PLATE 1

Top: Eliza Kennedy and her son George (born 1932), at Mulga on Orana Station

Lower: Eliza's husband George Kennedy with his parents Jim and Margaret Kennedy (seated), Eliza's cousin Millie Hall (rear) and niece Ida Singh, and friends Ted and Mick Gallagher, at the Kennedys' returned soldier's block, Yelty, Ivanhoe, c.1923

Photographs courtesy of Eliza Kennedy (A.I.A.S. 1857-4,2778-9).

COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAALYA: REMINISCENCES OF THE LIFE OF ELIZA KENNEDY*

Eliza Kennedy and Tamsin Donaldson

When Eliza Kennedy was born, a year or two after the turn of the century, her people were still 'camping about' in their own country, the dry riverless belar tree country between Cobar and Ivanhoe in central western New South Wales. She grew up speaking Ngiyampaa, 'the lingo' — the kind of Ngiyampaa also known as Wangaaypuwan because *wangaay* is the word it has for 'no'.¹

Most of Ngiyampaa country had already been occupied by white pastoralists for several decades. They had divided the country up into stations, with fences which Eliza's people helped to build. The newcomers had also renamed the features which mattered to them, sometimes anglicising Ngiyampaa names and sometimes supplying new ones.

Because the group of families Eliza grew up with camped most often in the area around Keewong station (which they called *Yakararay*) they were known as 'the Keewong mob', and she and her sisters, like her mother and some of her other relatives, used the surname Keewong. They kept their distance from the stations, camping no closer than a couple of miles away. Rabbit scalps were taken there for payment of the bounty, and Eliza remembers the 'big old white starched aprons and white caps' worn by Ngiyampaa women who worked in the station kitchens. But the world of station life impinged very little on her early years, for among her closest kin only a couple of uncles ever did station work, and that late in their lives. Everything that was familiar and significant from the perspective of a small girl had to do with camp life, in particular the daily life she shared with her mother and sisters, and her maternal aunts and uncles and their families. Eliza's mother, Rosie Keewong, had five daughters: Mabel the eldest, Elsie the youngest, and the three who are still alive today, Lizzie, Lily and Eliza² herself, whose story continues mainly in her own words.

The most dramatic part of 'camping about' was shifting camp:

Whenever they felt like doing this, they'd just get their little *kulay* [women's net bag], put it on their backs, and their billycan and their pint [enamel

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¹ In this paper Ngiyampaa words are spelt according to the practical orthography adopted by the community since Donaldson's (1980) *Ngiyambaa the language of the Wangaaypuwan* was published. Wangaaypuwan was commonly spelt Wongaibon in earlier ethnographic records. Paakantji, too, is the spelling used in the community's readers. It has been rendered as Bagundji or Barkindji. Hercus (1982) uses Bāgandji. There is no practical orthography for Wiradjuri. This is one of the more widely known of the 60-odd spellings used by earlier writers, largely because of its adoption by Tindale (1974).

² A photograph of the three sisters together appears in Donaldson 1979:62.

mug], a little bit of tucker. Walk. Nothing to move from one dam to another, carry what belonged to you.

The small girls were keen to do their bit:

'I'll carry this, *ngathu ngina kaawayaka!*' Just a little pint tied with a string, bundled up. Walk along, that was even too much to carry, poor old mum'd have to put it in her *kulay*.

Then they would get to a camp:

might be a nice spot, bit of a clean patch, '*Ngini yuwakirri!* Let's sleep here!' Just chuck a blanket down there, that's how we lived. In the summertime we'd just have a bough shed and camp around anywhere, a bit of a windbreak, and lay alongside of that. We wouldn't go to much bother unless it looked like coming up stormy. Then we'd have to prepare a bit of a humpy of some sort.

One memorable wet night:

Mummy and Lizzie, we all helped one another building this little camp with bits and pieces of bark and bushes, and bits of rag here and there. We was in this little miamia and it was leaking. I remember Mummy covering me and poor Elsie up. She used to look after us with pieces of blanket and clothes to keep us dry, but we'd be sleeping in wet beds and walking about in wet clothes that dried on us.

Once there was a surprise at the end of a journey to *Kirraawara*, to Carowra Tank, a government water reservoir:

We started from near Koonaburra station and walked around a place called *malkangurrunhu* that was only a crabhole [small waterhole], but they camped there for many weeks sometimes because it was a good-holding crabhole. We left two little kittens, couldn't carry them, at some of the camps on the way. It took us three or four days, then we got to Carowra and made our camps, a big bush break around. And do you know them little kittens got there a couple of nights after? "*Minyawaa wurrakara?*" the old people said, "Something's rattling in the *kathurr* [windbreak]. Might be a snake!" It was these dashed kittens that trailed us along.

