supply for a community at the location the Mission wants fenced. They think Mr Thomas’ conditions – the first set – are reasonable, but urge the missionary, not a policeman, to inform the community. And it will be an officer of the Aboriginals Department who will draw up ‘regulations for the control of the natives.’¹⁰⁸

Gerard is already writing a pencilled draft of the report he will make in *The Messenger* ‘in regard to the New Reserve. ‘The main conditions on which the natives go on to their new reserve are as follows:’ and he copies out his second list again, with some reformatting and one new rule which he realised was missing previously: ‘They attend Divine Service’.¹⁰⁹ Gerard frowns at his new list. It is a good list, he thinks, opportune even. But he is thinking of Mr. Page. It seems it will be up to him after all to inform the natives, and enforce it. He sits frowning a little while longer, before he folds the draft into an envelope to take to Violet to type for him. There is only one more thing to be done now: obtain a signed copy of the agreement from Mr Thomas, and send it, along with his own report, to Mr Page.

UAM Archives, Melbourne, February 2003

I was delighted to find that the agreement was finally signed on my birthday. I found a copy of it in the UAM archives in Melbourne, seventy three years after it was signed, and just a few months past my thirty-sixth birthday. With my third baby ensconced in his pram, and my mother as my erstwhile research assistant, we made our way through bush fire smoke to the suburban home of the UAM archives, in Melbourne’s outer east.

Dated Seventh Day of October 1930

I, ROY THOMAS, Lessee of that Property designated Mt. McKinlay Pound, hereby give it to the UNITED ABORIGINES' MISSION and I, ALFRED EDWARD GERARD, President of the South Australian Council of the United Aborigines' Mission, on their behalf to hereby accept that piece of country comprising the western end of Mt. McKinlay Pound situated on Pastoral Block No. 228 and held on Pastoral Lease No. 1378 to a line about 4 miles east from the entrance gate of the roadway on the Mt McKinlay Pound and Angepina Station boundary. The line is more definitely defined by being just east of the Nepabunna Rock Hole catchment area, thence running approximately north and south to the northern and southern boundaries of Mt McKinlay Pound, making a total area of approximately 20 square miles.

This ground is to be held and used by the UNITED ABORIGINES' MISSION for a Missionary Station and Reserve for the Aborigines of this district and the gift is made of the following conditions, otherwise free from all encumbrances:--

The ground to be fenced with a six wire sheep and donkey proof wire fence.

The main camp and Mission Station to be situated as near the Angepina boundary as convenient.

The Native camp and Mission to be conducted so as not to cause any inconvenience to the Donor.

The dogs owned by the natives must be kept in check.

Mr. Thomas to have the right to shoot or cause to be shot any mules, donkeys or dogs straying on his property:

A well to be sunk if necessary on the Donor's part of Mt McKinlay Pound by the Mission Natives in return for Nepabunna Rock Hole being on the Mission property.

Should the United Aborigines Mission abandon the Mission the land to revert to the Donor, Mr Roy Thomas, the present Lessee.

(signed) Roy Thomas

“ A. E. Gerard

WITNESS: J. Wiltshire 7/10/1930110

A reporter and photographer from the Advertiser newspaper were also in attendance, and reported the event.¹¹¹

The 'gift', I realised, was not technically, a 'Reserve' at all. A 'Reserve' connotes land excluded from a pastoral lease and directly administered by the Department for Aborigines,

with all the constraints and rights that entailed. This ‘gift’ was a private arrangement: a Christian mission, on pastoral lease No. 1378, in Adnyamathanha *yarta*. The status of this ‘gift’ will come to matter a great deal in the months and years ahead, as will the question of whether the Aborigines Department, or the Mission, sets the regulations for the behaviour of the ‘inmates’.

Minerawuta, October 1930

Jim sits in the shade of the spreading gum, on the ground worn bare and smooth from the meetings the older men seem to have, often now. He unties his parcel of letters the mailman has left for him, even before the mail truck has pulled out of sight. Its progress is being hampered by men trying to cadge grog, Jim knows. He knows too, that just over the rise, the mail truck is likely to pull over for a few minutes, and some cash - or more often these days, dog scalps or rabbit skins - will change hands and the bottles would be smuggled back into camp. Of course it was illegal, and Mrs Forbes had made it quite clear to him on a number of occasions she expected him to do something about it, but what could you do? Except feed up the families that were going hungry, and welcome the men with a warm smile next time they edged towards the fringes of the meetings he holds.

The weekly missive from the UAM Adelaide headquarters looks plumper than usual, and he opens it first. A rather lengthy letter, three roneoed copies of articles prepared for the next *Messenger*, and another document, on heavy paper. The agreement with Mr Thomas, at last! He reads the official document first, biting his lip as he concentrates, visualising what its words mean laid out across the rock earth. So it includes the rockhole – just – but no mention of Ookabulina. The fencing would be a big job, but there were more men in the camp able to

help. They could get onto that straight away the materials arrived. Situating the Mission at the boundary on the western side of the area left them miles away from the rockhole on the eastern boundary, which is all they would have until they sank a well. They would have to hope they found good water first up at the Boundary. The dogs: well, they were expecting that from what Thomas had said to them directly. He almost snorted at the cheek of asking for the men to sink another well for Mr Thomas. Walter had shown him the Ookabulina well, and several other beautiful waters in McKinlay Pound, and none were included in this parcel of land. But the last condition he read and re-read. This wasn't a Reserve. This wasn't a permanent home for the people. They could be there only on Mr Thomas' grace, and that of the UAM. Not even the fellas who'd done all that fencing work for Mr Thomas got a mention. And while he knew – *knew* - the UAM were committed to the people, it was not like they had much behind them, really. After all, it was a faith mission: alright for him, a single man, but these were whole families. If this arrangement fell over, where could they go? Once they left Burr Well, there would be no going back. He considered the document again. It was not that Thomas had misled them: no, he could see Thomas' position clearly reflected in the terms. But he had hoped for a little more. *Still: Trust. Faith. Hope.* It was a start.

Fred McKenzie and Dick Coulthard are squatting together by Dick's fire, watching their missionary wrinkle his brow and look like he is about to spit as he takes up another piece of paper from his mail. Then his face smoothes out, dead pan, and he purses his lips a little. Fred relights his pipe.

'We better talk to him. Looks like he knows something now.'

Dick nods agreement to Fred. 'I'll do it then. You tell them others we're gonna need to talk soon. Find out where we're going, eh?' And with that, Dick throws the dregs from his pannikin on the ground, and pours himself another cup of the sweet black tea from his billy.

Jim has read all of his mail, but has returned to the UAM correspondence. It goads him. He is meant to tell the camp they have to obey him, they have to come to divine service, the children have to come to school. And the drink! The Lord knows— even if the SA Council of the UAM doesn't - that he can't *make* these people do anything. He looks at the dogs sprawled out around every camp. He'd be lynched if he went around killing any of them. Keeping them off Mr Thomas place: fair enough. But the dogs were practically part of the family. He hadn't even told Walter he'd been expected to destroy the donkeys before, and he wasn't about to now.

There is a resolve growing inside him. The men knew what Roy Thomas had wanted: they were there, with him, when Roy came to call, to thrash out the matter. That's what they would be expecting. Not this other set of rules the Council had dreamed up, five hundred miles away. That would all come in time, as they became won for Christ, *but you can't make people do things*. Well, at least, he couldn't. And he wouldn't. Right now they needed some land they could call their own, with some water so they and their stock wouldn't perish. And if they had to put a fence up and a well down for it, then that's what he would tell them.

Dick has seen it is time, and walks over deliberately to Jim's pool of shade near the *Wimila*.

'Nunga'

Jim had heard Dick approaching, and is glad to see him. '*Nunga*, Dick. I got some mail about McKinlay Pound. They want me to tell it to the whole camp. Mr Thomas gonna give us some land.' Dick pushes his lips forward, and looks pleased.

'So what they saying there? You readin' it?'

