

STATE LIBRARY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

**THROUGH OUR EYES**

Transcript of an interview with

**Anne Sibosado**

ACCESS

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**ANN SIBOSADO**

**5<sup>th</sup> August 2015**

**Acknowledgment to Country**

The Town of Port Hedland Libraries wishes to acknowledge the Kariyarra people and Elders, past and present on whose land this recording is occurring today.

**Introduction (Helen Ellacott)**

The following is a sound recorded interview with **Ann Sibosado** on the 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015. It will be conducted by **Jeliaha Councillor** who is 12 years old. This interview is to be included in the Town of Port Hedland Libraries' project "Through Our Eyes".

**JC:** Where was you born?

**AS:** Well, I'll give some background – my Dad ... my Dad came from ... he was a Lockyer and he came from Mallina Station, that's near Whim Creek, and my mother came down to Wallal ... to Wallal ... as part of ... in those days there was a house, for kids in the house on the station, and from Wallal she went down to Yandeyarra. That's even why I have friends in Yandeyarra – my mum lived there and that's where my Dad met my Mum. So, then they went to Derby and my Dad was training racehorses there ... cos my Dad came off the station saying he was a butcher and all that, doing station work. Then when the war came all the mums that were pregnant and the ladies had to go to Perth ... so my mum was pregnant with me so we went to Perth and I was born in King Edward Hospital. We stayed down there for about three or four years then I came back to Hedland ... to Port, South Hedland ... Port Hedland, South Hedland. My Aboriginal thing is that I am a Kariyarra person ... you know, the Kariyarra people that are the people of this place. I can also go on the Kurrama side too ... as well.

**JC:** Was it nice back in the old days

**AS:** Yeah, very small. Port Hedland was very, very small. It was only as far as ... I don't know if you noticed the town in Port Hedland where the Acton Street school was ... that used to be the part of South ... Port Hedland then. In the old times when I was small that looked like out in the bush ... til the hospital got built, then it sort of became like a town sort of thing. Yeah, the Lock Hospital was the end of town. Port Hedland was very small but we had fishing there because we had the ocean. We all lived and

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went fishing and around where BHP now is, there used to be mangroves and mud and we used to get cockle shells from there, and when the rain used to come my uncles used to go up the creek and net the prawns after the rain so we all sort of lived off the sea then.

**JC:** What was your favourite thing to do when you was a kid?

**AS:** I used to like dressing up and make believe. I was a bit of a daydreamer. Yeah, I used to make cubbies out the back of my yard there and dress up and have the games.

**JC:** Are you the oldest?

**AS:** Yeah I'm the eldest of seven children in my family. Was seven. There's only three of us left now.

**JC:** Did your Dad fight in the war?

**AS:** My Dad did go. I had other uncles. I had five ... he had five brothers. My Dad had five brothers so they all went, enlisted. My Dad, he did go. They say he went over there but because he had asthma they brought him back and he stayed in Queensland. He was probably doing the roads or whatever. The other three or four... the other four went overseas and two died in the war, and my uncle came back. He was in the Lighthorse Battalion – he came back without any injuries, and the other brother, he stayed in the air force for many years, 'til I remember in the 80's then he came back. He was over in Borneo, but they never talked about it y'know. They never talked about it. They all sorta ... my Dad always would go out the bush cos he was catching the dingoes, they call them ""doggers"". They'd go all the way around, right from White Spring and Marble Bar. For the stations, they used to go and trap the poor dogs ... they weren't poor really because they used to kill the sheep and stuff. My Dad stayed out there mainly all the time.

**JC:** Did you live on the station with him?

**AS:** We used to go to the station on holidays to Mallina Station cos my old grandfather used to work on the Mallina Station there and as he got older the station owner let him stay there. He had a little sort of shed out the back, or hut I should say. We stayed there so when the station owner and his wife went on holidays my Dad used

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to go out and we'd go out and help Grandad to do all the windmills and different things he had to do. And mum used to help in the station. They had a shop there where people could buy their sugar and tea and dresses and talc and shampoo and talcum powder and soap, just all of some description like that you know.

**JC:** Did you's used to live in like a little house or a shack?

**AS:** We lived in Port Hedland. I can't remember when we came back from Perth cos we came all the way through ... we had to go along slowly, we came up through ... uh, what's that place, Kalgoorlie, but out Leonora. I remember Dad staying there - we stayed there nearly six months and he used to train horses and I think he was looking after that outstation.

Then we went to Meekatharra slowly. We went to Marble Bar. The train was running then. I think I must have only been about six or seven then, you know. The train was running. Everywhere we went we stayed for a while cos he had to work I suppose to get the money and whatever. And we stayed in Marble for a long time and then we come across to Port Hedland on the train then.