Cold and hunger, like wetness, were memorable but commonplace features of this way of life:

Some mornings if we was hungry, Auntie Kate, she was a fast walker, you'd have to trot alongside of her, with a firestick maybe. We'd come to these old dry *mukarr* [tussocks of porcupine grass] that grows in the mallee, light one of them and have a bit of a warm, and go on. Catch a kangaroo and have a good old feed, just meat. Walk on with a back leg of kangaroo on your shoulder or in your *kulay*, right as pie.

For children, winter had its special attractions too, such as eating ice off the horsetrough at Carowra Tank, a pleasure Eliza realizes now was not without risks:

Dogs and horses and cattle drank and blew their noses in it I suppose. We

used to eat ice off that horsetrough, wintertime. There we'd sit over this little old fire we'd make, eating ice.

Even though the children rarely came in contact with station people, there were plentiful signs of their presence; their livestock were everywhere, and the tracks of their vehicles traced a network of roads across the country. The vehicles were better known than those who rode in them, though the 'beautiful diamond-cut track' of the first motorcar was a puzzle. Eliza's sister Lizzie was among those who carefully avoided treading on the evidence while they tried to work out what sort of a *wanta* (supernatural being) could pull a four-wheeled vehicle without leaving any track of its own. The general attitude towards anything to do with white people, whether initially mysterious or not, was avoidance wherever possible. After cars had become commonplace: 'If we was walking along the road and heard a motorcar, we still scooped into the scrub'.

This attitude was partly dictated by fear: 'If we saw anybody with a camera we'd reckon, "They going to shoot us" and run off away and hide. That was a gun, we thought'. But it was also partly the result of *kuyan*, an expression of respectful behaviour usually talked of in English as 'shame' or 'shyness'. Its full force is liable to be missed by non-Aboriginal speakers of English for whom the words shame and shyness rarely have positive connotations. According to the Ngiyambaa scheme of things, *kuyan* is not an uncomfortable feeling to be overcome, but an appropriate and expected reaction in many social situations:

We were brought up to know right from wrong in our own way. We wasn't cheeky to anyone. We had to respect them for what they were to us in the blacks' law. We carried that out. Our people told us how to treat others that weren't in our tribe, how to treat strangers.

In the system of etiquette which provided the ground rules for everyday life, various sorts of avoidance were prescribed as the chief means of showing respect — both physical avoidance and restrictions on conversation. Here for instance is how men and women behaved respectfully towards one another:

The men had what they used to call their *ngulupal*, a big sort of shed where all the single fellows was staying. All the men used to go there. That was their place. They used to sit down and play cards or talk about something. Women wouldn't join them, that'd be the men's quarters. Women, if they wanted to gather up talking about some thing, they'd just visit from camp to camp. They were the *ngurrangkiyalu*, the camp pigeons, the home ducks, and the men, they could go and join them young fellows. Say if me and Edie [Eliza's cousin] went to one's place and started talking, well that man would walk away and join his group, he wouldn't sit and listen to us talking.

So Eliza and her sisters grew up feeling 'ashamed' or 'shy', as a matter of normal propriety, in the presence of many people, including strangers both black and white. The heart of their daily lives lay in the activities they shared

with those Ngiyampaa relatives they belonged to be close to, 'taking notice' where they were not yet skilled enough to participate effectively, and joining in where they could.

Some of their elders' pursuits were of a time-honoured kind. For instance Eliza watched skins being patterned with criss-cross rubbing as they were prepared for rugs, and bags being knotted from a loop secured round the maker's big toe. Some of them were self-taught, such as dressmaking, which her mother was particularly good at.

Say, white people might've given them some old clothes, she'd unpick them. She'd copy off whatever garment she could unpick and cut out by that. After that she only had to look at what was on you. Say you came there with something she'd never seen before, she'd look you over and she'd sit down and cut that out and make it exactly the same.

The cloth too came mainly from unpicked cast-offs. Once some of her relations were given some clothes to wash from one of the stations, but never given no tubs or boilers or anything. We had nothing to wash in, never knew what soap was, *warrikal pakaa tyii mayi* [my people were really wild]. So they wore them! The station people wouldn't have them back after the blacks wearing them, *kapulpuwan* [lousy] I suppose. Serve 'em right to my way of thinking! We had nothing to wash. What we had on we wore until they dropped off.