'It says... ' and Jim reads from the official document, slowly, but every word. Then he folded the mail up again. 'So that's pretty well like he said to Ted and Walter, and Ted Wilton, that time we saw him.'

'Nothing about shooting them donkeys?' Dick asked sharply.

'Nah.' Jim lies, and it comes easily. 'Like it says, we're OK as long as they stay in our fence. So first thing, we got to build a fence.'

'Can't go leaving here with no water, Mr Page. Why they want to put us over on Angepena Boundary?'

'We'll dig a well, Dick, hey, like this one?'

'You know how to dig them wells, Mr Page?'

Jim decided to ignore that. He went on: Dick did not seem as enthusiastic as he had hoped.

'We'll be able to move up now, before it gets too hot.'

'Mr Page, it don't say nothing about *Ookabulina*. Ted said he wanted *Ookabulina*. That's *Hookpona* what he's given us. Not much water that end.'

'Oh, Dick, Walter has shown me that waterhole there!' Jim was trying to sound confident.

'Mm. Not in summer, eh? And our fellas going to get paid to put a fence up for Mr Thomas?' Dick asked.

'They'll be putting it up for themselves,' Jim lied again. 'Mr Thomas, he didn't have to give up his land. This way, we get our own land.'

‘Eh, Mr Page. That good one. You got us our land, right?’

‘That’s it Dick.’

‘But we can’t go yet, not till that fence up. They gonna give us something to make that fence with?’

‘Government will send that up. You find the ones to put that fence, and I’ll write to Government and say we’re ready now for them to send that wire and things. That OK?’

Dick said nothing for a time. ‘You got to read it to the camp.’

‘Yes.’

‘Alright. You read it at meeting tomorrow. And I’ll tell ‘em too what that’s you’re saying. Now I got to talk to my brothers.’ The other men were waiting, grouping just out of earshot. Jim wanted to stay, and lingered uncertainly. But Dick had turned his attention from him, while the other men had not moved any closer. Reluctantly, Jim walked away, hearing the sounds of men moving, seating themselves on the dry ground, talk bubbling over from this group, and that. Words he had no hope of catching.

Flinders Ranges, 2001

When I first heard the story of Jim Page, he was described as ‘like Moses’, leading his people through the wilderness to the promised land. I’d looked around at the thin soil lying between the rocky outcrops that was the ground at Nepabunna, and blanched, like I did every time I heard Adnyamathanha people sing the old Alexanders hymn about a ‘green hill’ far away.¹¹²

It resembled Ezekial’s ‘valley of dry bones’ more than any ‘green hill’ let alone ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’ as *The Messenger* had its readers believe:

Had we lived in the days when Bible history was recorded in that sacred way, would our story have read like this?-

‘And it came to pass that, in the distant land of Australia, even the land of the Southern Cross, there arose a great cry from the hearts of the dark native people. Albeit this often inarticulate utterance was hidden in grief by the sufferers. ‘For,’ they said, ‘how can we alter our conditions, since our white brothers have driven away or exterminated the kangaroo, the euro, the emu, and all that meant food for us, and have taken the wide hunting grounds for their pasture and crop land? Moreover, they have given our people to drink of firewater (alcohol), and it enslaves us. Our children die; we older ones die out too. Is there no help – no hope?’

‘But the voice of prayer had all this time been going up in intercession to the Great Father above, and an answer has come in the gift of a broad area of land. Then were the hearts of the people full of joy and of thanksgiving, for such was the great stretch of gift country that, in the day of Jacob or of Abraham, it would have embraced all, or nearly all, of the Holy Land. Conference was sought, and they that sit in the seats of Council sought to make the fullest use of this land. And they said: ‘This shall we shall do if it please our Divine Director. On some part of this land we can have sheep. Fences are not yet, but our dark brothers will be shepherds, even as once the great King David was a shepherd. Perchance, on some part, we may grow grain or hay and store it.

‘Milk cows too should be part of our stock; swine and poultry can be fed from maize and potatoes which we hope to grow. Should we have expert advice? Will those who have long dwelt in that part help us, through an agricultural board led, perchance, by our benefactor? Are our thoughts travelling too quickly? What think you?’¹¹³

I think the writer’s thoughts, and certainly their body, had not travelled at all, certainly not to the *Hookpona* ground of the Balcanoona station. But still the allusion persists, and it is hard to escape the Exodus narrative paving the way for the journey from *Minerawuta* to the promised land of *Nepabunna*. While the white community applauded Mr Thomas’ generosity;¹¹⁴ Adnyamathanha recognised both the blessing and curse of their forced removal.

[Mr Thomas] was good to the community because he gave that paddock leases for us, *inni* ...It was long time ago. When we came back from Ram Paddock gate, when they heard that we was moved from Ram Paddock gate, well, they give us this waste country. See they reckon they give to my brother (Sam). ... thought it waste because you’ve got a lot of donkey there... My old uncle too, Luke’s father, he took them boys and worked with them [to put up the fence] just for a bit of rations...¹¹⁵ ...We wanted this place [Ookabulina] see. But he didn’t give that one. 116

Enis Marsh locked me in her clear gaze, over the pile of scones she had made for my visit to her gracious home in the Mid-North.

‘Yes, a lot of people say that they should never have been forced to leave Ram Paddock because that was tribal land... Yes, even now Mt Serle and Ram Paddock was their *yarta*; they should never have been forced to leave there. ...But they didn’t want to be moved from Ram Paddock because there was already graves there too. Women had babies there; *Mulkara* ground was there, so naturally they didn’t want to leave there, you know.

Enis knew the Aborigines ‘Protector’ had done the bidding of the pastoralists – ‘new squatters’, she called them – and removed the Adnyamathanha.

‘Nepabunna’, I began, ‘that wouldn’t have been a camping ground?’

‘No no. Not on top of the hill there like that!’ Enis laughed before her face grew serious.

‘Especially on that terrible white soil.’¹¹⁷

Cliff Coulthard tells the story to his tour groups as he lead them ever eastward from *Minerawuta* to Nepabunna. He figures Page as the ‘one man’ charged by church and government to look after and educate two thousand Adnyamathanha people, who told his sponsors ‘you’ve got to give me land to do it... Page was talking about land, land rights for the Adnyamathanha people in 1930.’ Cliff tells how his grandfather Ted began negotiating with Coles and Whyte – a campground in return for carting their wool – and that he and Page got others involved negotiating and sinking wells at the Ram Paddock: ‘Ted, Walter, Ted Wilton and Walter Coulthard and old Rufus Wilton, people like that... Dick Coulthard and Jack Coulthard and all them, [and] Andy Coulthard.’ Then looking eastward, Cliff describes the relationship between Jim and Roy Thomas of Balcanoona, and their concerns about ‘killings ...that happened with the pastoralists and the Aborigines.’ Cliff paraphrases Thomas:

‘Well fair enough they’ve got to have land to live on, you know... OK but only one thing. A lot of these Aboriginal people have dogs: ...If you can get these Aboriginal people to

build a dog fence right across the boundary of Nepabunna and Balcanoona station, well we'll give them that land... Then James Page walked [the people] nineteen kilometers which is from *Minerawuta* to Nepabunna.¹¹⁸

Cliff brings his own reflection to the story: '...But the thing was, when you look at it too, the people came [and] they built that big dog fence, they worked back for their own land you know.' Neither did the implications escape him:

'the people worked for this land see, but the lease went ...to that mission or the church organisation that [Mr Page] was working for, and then they put conditions on him, saying that "Oh you've got to get these people speaking English all the time, don't speak their tongue you know. You've got to tell them to stop the initiation ceremony, the tribal ways of living and the law. You've got to convince that on everything they've got to be like white people. They've got to [try to] live like white people". So Page didn't want to do that and he told the people. He said "No, I don't want to do that", and he told people like Roy Thomas too.'¹¹⁹

Mr Gerard's authorised version takes the part of the pastoralists, blaming the government for the predicament the agreement with Balcanoona sought to solve:

'You will agree that a few square miles of that country, with that well in the centre, should have been reserved for the natives when it was cut up for leasing or selling. However, place yourself in the leaseholders position. The ground had been surveyed and leased to them by the Government, your representatives. Every lease had the same clause in it, permitting natives to camp at their usual camping place, and you and your Government were satisfied, even though they were generous to the natives.