We stayed at my Aunty's for a while and then ... we had an old house. In those days they were old houses and I think the Chinese people owned them cos ... windows, they used to have bars and shutters, you know. And our walls – we had hessian bags for our walls, like inside the house. Old hessian bags for your walls and we never had any sink or anything. We just washed up with one of those dishes. We had a table where we washed up and we had an old wood stove. We never had no ... in my old house we never had a shower 'til I think, I became a teenager, so we used to just sit in the old troughs – you know, them old washing troughs? Mum used to bring it in from the washing and we just had a bath near the stove cos we never had any fresh water at that stage. We used to have showers with the salt water cos we used to have the water in the tanks to come from ... out there the train used to bring it in and the truck. We had a big water tank, a square one and water was very precious. We couldn't waste it or anything. We'd even water the garden with that and I think it used to cost 20 cents, florin or something to fill it up.

A truck used to come along and fill the thing up and that'd last us for well over a year or something. A lot of old houses in Port Hedland had ... well, my aunty, they had a

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nice house and had a railing and lattice work around but a lot of houses had big water tanks – the big round ones.

When we used to go to school we had the big water tanks where we used to drink the water out of. We couldn't waste water either. Water was very precious in those days for us. It was good when we had a shower. Water used to come from Shaw River, yeah, on the train. Mr Jim Thornton was the guy that used to be out there and he also had an old jalopy, one of them old trucks you know, one of them old cars that used to go around selling the green vegies and everything. And I used to say "Mum, Mr Thornton's here, the English person ...", and she'd say "no, we're not going up there!" I think he might have been a bit of a character ... "nope, you're not going up there to get the tomatoes" ... or whatever. She'd never go up there cos we used to have an old shop in town, Mr Wyndham – he used to deliver when the boat came in.

**JC:** How many schools have you went to from travelling?

**AS:** I only went to St Cecilia's School in Port Hedland. I finished school when I was ... well, girls could finish school at 14 see, but if you had money you could go to Geraldton see cos they had a plane there. Later on when I finished work I went back to college. I did a lot of my studies at college. Not like nowadays you can go to high school. We never had a high school

**JC:** How did it feel when you was travelling with your family?

**AS:** It was good! We had an old truck. It was an old army issue ... it used to be green too ... so we'd go along cos Mum had my brothers, they were babies then, so we'd go along on an old truck, it took a long time to go, cos I think we could only go about 35 k's an hour or something. Go along then when three o'clock come we always stopped in the river for Dad to make a cup of tea and everything. Then we'd go off, but as soon as soon as four o'clock or half past three, he'd stop the car ... stop the truck, then we'd go out and around there and we'd build in the spinifex battening down. And then we had a big gold ground sheet like a big swag there, so he'd make a fire and get a camp oven ... we never travelled, then the next day we might travel about 10 o'clock. Just took our time. One week needed to get to White Spring. We never sort of roughed it y'know. Nowadays I think, even now when I say to the kids, "you better take water or something", they say "oh Mum, come on, it's only about two hours to go to Roebourne!"

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I say, "well, you never know, you might need water!"

Things like that! We used to have a lot of water and took our time and one thing my Dad didn't like – when he used to have the big ground sheet ... cos we used to sit there and have our tea too on that ground sheet, no one was allowed to walk on that ground sheet! Oh he'd get so angry! Everyone had to go around it, on the edge of it cos they keep putting sand on it. Well, I suppose it was a table really on the ground. Oh, he used to hate that.

**JC:** Do you teach your kids about your culture?

**AS:** Mmm, I teach a lot about our Aboriginal culture

**JC:** Do you tell your children about how the days was when you was born?

**AS:** Yeah, we had a lot of our old families there where we stayed but we never lived with old people. We lived up in the shed but we always mixed with the old people. But we never learnt the language because we went to school then. My Dad got the citizenship rights so that we could go to school, so we weren't allowed to learn the Aboriginal language and all that stuff. That was a very painful side of my heart cos we were always with our old aunties and nannas. That's progress to go to school I suppose!

**JC:** Have you ever had any pets before?

**AS:** Yeah I did, a tortoise, a little freshwater one and my old nanna, she wanted to have that tortoise and I said "no, no, no, you're not having it!" But I went somewhere that day, I went to school and straight away I come home about half past three, looking for my tortoise in the water tank ... nothing! Was gone and I said "what happened?" I was so angry I wanted to go down and tell her off but mum said "no, you have to have respect." I never liked her (laughs)! They were very special those tortoises because you don't get them all the time. Yeah, I can remember that – that's just what comes to my mind. I never had ... when I got a bit older ... people used to give my Dad domestic animals to take out the bush but he never killed them and I had about two or three different dogs that he gave me.

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**JC:** How was your dress code back when you was little?

