

got a portion of meat according to the size of their family. Apart from being a baker and a barber, my grandfather Archie was a butcher for many, many years. He used to often bring home a sheep's head and put that in a big pot of water with an onion and a parsnip to flavour it and then set it in an old pie dish to cool. It would end up like potted meat and us kids really liked it. Lambs tails were also a favourite with us, cooked in the ashes.

The Aboriginal men would go down to the meat shop early and cut the meat up ready to be served out. Then you would have to line up for your family's portion, first come, first served. That went totally against our cultural practice of sharing everything equally and caused divisions amongst our people that weren't there before. It caused fights between the people if somebody missed out.

Apart from using pieces of glass of different shapes for different uses, the men would nail a bit of tin onto a piece of wood to act as a knife. The most important tools for the men were a tomahawk, a rasp and a spade. I remember when the men used to do the carpentry work they'd keep the handle of the hammer only to fashion carving tools. The kids would copy the men to make their own cricket stumps, but no-one was allowed to touch Grandfather's special wood for making *waddies*.

They'd use fine white lake sand to smooth wooden objects like *waddies* right down finely with their hands. Sometimes of an evening you could hear the sound of the men chip, chipping away with their tin knives to make *waddies*. The men could turn their hand to anything. They were all thinkers, not just Mainu David Unaipon. When Mainu David invented the comb shears — before that the shearers were just using blades to cut the wool — he did it to make life easier for his people, and that was a big lift for them.

Child Endowment and the colour of your skin

Mum and Dad were able to get Child Endowment payments for us children, but this allowance and other benefits worked on a very strange system to my way of thinking. My father was classed as a 'full-blood' and my mother was classed as a 'quarter-caste'. 'Full-bloods' weren't entitled to Child Endowment, but 'half-castes' and those of

lighter skin colour were. This meant that sisters and brothers often received different benefits. For example Aunty Opie and her sister Aunty Joyce (née Wanganeen), when they started to have children one was entitled to Child Endowment and the other wasn't. Same mother and father; same features, but different entitlements because one was lighter skinned than the other.

The anthropologists used to classify people as 'full-blood', 'half-caste', 'quadroon' and 'octoroon', but whitefellas don't classify themselves as 'full-blood English' or 'half-caste Scottish' or whatever. I could never figure out what difference it made.

I'm not what you'd call dark, I'm a cacky colour really, where my sisters Connie and Doris have nice brown complexions. I've always been ashamed of my colour. I would have loved to have been real dark like my Dad. Mum was more fair than me. Her brothers and sisters were different shades of black and so were her parents and aunties and uncles. When I was a child a lot of the parents had white grandfathers, so where the logic of the government policy is, I really don't know. It was very hurtful to be classed as different from your brothers and sisters because of the colour of your skin. It wasn't until I was married in the 1950s, when my father-in-law Bob Wanganeen from Point Pearce and Uncle Percy Rigney from Raukkan went to Canberra to lobby for 'full-blood' women to get Maternity Allowance, and Child Endowment that this issue came to a head.

Somehow it was seen in the wider community that the more white-skinned you were, the more like white people you were, but we still weren't treated the same as white people. I remember a white woman applied to Raukkan for a 'half-caste' domestic help. That meant my cousin, who was the next on the list to get a job, wasn't able to go because she was of darker appearance. She was really upset. Then some of my cousins who are fairer skinned would get called 'black bitches' straight out by people driving past them.

Clearing the land

But going back to them early days, one of the main jobs the Aboriginal men were given was clearing the land — stump picking. All the

and keep me going, but Dad would say, 'You have to come to grips. Mummy died for God's will'. He asked me, 'If you went into a garden, what flower would you pick?' I said, 'The best'. Dad said, 'That's what God took'.