Messers Coles and Whyte took over the Burr Well station. Why should they have the whole responsibility of the tribe of natives thrown on them, just because this well happened to be on their property?'¹²⁰

In this version, Gerard has Jim recommending a site – '*Ookabulina*' – which he describes as a 'rock hole with water', perhaps confusing the seasonal waterhole they did get, with the permanent public watering place they wanted, and didn't get. He describes Mr Thomas as willing to 'make a sacrifice', and giving the land on condition of obedience to the Missionary, erection of a 6 wire fence, '...and when your Society relinquishes the mission the property reverts back to me.'¹²¹

Violet Turner's editorial makes me grimace with its effusive enthusiasm. She starts:

'Put it right at the beginning; don't wait till the end of this article – GOD HAS GIVEN US THE RESERVE FOR THE NATIVES OF COPLEY!' ¹²²

But I cannot be cross with her: in many ways she is like me, sweeping up the bits of a jigsaw she can barely comprehend let alone imagine what actually happened. In the face of 'refusal, refusal, refusal at every turn' ... 'God was silently planning for us...we corresponded with the white woman of the camp – an Englishwoman married to a native man – and she kept us in touch with the people of the camp.' When Jim arrives, Violet rushes on with no hint of irony: 'The response of these poor dark souls was instant, like the taking of a drink of water by a man perishing of thirst.' Everything was heavenly: services of worship were attended by all in camp, there were conversions, songs of Zion instead of corroborees, and 'a desire for cleanliness in the camp, both physically and morally' ... 'The word of the Missionary, by common consent, became law in the camp.' There were rations, schooling, and newcomers arriving to become part of such 'great things.' She even refuses to become negative toward the 'owner of the land.' 'We have no word of censure over what happened next', she says, referring to Coles and Whyte ordering for the mission to close. In fact it became a fulfilment of God's will that Mr Thomas would make such a magnificent gift. She closes, of course, with a verse: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it UNTO ME.'¹²³

There is no written word from the missionaries themselves, or the *yuras*. In fact, Jim will not write to *The Messenger* for another year.

Minerawuta, October 1930

Jim can tell it is Mrs Forbes approaching, even before he pulls back his tent flap. Her steps are quick, and have a surprising heaviness about them, for her size, he thinks. She must be on an errand of some kind. She certainly hadn't seem disposed to socialise with him.

'Mr Page, Ted Coulthard has asked me to come and read those letters you got about McKinlay Pound.' It is a forthright request, and Jim wants to hedge a little. It hadn't occurred to him that she could read, although of course it should have. And Rufus Wilton too, he suddenly thinks guiltily. He can see his subterfuge is on tricky ground, although Mr Eaton had seemed happy enough to go along with it.

'Which ones, Mrs Forbes?'

'Which ones are there?' He should've seen that coming. He passes over the whole packet, as he begins to explain.

'The one I read to Dick is the official document, there. That's the terms that Mr Thomas has signed off on, and are mostly what he had talked to the men about.' Rebecca's eyes narrow as she reads.

'You know Ted thought they might get *Ookabulina*, with the good water,' she says, in a clipped tone. 'The donkeys will have this eaten out in a week, and still be thirsty. They'd be better off staying here.'

'We can't stay here. We've overstayed our welcome already.'

Her gaze is steady. 'That's true - for a mission. But Ted says every place can't say no to *yuras* camping there.'

'They can say no to their donkeys and dogs.' Jim saw the comment hit home.

'But they got that well there themselves; wasn't nobody using it before! It was just a hole in the ground some miners had left behind.'

Jim hasn't heard anger in her voice before. She calms herself down almost immediately, and continues.

'Where are the other papers then?'

Jim hands them over, and lets her read them for herself, in silence. He sits on the bench which is still dusted white from where he had measured out flour into the various bags people brought to collect their rations, and he does not look at her.

Rebecca is trying to memorise what she reads, as she reads it. Ted would be interested in every detail. She can see now why Mr Page was so evasive. He hadn't read any of the other papers to Dick. The UAM wanted a village of indentured labourers, serfs they could boss about like some medieval fiefdom. They had no idea. *No compassion either*, she thinks. *We just want somewhere to stay, with water and a bit of food, and be able to go about our business*. When she finishes, she regards the man sitting quietly waiting, picking dirt from under his fingernails. He is probably right. The men will be outraged at these other conditions and expectations. But they still had to know. They had a right to know what they'd got themselves into.

'You'll have to tell them.'

Jim looks up, but says nothing. She continues.

'What the UAM is thinking.'

Jim was grateful for the softer tone in her voice.

'Better you than me.'

'I, I just can't!', he is shocked how raw he sounds. 'It's...there's something not right about that, not for these people. And I don't think they'd listen to me, anyway.'

‘Why are you trying to protect those fellas in Adelaide? They don’t know the half of it.’

She watched him, keeping the pressure on.

‘I thought I was trying to protect the people here!’ he exclaims.

‘Or maybe yourself. They won’t thank you for taking them for fools.’ Her gaze is still steady.

It was a moment Jim never thought would come. Even when he sweated and chafed under the duties he’d been given, at Oodnadatta, or on deputation, he had known his fidelity to the promises he made at his Induction were absolute. In fact, humbling himself to the Will of God through the Council was part of his spiritual discipline. But this time what they asked had implications for others, not just himself. These ‘*yuras*’, as he finds himself addressing them in his mind.

‘Look, it’s the official agreement that’s going to matter in the long run. These other – fancies – are just the Council members enthusiasms. At the end of the day, I’m the senior missionary in their work here, and they will have to trust my judgement from the field. The first things we need are a fence and a well, and that’s what I will be applying myself to. I’ll read these other papers to Dick – and you can relay what you think necessary to Ted – and Dick can speak about them with the others if he sees fit. What do you think?’

Rebecca is delighted. *He’s on our side after all.* It doesn’t remove what she knows will be very real concerns about the bit of ground he had won for them, but it is something. It would still be ‘their’ mission...once some water was found. Which had better be soon, now the country had browned off over night, the winter grasses dying as summer approached.

‘I’ll tell Ted the UAM has high hopes for the new mission, but that it’s not on *Ookabulina*, and we’ve still to wait for fencing and a well to be sunk. And I’ll tell him you’ve done right

by us. If he wants to know more I'll send him over, alright?' She gives Jim a wide smile, showing her regular teeth, and for the first time, feels warm towards him.

Jim receives the smile like an embrace, and finds himself smiling back at her.

Alice Springs, February 2007

I stare at what I have written, and am delighted. I hadn't realised before that the fulcrum of Jim's journey rested here, in a subtle shift in the kaleidoscopic patterns of texts that now surround me –on the surface of the desk of course, and in file behind file on the computer screen, but also perching on drawers pulled out beside me, and on the floor behind me as well. Shift, shift. Jim rearranges the pieces in him, and around him, and sees what the pattern becomes. In the journey from *Minerawuta* to *Nepabunna*, he will take a very different direction now.

Flinders Ranges, 2001

With the trusty Morantz tape recorder on loan from the Mortlock Library, and the handbook from the Oral History workshop I had completed, I set off for a week of interviews with every person I knew in the Flinders Ranges who might have something to tell me about Jim Page or Rebecca Forbes. Yes, I knew about the variable 'accuracy' of memories as history, but 'the social perception of facts' was only part of what I was after.¹²⁴ I also wanted the scuttlebutt, hearsay, gossip, and opinion. The flourish on a fact that continued to carry a titillating charge for seven decades. 'What kind of fellow do you think Jim Page was?' I asked, over and over again.