Where it wouldn't be too far for the children, they gathered wild food alongside their older relatives: wild cabbage, yams, crowfoot with stalks like rhubarb, quandongs, wild apples, the gum of various trees, eggs and so on — some things required preparation and cooking, while others were enjoyed on the spot:

But there wouldn't be any kids if they were out walking. Not unless it was a little one that was still on the breast, the mother'd have to carry it sitting up on the back in a blanket, like a little pouch, and strapped on with an old shirt or something tied in front. Some of them used to walk for miles. By the time they'd get home of a night they'd be dog-tired, and feet swollen. They'd have to rest up for a couple of days before they'd hunt again.

Some of their growing knowledge the children expressed in games, getting stiff necks from playing all day in miniature miamias that they built for themselves. And there were other games played in the Keewong camps too, involving *kutyurru* [pointed throwing clubs] and *thapil* [balls, sometimes made of inflated kangaroo pouches].

Despite the fact that the Keewong people had been 'a little mixed-breed mob' ever since 'our grandmothers were taken advantage of', the children of 'white' fathers rarely knew anything of them. Though some of them may have worked on the stations, Eliza recalls that as children, 'We had no acquaintance with the station hands because we used to hide from them'. There were however two exceptional outsiders who married into the Keewong mob and shared a good deal of their way of life, though neither of them ever learned Ngiyampaa properly. The first and most significant, in

that among his children were girl cousins of much the same age as Eliza, was Dave Harris, a New Zealander. The other was 'Sabre' [Saba] Singh, an Indian hawker who married Eliza's eldest sister Mabel as Eliza's childhood approached its end.

Dave Harris made a big impression on Eliza, though she didn't tell him so at the time. He was

A lovely old man with long white hair as white as the snow and the prettiest blue eyes you've ever seen on anyone. And do you think I could talk to that old fellow? He christened me No Tongue. He'd say "Hallo, No Tongue!" and No Tongue'd hang her bloody head and wouldn't look up. I often think if he'd only lived long enough to hear Eliza Kennedy today, he wouldn't believe his ears.

Dave Harris' movements did not follow exactly the same pattern as those of his in-laws:

He used to mind the government tanks, he had to collect whatever travelling stock was coming through and charge a penny a head. He used to buy old kangaroo skins, rabbit skins, fox skins and he used to take them to Armidale, somewhere up there, now and again. He took birds too, parrots and cockatoos live for pets. He'd grow melons and pumpkins, tomatoes and potatoes and give us. We used to cook them in the ashes.

When the first war came, he 'used to do a bit of reading to them that could understand', reading from the paper that was brought once a week from Mossgiel to Carowra with the mail. Dave Harris camped with his family at Carowra and other government tanks, but his wife, Eliza's aunt Emily, was too sickly to go with him by wagonette on his trips to Armidale.

After Mabel's marriage to Saba Singh:

We went up in the world. Our Indian brother-in-law kept us going. He fed us most of the time, because we had nothing. He used to have plenty. Indian curry and Johnny cakes, curried bacon, wonderful tucker we thought.

In those days their hair was as often as not 'just stuff like old ropes, *mitimiti*, all matted up. He gave us combs, a few yards of material and that'. It was then that 'Latya', as he called Eliza, began to wear her hair long and plaited up, as she still does today.

Saba Singh came from Calcutta:

He used to carry a bundle, people tells me that knew him when he first got here. But I remember him going around hawking with a covered-in van with four horses in it when he met up with my sister. I don't know how they came to be together I'm sure because people are sort of scared of other nations, mainly from over there. Anyhow they finally got married — it was wartime I think, or war brewing — and ended up with seven or eight, they were about ten altogether.

As to his religion:

When he first come out he used to get around in a turban, but when he

got in with us, he give everything away, he wore a hat. He just had to be one of us, one of the Ngiyampaa mob. He'd eat anything we ate, all sorts of goannas and things. He even used to make curry out of this wild cabbage *yuluumay*.

By contrast, his fellow countryman old 'Motto' [Motu?] Singh (no relation), who also came hawking to Carowra, 'wouldn't eat anything unless he killed it himself, he had to bleed it before he ate any of it, otherwise he wouldn't touch it'.