Nanna couldn't keep him long. He just had to keep trying, so we scraped up all our pennies and halfpennies for him and he went back again looking for Doris. He went to plead with Mr Penhall again. Mr Penhall told Dad that Doris had been fostered out, although he wouldn't tell him where, and got him to sign a document. Dad thought he was signing a paper to get her Child Endowment paid to the Protector for Doris's upkeep until she came back to us. That's what Dad said they told him he was signing it for. In fact the letter signed Doris over as a Ward of the State until the age of eighteen.

When I saw that letter about ten years ago, I broke down because I recognised his signature on it. It didn't have all the detail on it, but if it did he wouldn't have read it, because with blackfellas they used to say, 'Sign your name here' and you would have to sign it. You could be signing your own death warrant and you wouldn't have known. Dad knew there was nothing else he could do. That was the procedure.

Dad came back to Raukkan again, and this time Auntie Martha joined forces with Nanna, and they would not let him leave again because they were worried about his health. They didn't need to bother. He was so exhausted he could hardly walk. Dad suffered off and on from asthma and this, combined with his worry and living rough in Adelaide, had taken its toll on him. I couldn't bear to see my Dad suffer like this.

Dad was so devastated that he sort of pushed everybody away and wouldn't have much to do with us kids for a little while. He started to become angry and to really hate white people for breaking up his family. All his life I remember him saying, 'Such is life with a lovely wife and a bastard of a one without her'. He began to get into trouble on Raukkan, but everybody seemed to understand. The police would be called up from Meningie and they'd say, 'Come on, Ozzie, cut it out now. There's nothing you can do. The baby girl is in the right place'.

Mr Bartlett was very concerned about my Dad, and Dad later told me that Mr and Mrs Bartlett wanted to adopt Doris. That was before Mr Bartlett became the Secretary of the Aborigines' Protection Board, and they were very fond of my mother, but apparently because of his work with Aboriginal people, adoption was not possible, and my Dad could not have agreed to that anyway.

Nanna

Nanna was also suffering. Not only had she lost her daughter-in-law, but she didn't know where her new grand-daughter was, her son was distraught, and she and Grandfather had three grand-children to look after. In their time, Nanna Sally and Mainu Archie had eight children, forty-nine grandchildren and 138 great-grandchildren. By this time my brother Oscar was out at Yalkarie stump-picking, even though he was only thirteen and the stumps were really big. They used to put a chain around the stump and get a horse to pull it out. How a young teenage boy managed with that work I don't know. Nanna was so mournful; she used to be crying all day and all night and calling to God for help. She kept her little bible with her all the time.

My cousins Flo and Sarah and I would get together with Nanna and get her in a really good mood, and then it could just be a little minor thing that would trigger Nanna off again and we'd have to go through all that thing of calming her down again. It really depressed me. I can still hear her crying even today, after all those years.

Nanna became obsessed with her religion. She'd say, 'Doreen what are you doing?' and I'd say, 'Nothing Nan, what for?' 'Oh come and listen to me. I want to read this psalm from the bible.' I only went in there to please her. I didn't want to hear this psalm I'd heard a million times before. So I'd go and sit on Nanna's bed and wait till she'd finished, and then I'd say, 'Thanks Nanna' and kiss her on the forehead and off I'd go. I only did that for peace.

The minute she put it down she couldn't find it, so Nanna would walk around with her bible and she'd keep it by her bed at night. Grandfather would make us sit down and listen to her read it

sometimes, not because he was over-religious, but because he was a very, very good living man. Everybody loved Nanna and *Mainu* on Raukkan.

Grandfather Archie

You could walk right round this world and you'd never find another fella like my grandfather. Not one of us grandchildren would ever disobey him. He was my idol. I loved him. He had lovely ways, kind voice, never seen him get into an argument, and there used to be a lot of arguments and fights on Raukkan amongst families then because of the way people had to live. He was everything a little girl who'd just lost her mother could ever want. He used to sit me down and say to me, 'Well, Doreen, things are not as bad as they really seem to you. What you've got is what your mother and father gave you, and no-one can take that away from you. Even though God's taken your Mum and they've now taken your little sister, they can't take away who you are'. He made me feel that I was something. He was the only one in the house who could comfort us children. He never stopped to worry about himself; he'd be there if any of his children or grandchildren needed him, and it was my grandfather Archie that kept me strong and kept me going.