At Iga Warta, Cliff said:

‘...the Yuras reckon he was pretty quiet sort of a bloke, but if he needed to get heavy he would get heavy you know ...Page wasn’t like a boss. He’d sort of work with people, not go there and say “You got to do this”...[I was told] from even some of the old people that Page he was very [good]. He would have been fairly young in them days... But they reckon he was fairly strong in terms of what he wanted to do. His ambition was to work with native people. But you know Page was a white man that said [about land rights] back then, you know. I think that, for me, [it’s] an honour to say “Good on him”, because at least he came and stopped the killings. He also helped my people and bought them to [Nepabunna], and gave them at least a bit of land and got them a bit of recognition.’¹²⁵

At Leigh Creek Station, Leo and Shirley agreed:

Well I think he used to treat them better, mainly. You know, whether they go and ask him whatever they wanted, you know, he’d give it to them, but Mr. Eaton used to knock them back too. He got harder and harder with the *Yuras* see. But I reckon because Dad and Mum used to say that he wasn’t a bad man, Mr. Page: he was very good.’¹²⁶

Rene Mohammed, talking on her shady verandah in Port Augusta said:

My father [Andy Coulthard] always said [Mr Page] was a really good friendly fellow who worked with the people and wanted to do a lot for the Adnyamathanha people. That’s why he did what he did because he wanted to do things for the people, but he couldn’t do much.’¹²⁷

Rene’s mother, Dolly, still living independently at Copley, said ‘Jim Page was never cheeky with the girls, just said hello and talked good to everybody.’¹²⁸

‘I heard he was good to Adnyamathanha people,’ offered Lena, Cliff’s mother, from her house full of children in Port Augusta.’¹²⁹

Albert Wilton’s granddaughter, Sylvia Brady filled out the picture further: ‘But the people loved him. They were broken hearted when he done what he done. They were all Christian with him, praying every meal, singalongs, Bible reading.’¹³⁰

Gertie’s opinion was brief, but repeated often: ‘He was good.’¹³¹

I drove home with banks of cassette tapes, and full notebooks. Of course there were a range of opinions on other matters. But about the kind of person Jim was, they all agreed. He was good. And the people loved him.

Back home in the manse at Hawker, I followed up my field work with a phone call to another person I knew had been at Nepabunna in Jim's time.



In my office at Hawker manse. Photograph courtesy of Tracy Spencer

RM Williams, then known as Reg Williams, had done his apprenticeship as the 'baby missionary' at Mt Margaret mission, followed by a camel trip in the Musgraves with Will Wade, just the year before Jim enjoyed the same probation.



WILLIAM WADE AND R. M. WILLIAMS
ABOUT TO EMBARK ON THEIR EXPEDITION

Reg and his family were sent to Nepabunna in the early 1932.¹³² Not only did they need his well sinking skills, but he introduced an industry to the community, and together with his mate Dollar Mick, set up a leatherworking workshop to begin producing boots. He planned to pay the Adnyamathanha men that worked there with the proceeds from the sales, but fell foul of the SA Council in his good intentions. They preferred the money to come to the Mission.¹³³ Reg left – Nepabunna and the UAM – but kept in touch with Jim by letter. And went on to establish the most famous bushman’s outfitters brand in Australia. RM’s voice was breathy and soft on the phone, and talking was obviously some effort for the aging man. But the strength of his affection for Jim came through very clearly.

‘James Page was a nice boy...He was a Londoner – had a lady in London who might have told him she didn’t want him any more. Maybe she didn’t. Women can do these things... Jimmy was not very talkative, but he was a kindly man. I don’t think he had any family. He didn’t have a lot of friends. He wouldn’t have got on with the mission crowd, because they were less educated and narrow minded... Jimmy Page was kindly disposed toward the old white lady. He would have been kindly and a good Christian. He was what he was, a man that tried to give his life to a work of that kind, and somebody let him down.’¹³⁴

‘He was what he was, a man that tried to give his life to a work of that kind.’ Perhaps when the time to choose came, Jim could not be anything else than who he was.

Minerawuta, November 1930

‘Mr Page, you betta come with me.’ Sidney Jackson stands still beyond the group of children sitting in Jim’s ‘school.’ The children look up, and then away, their hands still fiddling with the stones on the ground in front of them. Only Pearl has four, for the four Bible texts he is teaching them to memorise.¹³⁵ Jim hands his open Bible to the newest member of their missionary team, young Harrie Green, who had arrived at midnight the previous day, and had already made himself useful extracting teeth all morning and now helping with the Bible lessons. Harrie continues the sing-song repetitions, as Jim walks around the group to the man waiting for him. He is expecting yet another round of conversations with the men of the camp, as they probe the news of the move from every angle. None had been angry with him, yet nevertheless he felt the pressure intensely.

‘That old man, he’s dead. You better come,’ Sid repeats. Another one. Jim is weary of death. He is weary of the ground shifting under his feet: where he can camp, whether they can have a mission, who is in charge, who is alive and who is dead. At least this time is it not another child. He has no idea who it might be that has died. Sid is silent, a *Wilyeru* man already begun preparing himself to mourn his brother.¹³⁶ Jim regards the man closed in on himself, and wonders why this time they have come to get him.

Sid leads Jim past the camp, a little to the east where he can see a body stretched out on the ground, under a straggling grey bush.¹³⁷ The body seems to be already part of the ground,

twiggy shoulders and elbows lying at angles like kindling. A number of goats are spread out on the small flat, some staring with their otherworldly unblinking eyes at the man who had been shepherding them. There is a hut a little way off, and Jim thinks it is empty, until a movement catches his eye and he sees a boy shift his legs where he sits by the blanketed doorway. With a groan, Jim recognises Raymond Forbes. His star pupil. The little six year old had been the first to recite John 3:16, and to claim Christ for his Saviour. He had even begun to teach his father the Lords Prayer...¹³⁸ Realisation winds him like a blow, and he is bent over, his hands propped against his thighs.

‘She asked for you to come. Mrs Forbes’ inside.’ Sid points in the direction of the hut with his lips. When Jim still doesn’t move, Sid adds, ‘I come to take the old *Wilyeru* in for his dinner. Been with the goats. But when we got there,’ and he pointed towards the hut with his lips, ‘he got took bad with it. Couldn’t breathe, see. So I took him back over there.’¹³⁹

Jim straightens up, with a sudden flame of anger towards this seemingly callous treatment of a dying man. He walks towards the body of Jack Forbes. He bends to check the pulse at his wrist, although Jim has no doubt he is dead. The arm hinges easily as he takes it, and then falls back softly. Jack Forbes had been a tall man, but seems strangely insubstantial lying sunken into the earth. Once strongly built, his aging body became wiry on its bony frame, which he covered neatly with layers of singlet, white shirt and woollen cardigan over his dark trousers. Jim had never guessed how frail he had become, although he must have been one of the oldest men in the camp.¹⁴⁰ He looks back over his shoulder at the hut. Young Jack is standing next to where Raymond still sits drawing in the ashes of their fire pit. His arms are crossed, and his face is unreadable at this distance.

‘Do you want a hand with him?’ Jim offers Sydney, hoping the man will say yes and give him a reason not to visit her, not yet.

‘My brother, old Fred Johnson will help me I reckon. Bring over his donkey cart. We’ll take care of him. But she want to see you, too.’

‘Yes.’ Jim feels a weight in his chest, and his eyes begin to sting. *Give me strength Lord, give me strength* he prays silently as he begins to walk towards Mrs Forbes’ home. *Give Mrs Forbes strength, too, and your assurance that...that God loves her...that, that you will be with her in this time of trial.* His shoulders square a little and his chin lifts as he watches the young boys watching their missionary coming to bring comfort at such a time in their lives.

‘Boys, I am so sorry,’ Jim says, reaching the hut. Raymond stands up and looks like he wants to do something, but doesn’t. Jim embraces him with a quick hug, and feels the boy’s breath escape his body in a silent sob. Young Jack hasn’t moved. Jim holds out his hand, and the older boy shakes it, and moves slightly to one side.