Hunting expeditions were easier after Mabel married Saba Singh, too: We could yoke up a pair of horses — when it got to that stage my sister had a wagonette — and go out hunting, bring home a load of kangaroos, rabbits or whatever we could get — goannas, bogeyes, porcupine. We never learnt to shoot but we had reliable dogs. Saba used to get these dogs, greyhounds, staghounds and all kinds, off an old fellow named Charlie Wright, used to breed kangaroo dogs out there.

Mabel travelled everywhere with her husband. 'They used to have tents and that, the van was for the things he was selling, mainly clothes'. Though 'They'd always make back to this Carowra, the main camping centre', Saba Singh's hawking took him to Ivanhoe, Hillston and beyond. Like Dave Harris, he had travelled more widely than his in-laws, particularly his wife's young unmarried sisters:

We never left our territory until we got married. We were a group of people that never separated from one another, us Keewong clique, we were always bunched together.

This territory was part of the wider 'belar' *ngurrampaa* [camping country, homeland] which they shared with another local grouping of Ngiyampaa people, the Trida mob: 'Trida was their end of the world'. From time to time Eliza's people would meet up with people from the Trida mob (Fred Biggs, who drove the wagonette with the mail from Mossiel to Carowra, was one of them). Their dialect and their ways were occasionally different enough to provoke Eliza's interested attention:

The husband and wife used to sit back to back, leaning on one another's backs. If they wanted to give any tea or anything they'd pass it around, never face one another eating anything. That was the Trida mob style, more-or-less, because our people sat side by side facing the same way, or might be facing one another.

It seems that in this the Ngiyampaa couples around Trida station were simply more conservative than their Keewong counterparts. Both mobs still maintained the practice of 'not naming one another, and just calling one another *mayi* [person] all the time', though that too was soon to die out.

Perhaps the most intense period of contact with other Ngiyampaa groups, and with Aboriginal people from even further away, came at the end of Eliza's childhood, when the last *purrpa* or 'school for making men' was held in bull oak country in 1914.³

³ A description of this event by Eliza and her sister Lily is recorded in Ngiyampaa and English in Donaldson 1980.

Though Eliza's own experience was limited to her native territory, a few of her older relatives had made journeys beyond the Ngiyampaa world and had come back with tales to tell. One such person was a maternal uncle of Eliza's, Red Tank Jackie. He had acquired a reputation for 'magic eyes' after tracking down a small girl who had been lost for a week. So 'they put him down as a policeman' in 1900, to help in the search for the killer Jimmy Governor and his companions as they made their wild months-long dash through central and north-eastern New South Wales.⁴ Eliza's uncle Red Tank is said to have discovered their whereabouts shortly before their final capture, by spotting some ants carrying grains of sugar:

He followed this little streak of ants, up and down, and they came to a dry tree with a hollow in it. That's where the ants was carting from, and that's where this tucker was hidden. He proved to himself then that he was on their track. And they[the search party] was convinced then, when they found the tucker bags, that he was on their track. They were down in a gully in among the hills, and just a little smoke going up. And he said, "There they are down there!" And they said to him, "Go and get 'em!". "No", he said, "You go and get 'em! I found them, you go and get 'em".

Years later, Roy Governor, a brother of Jimmy and Joe, was in Condobolin and Mabel warned Eliza, 'Don't mention Red Tank in front of that fellow because he might kill us, seeing that we're related to him'.

This whole early period of her life, during which she 'camped around' with her family and stuck with the Keewong mob, Eliza refers to as 'growing up in the ashes'.⁵ She looks back on it with affection and a pride born of hindsight: 'A lot of people wouldn't talk like this about them days, they'd be ashamed, but I'm proud of the way we survived'. Her childhood gave her a sense of achievement which has remained a source of strength in later years:

We roughed it. It's a wonder we never died with T.B. or starvation even. But we managed, we were happy. It's a sad story, but thank God it's honest and good. I'm grateful to my mother that she stuck with us and showed us how to live. We lived happy because we had no sickness. What we ate — as I always say and I'll still say it — it was food and medicine for us. A lot of the young folks say "Oh, things couldn't have been that bad" when I say we hardly had any clothes on our back. You'd see a dress torn, you'd put in into a bit of a knot, and a bit of a trail hanging somewhere else. We had to wear them because we had nothing else. Sinful really,

⁴ The Governor brothers were the 'Breelong blacks' whose story underlies Keneally's (1972) well-known novel *The chant of Jimmy Blacksmith* and the film of the same name.