**AS:** We just wore ordinary clothes, dresses. They weren't bright in nowadays clothes, they were just really plain. And we used to have these big navy blue ... we used to get our clothes from Dalgety's, see that was the station where the stations used to order their stores but they used to have some nice dresses, my Mum used to go buy things but we used to have these really big Bombay bloomers! We used to pull them up over here (laughing)! Navy blue ones! We used, we weren't developed then, but we used to pull them up over here. True! We never had no nice under ... when we started work we got nice clothes. I suppose they had them in the shop but we were that poor y'know. We used to go swimming in them down the beach (laughing)!

**JC:** When you go out bush do you look for feed and that?

**AS:** Yeah, as kids. When I was out the bush when we was at White Spring, after the rain we used to get what they called "ngarkus", they are little bush onions. A few other girls and I, we used to go and sit and when it was all dry, dried up, we'd go to a certain patch and just dig 'em, dig 'em all up, and they'd just come up, little tiny miniature ones and then we used to just rub them like that or if we make a little fire we'd just sort of (rubbing hands together) soften them and they used to be nice. They still got them growing around here but we called them "ngarkus". Yeah, we used to have kangaroo. My Dad used to make damper. We never had no bread then, in a camp oven. I never tasted a kangaroo stew like my Dad made them. We used to have that bacon, you know that bacon, a big piece of bacon, then it was cut. We used to have to buy about three months' supplies of jam and stuff, butter, sugar. No, we never had no biscuits unless ... no, we had healthy food, yeah ... or go down the river there and look for some wild berries and that.

**JC:** How was your Christmas when you was in your teenage years?

**AS:** We used to have good Christmases. We went to our grandmother and grandfather and everyone used to get a chook, raise it up, then they'd kill it by Easter ... at Christmas time and I think they had tinned Christmas pudding. People, a lot of them lived in town, people came from the mission up in Beagle Bay so they knew how to cook you know – make custard and all that stuff. I don't think we had a very big spread but it was nice enough. Yeah, my Dad was a butcher so he used to do the pork. He'd get a small pork and he'd shave it all about and do whatever ... didn't go

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much for the killing of animals. He wouldn't do it if I was around. He'd chase me home. My Dad would chase me home, yet my sister used to sit up there watching him slaughter all the sheep but me, I'd get half way ... "get home!" And I think he made me worse (laughs)! Made me that I hate seeing things getting killed now! Don't like it at all, don't like watching it. No, we had a nice Christmas.

**JC:** So you used to have sheep and kangaroo and that for your Christmas?

**AS:** Yeah, sheep and mutton - a leg of lamb I suppose. Personally, I never got anything. Once I hung up some socks for presents (laughing) ... didn't get anything from Father Christmas ... like, we used to go to the town. At the hall they used to have, when I was about 13 or 14, they used to have a Christmas party there and everyone got a present under the tree. I used to always get purses. I don't know why ... never had no money (laughs)! We used to sell bottles to get our money.

**JC:** Where did you used to go swimming?

**AS:** We used to swim at the wharf there, not this wharf now. They had those mesh things, they had all around the piles, and a diving board. Yeah, we used to go swimming down there Saturdays and Sundays, stay there right up til five o'clock, we'd get in trouble when we walked back. It was beautiful!

**JC:** What sport that you used to play?

**AS:** Well when we went to St Cecilia's School we had gymnastics with all the nuns, and we used to have like a sports day – running. I wasn't a very good runner. And the boys - some of the boys at St Cecilia's they could have been Olympic high-jumpers the way they ... they could have even been divers the way they used to dive and that. The talents that those guys had! Yeah, the nuns always ... we always had sports. Running and flag race and things. Our uniform was a white dress and a red sash. Oh ... and white sandshoes and socks.

**JC:** Have you ever had a dream from when you was little, growing up?

**AS:** Dreams? No, no ... yeah, I would have loved to have gone out of this town when I was young but the roads were only too, too ... you know those old bush roads in those days when I was young. I would've loved to go to another town but I never had

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any money anyway. I always used to think of that. I would love to drive and get out of town. It's not like now, that you can just drive down and then you are going but in the old times it was very hard.

**JC:** Do you have any advice for me when I grow up?

**AS:** Hmm ... go and have ... go to school, and nowadays you can be or do whatever you want to do. Nothing's impossible. Yeah, it is. Cos the way I talk and learned things was I had to wait til I got older to go and do my studies but I always ... do have a job, if you can have a job it's good. Just do what you want to do. Be positive in yourself. Yes, be proud of yourself because you have a lot of inner things inside you because of your Aboriginality.

**Conclusion (Helen Ellacott):**

That concludes this interview with Ann Sibosado, conducted by Jeliaha Councillor. We wish to sincerely thank both participants. The Town of Port Hedland Libraries own copyright to this recording. Thank you for listening.

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