‘Mum’s in there’ young Jack says, with a cockney twist to his words Jim hadn’t noticed before. The grey blanket hangs in the doorway, with thick black lettering ‘Abo Dept NSW’. The low lintel is a tree branch, and the roof a thatch of brush. There is a large flat slate from the nearby creek as a threshold stone. He lifts the blanket aside and steps over it, into the darkness.

Jim stands just inside the door, and can hear nothing, but the soft crackle of the small fire beneath the rough stone chimney to his left. It is hot, and close, with only random slants of light where the materials of the walls and roof – canvas, flattened tins, brush – don’t quite meet. It smells: he waits for the acrid assault to dull his sense until he no longer registers the

mixture of smoke, and dust, and sweat and fat. When his eyes adjust, he can make out Mrs Forbes' small form sitting erect on an upturned tin drum at a wooden table made of pallet planks. She is clasping a white enamel mug, full of black liquid.

'Mr Page, would you like a mug o' tea?' She has broken the silence for him.

'Mrs Forbes, I am so sorry. I had no idea...' Jim trails off. It didn't matter to her whether he had an idea or not. Her husband was dead, and he was here to offer her what comfort he – *or the Lord* – could.

'Sit there,' she says, standing and pointing at another upturned drum at the head of the table. Jim wonders if that had been Jack's seat. He sits, and she dips a mug into the billy hanging over the small fire beside the doorway, and without asking, spoons three large serves of sugar into it. Jim waits until she is seated again.

'Mrs Forbes, can you tell me what happened?'

What happened? She screams inside. *I ran away from England and found my Jack and now he's gone, taken by that Yamuti!* 'Was the whooping cough,' she says. 'I'd been making him plasters, but his breathing was so shallow in the end. Sid had brought him in for dinner – he shepherds the goats, see – but he couldn't breathe.' She stops, and Jim notices there is no steam rising from her cup of tea. 'Sid took him out then, over that way,' and she waves vaguely towards the blanketed doorway, 'and that's it then.' Her hands clasp her mug again, but she still takes no sip of the brew. Jim dismisses his own questions, and instead asks:

'Had he been ill long?' The question seems banal, but Jim wants to keep her talking.

'Couple of weeks. Maybe more. I've been so busy with the *yakarties*,' she breaks off abruptly. When she speaks again, her voice is even and steady. 'There's so much of it as you

know, Mr Page. There's been so much to do. Mr Forbes – he - had had colds on and off all winter. He is not a young man.' She looks down at her cup. Jim notices she says 'is a young man', and that she has dark shadows under her eyes. He thinks *time to make this real*.

'Did you go and see him, Mrs Forbes?'

She looks up at him. His face is still so pale in the dim light, and his eyes are hidden by the round glass of his spectacles, reflecting only the darkness of her small home. *He doesn't know anything*, she thinks, with a mixture of contempt and pity. *But at least he is here*. He has left the dregs of his tea in his cup, and she notices his fingers unconsciously tracing the small flower print on the cup.

'I can't go to him, Mr Page. I'm his wife, *Mathari*. He's *Arruru*. They won't let me near him now, they got to do it the right way for him.' She feels the tears building up behind her eyes, pinching at her nostrils. The images loom in her mind: his empty sucks at the air as he sat where Mr Page was now; his long form restless on his cot as she rubbed and rubbed the eucalyptus oil into his chest.¹⁴¹ Then Sid's hand on her arm, as he moved beside the cot and lifted Jack. Watching, and watching, from her doorway, holding the blanket flap up with her right arm while she held Raymond to her with the left.

'Mrs Forbes?' She takes a breath and lets herself be pulled back to this young man. 'Mrs Forbes, the boys: have they seen him yet?'

'No.' She can see he is trying, but she feels so tired. Too tired to explain, although she tries, again. 'Dick Coulthard will come for them. He'll tell them what to do. Them boys *Mathari*, like I'm *Mathari*. See? Has to be Dick, because we're not from here, and I haven't got any brothers here...' She can see his face is troubled, failing to grasp even this. Rebecca stops trying to explain. Her lips purse a little. He could at least have tried to work out who

was who. She resolves to be direct about what she has asked him to come for. But he begins speaking first.

‘Mrs Forbes, I know there is so little I understand here. I – I meant to study their language, but it just got away from me...’ His voice trails off, and Rebecca feels a pang of guilt. She had expected so much. She had to admit she had not got very far with the language, either. ‘I’m, I’m...I don’t understand their customs at all, I’m afraid.’ He is struggling, she can see, and she fancies she can hear the small strangled sounds of a man trying not to weep. Her own eyes begin to fill, at last, and overflow in silent trickles down her cheeks. She sits very still. His fingers finding her hand startle her, but she slides her hand from the cold cup and lets it rest in his soft grip. Not the generous softness of Jack’s hands, that dwarfed her own, but something smaller, like a boy, or a brother, holding on. They sit that way, and Rebecca wonders if he is praying.

‘Can we say the ‘Our Father’?’ Rebecca asks, abrupt from her silence. Then her voice is a whisper again: ‘Ray and Jack, they had been practicing together, you know.’ She takes a breath that shakes her, but calls out ‘Ray!’, and both boys appear inside the door immediately. ‘Come here, boys’ she says, with a small smile. When they are both beside her, she says ‘When you’re ready then, Mr Page,’ and he begins, in his smooth careful accents:

‘Our Father, who art in heaven’

‘Hallowed be thy name,’ echoes the soft chorus, following the rise and fall of London’s accents in the close dim hut until it is halted with ‘Amen’. There is a moment when everyone is looking away, or at their hands.

‘Is there anything I can do?’ Jim asks.

Rebecca's face holds its sad smile. 'Yes. I want him buried in a coffin, and I want a proper funeral, white way too. When Mr Waterhouse, that policeman comes over, he can help you.¹⁴² You'll need to speak to the men about that too – Sidney Jackson and Fred Johnson I think. Let them arrange the burial place: they'll know where.'

'He's *Wilyeru* too.' Young Jack speaks up, too loudly in that small space. His lips are set.

'Of course, *viridianha*. We'll bury your *vapi yura* way, too. Only with a coffin, so we keep him nice and clean. You boys go and find old Fred now, and tell him, *inni*?' Rebecca turns back to Jim. 'Thank you, Mr Page.'

'Mrs Forbes, it will be an honour. Thank you. Let me know if there is anything else I can do.'

There is one more thing she thinks of, suddenly. 'Do you know that hymn, "The Sweet Bye and Bye"? I learned it on the ship coming out. I sang it to Jack sometimes – I haven't got much of a voice – but he could pick it up alright. Could we sing that one, at your meeting place?'

Jim did know it. 'Of course.' *Even if it's just you and me singing it*, he thought. 'God bless you, Mrs Forbes.'

'Oh, I think He has,' she says, in a small voice.

They buried Jack the next day on the bank of a small creek, next to another *Arruru* man, Henry Burton.¹⁴³ Several men had dug out the long hole, and Mr Eaton and young Harrie used the cross-cut saw Harrie had bought with him to plane sufficient boards for a simple coffin.¹⁴⁴ Jim had not seen Mrs Forbes again, and she was not sitting with the women wailing nearby while the men worked at the grave. It was a Sunday, and Mr Eaton said they should

have divine service, but Jim had put him off. Instead, Jim went about the camp, reading the passage he planned to use at the Funeral service, the one that young Raymond had so eagerly learned: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.'¹⁴⁵ As he approached Sid and Elsie Jackson's hut, just past the Forbes' old campsite, and was surprised to suddenly recognise Mrs Forbes sitting with a group of women, her head and face covered with white clay like the rest of them. Their silence was as total as their cousins keening further across the flat was constant. Jim left off his visiting then, and retired to his hastily erected tent across the road, on Angepina. They would come and get him when it was time. His copy of The Bushman's Companion lay ready with his Bible and concertina. In what had become a liturgy of comfort for him, he withdrew the writing pad from under his cot, and began to write:

'...Today is my first funeral, and I feel so sad for the old man I am to bury. Pray for me, and the families here, and ask your dear congregation to pray for us also. I am sure it is the constant care of your concern and prayer for us that gives me strength day to day...'