Thank goodness for *Mainu* because everyone was really upset. Connie was only three and she was crying every night for Mummy. I used to make her little things, little toys out of sticks and cotton to give her to quiet her down. In the night Connie would jump into bed with me and I would cuddle her until she went to sleep.

Ron (we called him Squashy) was only about five years old and he had a different reaction. He withdrew from everybody. Oscar and I would try and get him to have a cry for Mum but he never could. Grandfather would try to help by getting Squashy to sit and whittle with him. He gave him a pocket-knife and sticks to whittle, but Ron would just keep with the movement, not really looking at what he was doing, like he was in a trance. After a while he began to get fidgetty in school. He got made to stand up in the corner because he wouldn't sit still in his seat. You'd think the schoolteacher would have understood

what Squashy was going through, because the teacher lived on Point McLeay and knew what had happened. Eventually Squashy started to get a nervous twitch. It got worse and worse until he was about eight years old, when Auntie Martha took him to see the doctor, where they diagnosed him as having St. Vitus Dance and he was sent down to Escort House, a hospital in Semaphore.

Because of the little ones I did my crying in private after Connie went to sleep, but it seems like I cried myself to sleep every night for a long time.

Flo moved into the house to help, and Auntie Martha and Auntie Phyllis were there for us, and so were all my uncles and my other cousins. There were relatives living off the mission who wanted to come back to help look after us too, but they were exempted, so the government wouldn't let them back into Raukkan.

Exemptions

Being exempted² meant that the colour of your skin didn't change; the way the rest of the community treated you didn't change; you were still discriminated against, but your entitlements changed. It meant that you could live and work off the missions, but you couldn't go back to the missions to visit your family or friends. You could get Child Endowment, but you couldn't get rations, so you had to work, although Aboriginal people didn't get paid the same as white people for the same work.

To prove you were exempted you had to wear a tag on a chain around your neck, which we called 'dog tags'. That seemed an appropriate title because we were still treated like dogs. This was so the police could know who was exempted and who wasn't. That was useful for the police because under the same legislation it was a punishable offence to 'consort' with an Aboriginal person.³ That meant that no white people or exempted people were allowed to have any sort of relationship with an Aboriginal person, and most Aboriginal families suffered greatly because of that.

A limited exemption was for three years. During that time you could back out of it or it could be revoked by the Board for some

a star footballer who also didn't get the recognition in the white community he deserved. There was one thing for the whites and one thing for the blacks. Point Pearce was the only Aboriginal team in the Association, but they won more grand finals than most of the white teams. This tradition continues today in the national football league, where many of the top footballers are Aboriginal men, but at least they're recognised better for it now.

More foster children

After I had had a few of my own children I started to help others out when there was sickness and death in the family. One of the main reasons I did it was because I still had that bitterness in me about Doris being taken away when Mummy died. I'm sure there was relatives there that would have helped Nanna and Dad out with her. So I felt an obligation towards those kids; I didn't want to see them go through what I went through, being taken away and finishing up in a Home.

Starting with Eddie, Dick and Wayne at Raukkan, I eventually also looked after Daughter and many others over the years. For example, when Tiny (Edward) Wanganeen's wife died leaving ten children and a new-born baby, I took Wendy and I had Wendy for four years. Terry's cousin Keith Weetra and his wife had fourteen children when she got cancer, so I took Kenny and Trevor. And then another time, when Terry's sister Kathleen Taylor died, I took Irene, Yvonne, Dianne and Alex. I had five of Sarah Jackson's children — Charmaine, Stuart, Nelson, Warren and Meredith. Then there was Heather, Robert (Pubelie) and Ronald Rankine, Harry Newchurch, Clifford and Trevor Wanganeen and Cheryl Travis. I was strict with my foster kids because I didn't want them to go out and get into trouble.