⁵ *nhaalya* is the word for the fallen leaves which accumulate to form circular carpets under the scrubby bushes and low trees of *Ngiyampaa* country. 'Growing up in the ashes', 'coming up out of the *nhaalya*': these phrases assimilate a stock metaphor of English-speaking culture for giving shapeliness to the story of a life — the notion of rising from low or humble beginnings. But they manage also to deflect the pejorative associations of metaphorical 'lowliness'. The ashes and the *nhaalya* are vividly evocative of a childhood hearth and home that were quite literally close to the ground.

but we survived and turned out great women, I reckon anyhow, us three old women and my two other sisters that died. I think it's great how we battled through it all and come up out of the *nhaalya* [fallen leaves].

As time went on both Keewong and Trida mobs had gradually become more dependent on visits to Carowra Tank, the only permanent water in belar country, which was on the border between the 'beats' of the two groups: We used to wander around here there and everywhere but all end up back there at old Carowra Government Tank, that's where we used to get our government rations and mail. They'd know by the moon when it was time to come back.

The rations used to arrive at 'the little one-horse town' of Mossgiel, and Some of our folks used to have to go over there, or meet the people that was bringing them across [to Carowra] somewhere along the road, meet the wagon halfway perhaps. Carowra was the main place for the rations, somebody'd be there to read out the names.

The monthly rations consisted of:

just plain old flour, tea and sugar, and the tea leaves, well they were like sticks, post-and-rails lots of people used to call them. They'd be in a little bag for each one.

Twice a year there were bundles of government clothes too, the summer and winter issue, with a blanket included in the winter issue.

As the Ngiyampaa camps at Carowra grew larger and more permanent it became more and more necessary for individuals to spend periods away from their families to earn a living. Eliza was growing up and it was increasingly clear that the skills she had learnt from her mother and other relatives would be insufficient to gain her a livelihood. However *thaarmaay* (skilled, competent) she became, their way of life would not support her generation as adults. Yet in respect of every skill marketable among white society she was *mayaal* (incompetent, ignorant).⁶ For all the knowledge she had picked up through years of watching and listening to her elders, 'You wouldn't give a bumper for me when I was a kid; I was worth nothing'. The task ahead was how to feel sufficiently at ease amongst white people to 'take notice' of their ways too, and learn new skills that would be advantageous to her. She had to overcome some of her shyness without feeling 'shameless' and learn to use that tongue which Dave Harris had said she did not have — to speak a second language she was still less at home in than Ngiyampaa.

Eliza's older sisters had a long start on her. Lizzie and Lily had done washing and ironing on Marfield Station, and Lily had gone on to work as a kitchen maid at the tiny hospital at Mossgiel and then on Mossgiel Station.

⁶ Reflexes of this word are widespread in New South Wales. 'Myall' for 'wild Aboriginal' probably entered Australian English through Dharuk, spoken at Port Jackson.

When she was there:

She used to ride down to Ivanhoe [30 miles] on a horse, in riding breeches. If a horse was broke in today she'd ride it tomorrow, or drive it, whatever it was broke for. She was game, and so was the oldest sister, poor old Mabel.

Lizzie was housekeeper at the Mount Hope pub (since claimed by some to have inspired Slim Dusty's famous song 'The pub with no beer'). As for Eliza:

I knew nothing and I wouldn't go out to learn. A fellow name of Mack MacDonald had a place just away from Conoble Station and they took me there for a while. I used to cry every day wanting to go home to old Carowra where my people was. They took me to Mount Hope so I'd be with my sister. They said "You'll be right here!" And I went, but I was frightened every day. They got sick of me. I pulled up at Trida, then one day back at Carowra and that was that. I never learned to do anything, only cry!

There was also a more combative side to Eliza's reluctance for domestic work, as she reveals in her comment on another attempt by the same family to get her to work for them. They hoped she would accompany them to Juneë, way out of her territory to the southeast: 'They wanted me for a bit of a slave, I suppose, but I wouldn't be in it'.

As Carowra became more of a centre, interested 'white people' came out from time to time 'to help the people what way they could'. At one stage there was a teacher from whom Eliza's eldest sister had learnt to write her name, 'But the teacher couldn't settle out there'. Then there were two women, the first of a series of lay missionaries sent by the Aborigines Inland Mission, a non-denominational fundamentalist group which influenced most western New South Wales communities during the 1920s and 1930s:

They camped there in tents with us, big bough sheds they used to live under. They came along to try and teach us, either to be Christians or to read and write. All we learnt off them was the hymns they used to sing us.