'Australia Day', Alice Springs, 2007

I have been invited to my first Invasion Day Barbeque, where there will be pig on a spit and roo tails in the fire, and a Mauritian Australian father watching his children beg drinks from his Walpiri and Irish in-laws. I will go alone, with just my children to play with the other kids there, because my husband is not well, and I am in need of company.

But first I want to lay poor Jack to rest. Harrie Green reported on the funeral:

'It was a pathetic scene as the natives with bowed heads gathered around the grave, whilst Bro. Page conducted the burial service, telling the people that their loved one who had gone to be with Jesus would one day rise again.'¹⁴⁶

I think *yuras* would have known that already. Elkin had described how Adnyamathanha continued to observe traditional beliefs, regardless of their degree of mixed ancestry and

history.¹⁴⁷ And yet practices were changing. Instead of vacating the dwellings of the dead, Elkin observed that settled camps were preserved by removing the person from their home before the point of death.¹⁴⁸ And now here was the first *yura* to be buried in a coffin. Elkin had warned fellow clergy ‘must not too hastily assume that the Christian burial which they afford to their converts has the meaning for the natives that it has for us.’¹⁴⁹ Jack’s spirit was expected to rise again. Mourners would have lit fires between the grave and their own camps, and checked the swept ground each day to see the spirit did not wander. When the *vartivaka* leaves found their way through the loose dirt of the grave and the double rainbows, red clouds and the shower of rain that told them the spirit had reached the sea of dead in the gulf, the sorry camps would relax a little.¹⁵⁰ But although the coffin was laid so Jack faced the rising sun, and the songs were sung, I wondered if the lid of the coffin was quite screwed down, or left loose enough for his spirit to escape?¹⁵¹ Rebecca would have watched it all from a distance, mourning in silence and a mask of white pipe clay. Her fire embers would bear remnants of the clothes, and blankets and personal effects Jack had had. Perhaps she also watched for a pelican, to take this strangers spirit back to his own country.

Around the campfires, children would be told again the story of Adambara the golden globe spider who wanted the dead to come back to life, and Artapudapuda, the wood roach, who won the argument saying ‘No let him lie there until he rots.’¹⁵²

Rebecca and Jack’s great grandson had suggested to me that the web Adambara the spider spun around dead bugs, was like a coffin, with the hope that from this cocoon the grub could return to life again every September.¹⁵³ Jim’s assurance that Jack would rise from the dead perhaps gave hope that one day Adambara would win the argument, with Jesus’ help.

Still reflecting on his visit to the *yuras* five years later, Elkin gave further advice his fellow clergy:

‘...if a Christian burial is to be given, it should be made much of; let as many as possible be gathered together, grouped according to any social laws that are still respected, and let such symbolism and teaching be given which will enable the natives to maintain continuity with the past, hope for the future, and a sense of unity and strength in the present...[and to] realise the significance of native fundamental beliefs even for civilised Aborigines and that his work is to tide them through a period of spiritual and philosophical shock and bewilderment. Success in industrial training of young Aborigines is not a sufficient test for a mission. A government institution or station could do as much. The mission must also tackle its real task, which is to help the Aborigines to acquire or build up a view of life which will give them courage for the present and faith in the future.’¹⁵⁴
Perhaps the first Christian burial did just that.

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¹ Cliff Coulthard, *Conversation with Adnyamathanha Easter 2005*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Flinders Ranges: 2005), vol.

² South Australia Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988). P14

³ Ken McKenzie, *Transcript of Interview 150801*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker: 2001), vol.

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- ⁴ Ken McKenzie, *Transcript of Interview 150801*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker: 2001), vol.
- ⁵ Deborah Bird Rose, *Nourishing Terrains: Australian Aboriginal Views of Landscape and Wilderness* (Canberra: Australian Heritage Commission, 1996).p40-42
- ⁶ Ken McKenzie, *Transcript of Interview 150801*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker: 2001), vol.
- ⁷ Christobel Mattingly and Ken Hampton, ed., *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836 Told by Nungas and Others* (Adelaide; Sydney: Aboriginal Literature Development Assistance Association Inc. in association with Hodder and Stoughton, 1988). P229
- ⁸ Christine Davis, and McKenzie, Pearl, *Adnyamathanha Genealogy* (Government Printer South Australia: Aboriginal Heritage Branch. South Australian Department of Environment and Planning., 1985). Angas McKernzie born 1900; Walter Coultard born 1903.
- ⁹ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. P131, 132
- ¹⁰ Charles P. Mountford and Robert Edwards, 'Aboriginal Rock Engravings of Extinct Creatures in South Australia.,' *MAN* July (1962). p97,98
- ¹¹ Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. P131
- ¹² Gertier Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.
- ¹³ Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, vol.
- ¹⁴ Keith Nicholls, *Transcript of Interview with Keith Nicholls 151001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Beltana: 2001), vol.
- ¹⁵ Coulthard, *Conversation with Adnyamathanha Easter 2005*, vol. This episode is based on an account told to Clara Coulthard by Angas McKenzie.
- ¹⁶ AE Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King, 1944). P22 Gives this date as Jim's departure from Adelaide for Copley.
- ¹⁷ United Aborigines Mission. May 1 1930 p9 Gilpin died of tubercular meningitis later that month.
- ¹⁸ United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. May 1 1930 p9
- ¹⁹ Clara Brady, *Transcript of Interview with Clara Brady 171002*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Quorn: 2002), vol.
- ²⁰ J. Jacobs, Laurence,C., and Thomas,F., 'Pearls from the Deep: Re-Evaluating the Early History of Colebrook Home for Aboriginal Children,' *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, ed. T Swain and DB Rose General Editor Victor C. Hayes. (Bedford Park SA: The Australian Association for the study of religions, 1988). P149
- ²¹ Brady, *Transcript of Interview with Clara Brady 171002*, vol.

²² United Aborigines Mission. May 1 1930 p5-6

²³ Brady, *Transcript of Interview with Clara Brady 171002*, vol.

²⁴ Brady, *Transcript of Interview with Clara Brady 171002*, vol.

²⁵ AP Elkin, 'Series 2 Box 9', Field Notes, Personal archives of AP Elkin, Sydney. Elkin received correspondence from several amateur anthropologists and outback residents early in 1930, regarding his inquiry about where he might access Indigenous people as subjects of anthropological study.

²⁶ AP Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture,' *Oceania* VI.2 (1935).

²⁷ United Aborigines Mission. Jul 1 1929 p7

²⁸ United Aborigines Mission. Feb 1 1930 p9

²⁹ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P120

³⁰ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P146

³¹ Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley Anna Cole, ed., *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005). P146

³² Eileen Lewis, *Transcript of an Interview 020901*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Adelaide: 2001), vol.

³³ Frank Warwick, *Transcript of Interview with Frank Warwick 240602*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Adelaide: 2002), vol.

³⁴ Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. P22

³⁵ Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated*. P23

³⁶ Elsie Jackson, *Transcript of Interview 10801 (Second Edit Parts Removed 0303)*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2001), vol.

³⁷ Elsie Jackson, *Transcript of Interview 10801 (Second Edit Parts Removed 0303)*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2001), vol.

³⁸ CP Mountford, 'Journals 2/9;

Journals 2/8 May-June 1937; May 1938', Field Notes, Mountford Sheard Collection, Adelaide. p185: when visitor coming to camp, they sit down fifty yards away and wait about 30 min till a female relative would come and ask 'where did the dogs come from this morning?' to which they answer where they camped last night.