I didn't get any financial support for any of my foster children except Cheryl, and when I did apply for Endowment for Ron and Kathleen's children, I was accused of only taking them for the money. That really made me angry. I was so hurt to be accused by my own people of doing it for the money, especially since I was washing and scrubbing and working my hands to the bone for those kids.

I wasn't much for reading then. I got a lot of books off the shelf, but I never read them. But it was a way of sitting down and relaxing and not worrying about chores. What I didn't realise at first was that after about a week they would question you on them. I can remember Captain Hepper (we used to call her Captain Pepper, because she had a bit of a bite to her) saying to me, 'Doreen, what did you think of *Gulliver's Travels*?' I'd had it for about four days but I hadn't read it, so I described the picture on the cover. I really wasn't interested.

Every girl had work to do after school. I never used to finish until about eight o'clock at night sometimes. Fold the clothes, do the laundry, work in the kitchen, in the scullery, make the beds. Every girl over a certain age made her own bed and the bigger ones helped the little ones. Sweeping, mopping and dusting was all done by the girls. None of the staff did it. All they did was give us orders, tell us when they thought we hadn't done something properly, and make us go over it again. I couldn't see how they had us young girls of eleven and twelve doing the work of women. Especially since I learnt later that they were charging the Aborigines' Protection Board a weekly fee for each Aboriginal girl they kept, as well as getting our Child Endowment.⁶

Each change of season we would be lined up to choose what clothes we wanted. One of the things I used to hate was that the white girls would be given their choice first. The white girls would pick out a dress and they'd look at it, turn it over, hang it up against themselves and make their decision. After all the white girls had chosen theirs, it'd be the black kids' turn, so with what was left we'd be lucky to find something to fit. One girl used to be always wanting a flared skirt so that when she'd spin you could see her knickers. She was quite good on her feet and a good dancer, and she looked cute.

Religion was a huge part of daily life. Every breakfast there'd be a prayer said, and then we'd all say grace. Lunchtime, a prayer and grace; evening meal the same. Then after school we had what they'd call Christian Religion. Then we could have a play in the yard before doing our chores. Before bed we'd have a prayer meeting on the landing outside the dormitories, then we'd have to kneel at our beds and pray

it was time for our swim, so we all ran down to the lake and jumped straight into the water.

When I was sixteen, Jack Sumner became my first boyfriend. I adored him and he adored me. Then Dad told me that we were related (our mothers were first cousins) and forbade me to see Jack. I was heartbroken, but my interest in kinship and genealogies blossomed after that. I was intrigued with who could see who, and hungry to find out as much about family trees as I could. I didn't write anything down; I just kept it all in my head.

My first job after I returned to live with my Nanna and Mainu at Raukkan was working for Mr and Mrs Ross Swalling. He was the superintendent then and I worked for them as a domestic. I wasn't earning much, but at least it was a job. I didn't like them; I was their little black lackey. Most of my pay would go to buy whatever was needed in the store because my father was working off the mission and my grandparents were only living on rations. They couldn't get a pension because they were Aboriginal, and although they got Child Endowment for my younger brother and sister, that was controlled by the superintendent on the mission. I used to supplement my wages by making feather flowers, baskets and mats and selling them.

It was while I was working for the Swallings that the Sturt Re-enactment took place in early 1951. Mr Swalling was asked if the Raukkan people would like to be involved. It was to finish with the opening of the Sturt monument, which stands at Raukkan today on top of the hill. The journey was to be enacted the way it was described day by day in Sturt's diaries as he travelled down the river in 1830 from the other side of Mildura with a small crew of men. When the party reached Raukkan they were met by a band of Ngarrindjeri men who were dressed in body paint and threw spears at them. The superintendent agreed that the mission people would participate, despite what the blackfellas on Raukkan thought of Sturt. They saw him as an invader just like Captain Cook, and they were very unhappy about what had happened to Aboriginal people since that invasion took place.