³⁹ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies.*, trans. W D Halls (London: Routledge, 1990). P70 describes a ritual of visitors to a Corroboree calling out where they came from, throwing away any weapons and being gifted with weapons by their hosts.

⁴⁰ Sylvia J Hallam, 'A View from the Other Side of the Western Frontier: Or I Met a Man Who Wasn't There.' *Aboriginal History* 7.2 (1983).

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- ⁴¹ Veronica Brady, *Can These Bones Live?* (Leichhardt: The Federation Press, 1996). P60
- ⁴² Reference to Ron Vanderwal, ed., *The Aboriginal Photographs of Baldwin Spencer* (South Yarra: John Currey O'Neil Publishes Pty Ltd, 1982).; Hallam, 'A View from the Other Side of the Western Frontier: Or 'I Met a Man Who Wasn't There.'.
- ⁴³ United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. June 1 1930 p8 'Opening of Copely'
- ⁴⁴ Various correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council', State Records of South Australia GRG 52/1/1936 Boxes 42-43-44, Adelaide. P117 Letter from AE Gerard per SA Council, UAM to The Honourable the Commissioner of Crown Lands 10th September 1930
- ⁴⁵ Irene Mohammed, *Conversation with Irene Mohammed 230503*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2003), vol.
- ⁴⁶ Gertier Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.
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- ⁴⁸ Betty Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. (Adelaide: Aboriginal Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Planning, South Australian Government, 1981). P21,22
- ⁴⁹ United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. June 1 1930 p8 'Opening of Copely'
- ⁵⁰ Fred Eaton, 'Ten Years with the Nepabunna Aborigines', Margaret Brown collection, Quorn. P2
- ⁵¹ Harrie Green, *'Mr Green Tells How Jesus Never Fails' Based on Recordings of Harrie Green's Reminiscences*, (*Unpublished Manuscript*), ed. Chris Jones (United Aborigines Ministries, 2003).
- ⁵² United Aborigines Mission. June 1 1930 Quotes taken from conversations between Jim and unnamed Adnyamathanha, included in Jim's report in the Messenger.
- ⁵³ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1930 p10
- ⁵⁴ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1930 p10
- ⁵⁵ Leo and Shirley Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Leigh Creek Station, Flinders Ranges: 2002), vol.
- ⁵⁶ Johnson, *Video of Gertie Johnson Taken by Margaret Dodd and Michael Diorio 1999*.
- ⁵⁷ Jakelin Troy, ed., *The Role of Aboriginal Women in the Development of Contact Languages in New South Wales: From the Late Eighteenth to the Early Twentieth Century* (Sydney: Australian Professional Publications, 1987). P167 Troy argues that Aboriginal women contributed significantly to the development of pidgin languages in Australia, and that particularly in the mission context were privileged in linguistic and literary contexts such as discussion of family matters, schooling and involvement in church activities.
- ⁵⁸ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1930 p10, 11.

⁵⁹ UAM Mission Secretary, 'Correspondence to the Director of Education July 16th 1930', UAM Archives, Melbourne.

⁶⁰ Eaton, 'Ten Years with the Nepabunna Aborigines'. P2

⁶¹ Christobel Mattingly and Ken Hampton, ed., *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836, Told by Nungas and Others*. (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1988). P230 citing CP Mountford

⁶² Mountford, 'Journals 2/9;

Journals 2/8 May-June 1937; May 1938'. P81

⁶³ United Aborigines Mission. September 1 1930 p9

⁶⁴ Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, vol.

⁶⁵ John E Stanton, 'Missionaries and the Aftermath,' *Aboriginal Australians and Christian Missions: Ethnographic and Historical Studies*, ed. T Swain and DB Rose General Editor Victor C. Hayes (Bedford Park SA: The Australian Association for the study of religions, 1988).; John Stanton, *Conversation with John Stanton 070901*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Perth: 2001), vol.

⁶⁶ Johnson, *Video of Gertie Johnson Taken by Margaret Dodd and Michael Diorio 1999*. Gertie recalls 'Jim used to show us little Jesus book of pictures he used to show us lambs, all the pictures.'

⁶⁷ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1930 p10,11

⁶⁸ United Aborigines Mission. July 1 1930 p10,11

⁶⁹ Victoria Haskins & Fiona Paisley Anna Cole, ed., *Uncommon Ground: White Women in Aboriginal History*. (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005). P96 Citing Dawson Daniels, Ngukurr, Sept 1984 in Hughes 1986 locates [Ruths] incorporation within an Indigenous knowledge system through the context of an earlier dream prophecy he was told of: "Old people, my grandfather and his father had a dream, a good dream that someone would come out to them, to look after our sick people and take them to a better place. We believe that person was Sister Ruth and that dream apparently came true."

⁷⁰ Ken McKenzie, *Transcript of Interview 150801*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker: 2001), vol.

⁷¹ McKenzie, *Transcript of Interview 150801*, vol.

⁷² Cliff Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview with Cliff Coulthard 010802*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Iga Warta: 2002), vol.

⁷³ Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview with Cliff Coulthard 010802*, vol.

⁷⁴ United Aborigines Mission. August 1 1930 p8,9

⁷⁵ Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 17701*, vol.

⁷⁶ Keith Nicholls, *Transcript of Interview with Keith Nicholls 151001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Beltana: 2001), vol. Keith recalls his father having the mail run during the period in which the community moved from Minerawuta to Nepabunna, 1930. His father 'had one leg, and one eye' from various accidents

⁷⁷ Guy Tunstill, ed., *Adnyamathanha Years R-10: A Teaching Framework for Revival and Second Language Learning in Years Reception To* (Hindmarsh South Australia: DECS Publishing, 2004).

⁷⁸ Rosie Brady Rita Coulthard, Lorna Demell, *Conversation with Rita, Rosie and Lorna 191001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Ram Paddock Gate: 2001), vol. [Rosie] Harold he got (sickness) and they say we got to pray for him, but he said 'God is with me. God will keep me strong', and he was alright. I got a brother and sister buried at that cemetery.

⁷⁹ Cliff Coulthard, *Conversation with Adnyamathanha Easter 2005*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Flinders Ranges: 2005), vol. Daisy Shannon told me: Granny used to use mustard plasters: Mum told me these were flour, a bit of mustard, and water mixed and put on chest with brown paper. Some used to take it off too soon and lost them and Granny said to keep it on for longer. This was used for whooping cough.

⁸⁰ Mavis Gaff-Smith, *Midwives of the Black Soil Plains* (Wagga Wagga: Triple D Books, 2003). P47

⁸¹ Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*.

⁸² Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*. P21,22

⁸³ Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol.

⁸⁴ Rita Coulthard, *Conversation with Rita, Rosie and Lorna 191001*, vol.

⁸⁵ Elsie Jackson, *Transcript of Interview 10801 (Second Edit Parts Removed 0303)*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2001), vol.

⁸⁶ Nicholls, *Transcript of Interview with Keith Nicholls 151001*, vol.

⁸⁷ United Aborigines Mission. Sept 1 1930 p9

⁸⁸ AP Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture,' *Oceania* VI.2 (1935). P125

⁸⁹ Rev. A.H.Ackley, *All the Way to Calvary*, (HOMER A. RODEHEAVER, 1915), vol.

⁹⁰ The Director of Education, 'Correspondence to Ve Turner, Secretary of the United Aborigines Mission', UAM Archives, Melbourne.

⁹¹ Various correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council', State Records of South Australia GRG 52/1/1936 Boxes 42-43-44, Adelaide. P118

⁹² correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P119 Letter from James Page to Messers Coles and Whyte, 3rd September 1930

⁹³ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P120 Letter from Ron L. Whyte to James Page, between 3-10 Sept 1930

⁹⁴ Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol.

⁹⁵ Cliff Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview 191001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Iga Warta: 2001), vol. Terry and Cliff Coulthard maintain a prior arrangement with Roy Thomas existed for Adnyamathanha use of the land. 'When grandfather, old Ted, was negotiating with [pastoralists about] bringing in the sheep, taking the wool and food back, they gave him the bit of land here to run his stock so he could do that. And there was a handshake. A lot of deals were made to the Aboriginal people in them days with handshake'. Leo Coulthard, Sam's son, also suggests that Sam and Walter Coulthard had an agreement with Roy Thomas for land prior the Nepabunna deal with UAM. Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol.

⁹⁶ Peggy Brock, *Yura and Udnyu: A History of the Adnyamathanha of the Northern Flinders Ranges* (Netley SA: Wakefield Press, 1985). P49 cites John McKenzie, pers comm

⁹⁷ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P116 Letter from AE Gerard SA Council UAM to The Honourable the Commissioner of Crown Lands on 10th September 1930

⁹⁸ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P116 Letter from AE Gerard SA Council UAM to The Honourable the Commissioner of Crown Lands on 10th September 1930

⁹⁹ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P116 Letter from AE Gerard SA Council UAM to The Honourable the Commissioner of Crown Lands on 10th September 1930

¹⁰⁰ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P106 Addendum between Chief Protector of Aborigines, Hon. Commissioner of Public Works, and Commissioner of Crown Lands 10/9/30

¹⁰¹ Cameron Raynes, *'a Little Flour and a Few Blankets': An Administrative History of Aboriginal Affairs in South Australia, 1834-2000* (Gepps Cross: State Records of South Australia, 2002). P46. Garnett retired as Chief Protector of Aborigines in 1930 and McLean became Acting Chief until being appointed Chief for following year. McLean had previously been the Accountant and Clerk of the Aborigines Department. Garnett's retirement was gazetted in October 1930.

¹⁰² correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P105 Minute from Chief Protector of Aboriginal to Public Works 12/9/30

¹⁰³ Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol. Edited story.; Catherine Murphy, ed., *Dirt Roads and Desert Roses: Writing from Women in South Australia's Outback* (Port Augusta: RICE, 2002).

¹⁰⁴ South Australian Department of Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students.*, Aboriginal Studies 8-12 (Education Department of South Australia, 1992). P166 Citing Claude Demell.

¹⁰⁵ Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol.

¹⁰⁶ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P103 Letter to The Honourable the Commissioner of Public Works from AE Gerard, UAM SA Council on 23rd Sept 1930

¹⁰⁷ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P101 Letter to The Honourable the Commissioner of Public Works from AE Gerard, President SA Council, UAM 30th Sept 1930

¹⁰⁸ correspondents, 'Reserve for Aborigines at Burr Well, Including Correspondence of the Australian Aborigines Mission South Australian Council'. P99 Letter from Secretary of the Public Works Dept to AE Gerard 4th October 1930

¹⁰⁹ United Aborigines Mission, *The United Aborigines Messenger* 1929-. Nov 1 1930 p6

¹¹⁰ Various correspondents, 'Correspondence File Relating to Nepabunna Mission', UAM Archives, Melbourne. Document of the agreement between AE Gerard and Roy Thomas for the gift of land for Nepabunna mission

¹¹¹ AE Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated.* (Adelaide: Hunkin, Ellis and King, 1944). P24

¹¹² Cecil F. Alexander, *There Is a Green Hill Far Away*, (1847), vol.

¹¹³ United Aborigines Mission. November 1 1930 p7

¹¹⁴ Bill Snell, *Transcript of Interview with Bill Snell 130303*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Adelaide: 2003), vol.

¹¹⁵ Gertie Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 17701*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.

¹¹⁶ Gertie Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Nepabunna: 2001), vol.

¹¹⁷ Enis Marsh, *Transcript of an Interview 110302*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Gladstone SA: 2002), vol.

¹¹⁸ Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview 191001*, vol.

¹¹⁹ Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview 191001*, vol.

¹²⁰ Gerard, *Coming of Age of the United Aborigines Mission (Sa) Incorporated.* P21

¹²¹ United Aborigines Mission. Nov 1 1930 p8

¹²² United Aborigines Mission. Nov 1 1930 p6,7

¹²³ United Aborigines Mission. Nov 1 1930 p6,7

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- ¹²⁴ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford University Press, 1988).
- ¹²⁵ Coulthard, *Transcript of Interview 191001*, vol.
- ¹²⁶ Coulthard, *Transcript Leo and Shirley Coulthard 290302*, vol.
- ¹²⁷ Irene Mohammed, *Conversation with Irene Mohammed 230503*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Port Augusta: 2003), vol.
- ¹²⁸ Dolly Coulthard, *Conversation with Dolly Coulthard 16701*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Copley: 2001), vol.
- ¹²⁹ Lena Coulthard, *Conversation with Lena Coulthard 161001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Iga Warta: 2001), vol.
- ¹³⁰ Sylvia Brady, *Conversation with Sylvia Brady*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker SA: 2003), vol.
- ¹³¹ Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 17701*, vol.
- ¹³² United Aborigines Mission. October 30 1926 refers to Reg as their 'baby missionary' at Mt Margaret; Nov 30 1927 lists Williams as at Oodnadatta with Will Wade; April 1 1932 reports Reg Williams arrival at Nepabunna; May 1 1934 reports the Williams family has left Nepabunna, and Jim has returned.
- ¹³³ Education, *The Adnyamathanha People: Aboriginal People of the Flinders Ranges. An Aboriginal Studies Course for Secondary Students*. P173-174
- ¹³⁴ RM Williams, *Conversation with Rm Williams by Phone on 13/08/01*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Phone: 2001), vol.
- ¹³⁵ United Aborigines Mission. October 1 1930 p8
- ¹³⁶ Charlie Jackson, *Information for the Jackson Family Genealogy*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker: 2003), vol.
- ¹³⁷ Gertie Johnson, *Video of Gertie Johnson Taken by Margaret Dodd and Michael Diorio 1999*, 1999.
- ¹³⁸ United Aborigines Mission. October 1 1930 p8
- ¹³⁹ AP Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture,' *Oceania* VI.2 (1935). P125 Elkin describes the adaption of mourning practices the Adnyamathanha made, once they started making houses of more permanent materials at Ram Paddock. He said that in order to respect the protocols of avoiding the place someone died, but avoid destroying and abandoning camps, the dying person is taken a distance from the hut, so they die away from it.
- ¹⁴⁰ United Aborigines Mission. Dec 1 1930 p9
- ¹⁴¹ Mavis Gaff-Smith, *Midwives of the Black Soil Plains* (Wagga Wagga: Triple D Books, 2003). P48
- ¹⁴² Johnson, *Transcript of Interview 181001*, vol.
- ¹⁴³ Ross, *Minerawuta: Ram Paddock Gate. An Historic Adnyamathanha Settlement in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia*.
- ¹⁴⁴ Harrie Green, 'Mr Green Tells How Jesus Never Fails' Based on Recordings of Harrie Green's *Reminiscences*, (*Unpublished Manuscript*), ed. Chris Jones (United Aborigines Ministries, 2003). P24
- ¹⁴⁵ United Aborigines Mission. Oct 1 1930 p8

¹⁴⁶ United Aborigines Mission. December 1 1930 p9

¹⁴⁷ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.'

¹⁴⁸ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P125

¹⁴⁹ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P126

¹⁵⁰ South Australia Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 1988). P3; Victor Clarke, *Conversation with Victor Clarke 2001*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Hawker SA: 2001), vol. ; Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P125-126; R Ellis, 'The Funeral Practices and Beliefs of the Adjanmathanha,' *Journal of the Anthropological Society of South Australia* 13.6 (1975).

¹⁵¹ Jackson, *Information for the Jackson Family Genealogy*, vol.

¹⁵² Dorothy Tunbridge in association with the Nepabunna Aboriginal School and the Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges, *Flinders Ranges Dreaming*. P3

¹⁵³ Roger Shannon, *Conversation with Roger Shannon 270107*, ed. Tracy Spencer (Phone: Alice Springs: 2007), vol.

¹⁵⁴ Elkin, 'Civilised Aborigines and Native Culture.' P128, 146