One of these hymns reinforced the economic pressure to acquire house-keeping skills. It became a favourite, and is still sung with relish by women of Eliza's generation to liven up a long car journey (with appropriate variations on 'Irish' such as *kirrpatty* [kangaroo] or even *thitaka* [a small inedible lizard]):

In the house and out the door
Chopping wood and scrubbing floor
Washing, ironing, mending too
Sometimes making Irish stew
I'll do it all for Jesus
I'll do it all for Jesus
I'll do it all for Jesus
He done so much for me.

Later, after a woman missionary 'cleared out because she reckoned someone was giving her electric shocks' the missionaries were all men.

We wasn't a bit interested in the fathers, oh we loved them and everything you know, they'd do a lot for us, medicine and one thing and another. Yet we never appreciated them that much. I often think how foolish we were, we might have been educated people. But we just battled on.

Economic and moral pressure were not enough to make Eliza change her ways:

I was one that took a bit of taming, and it took old George Kennedy to tame me. I was still wild when old George tried to make love to me first time. I called him everything but a man. My old brother-in-law said to me 'You don't want to swear like that, he's a sergeant and he'll put you in gaol.' And I told him off too, told him what to do with the gaol and himself too.

George Kennedy was a good deal older than Eliza. He was born in 1883. Like Eliza herself he was of mixed descent, but unlike her he had not grown up 'in the ashes'. 'He had black blood in him, black father and white mother. He was pretty fair and he was brought up as a white person'. His mother was from around Jerilderie and his father probably from somewhere near Darlington Point. He came courting Eliza at Carowra after returning from service in the first World War:

He was a shoeing smith in the Light Horse Brigade, that's how he started off. From there he worked his way up, and he was a warrant officer then. Yes, he tamed me and learnt me a lot, like how to get myself clean and how to cook.

They were married in 1923, in St Paul's Pro-Cathedral at Hay. It was a double wedding, for her cousin Cissie Harris married an Englishman, Jimmy Evans, at the same time. The Kennedys started their married life at Yelty, a 17,000 acre returned soldier's lot seven miles outside Ivanhoe. They had 'a few sheep but very few, might've been a couple of hundred or so, a few pigs, chooks, horses, that's all'. George 'got a fellow he knew to put up a shack for us, a kitchen and a lounge, a little bit of a verandah back and front, no stove till very late'. Eliza cooked in 'the old camp oven, which was great', and boiled all their clothes in a four-gallon drum.

In the drought year of 1923 all the Trida mob were forced to move to Carowra for survival. By 1926 there was a permanent 'mission' at the tank. At this Aborigines Protection Board station, run by a European manager, the people lived a sedentary life in two-roomed tin huts supplied by the government. 'When they started the mission there they wanted all the blacks, and they only got their rations there'. This form of coercion to come to the settlement simply institutionalised the movement already taking place among the Keewong and Trida mobs: 'when the mission came in, we sort of clubbed in together'. But it also affected a third group, not belar people but nilyah tree people from further west, who spoke a dialect of Paakantji ('Darling River talk') as well as their own Ngiyampaa. They had 'always lived about on their own and used to hang out around Marfield and Neckarbo'.

The Marfield mob 'didn't like the idea of coming to the mission at all'. Dave Harris (a son of the blue-eyed New Zealander) and some of the girls were sent out 'to coax this wild mob in. They didn't even know what it was to ride in a car, and this big truck went out there and brought them in'. The 'mission' was demoralising for everyone:

I reckon they ruined the people, putting them all together. Before that they battled alright, although I don't suppose they'd've survived because there'd been no rain.

Meanwhile the drought together with inexperience and lack of capital was also forcing many of the soldier settlers off their blocks. George 'couldn't make a go of anything on the farm'. They lost their sheep: 'Drought-time come and that wiped them out'. Then: 'All his mates used to come out there and they used to drink up, and different ones would come there for the night, and they all had grog on them'. Eliza would not join in, nor would she go dancing: 'I kept away, and looked after myself'. Whatever the private difficulties in the marriage, then or later, people 'always reckoned Uncle George and Auntie Liza were a great couple', and that was what mattered most of all. 'We always had plenty to wear and eat and drink, and whoever came along our way, we'd always give them a bit of tucker for the road'.

After five years or so the farm had to be sold and the second period of wandering in Eliza's life began, its scope no longer dictated by the availability of wild food and water supplies, and collection points for government rations, but by the search for wage work on pastoral stations. The area over which George and Eliza Kennedy travelled together was much larger: 'We wandered *everywhere* after we left the farm'. 'Everywhere' meant over the whole of the territories of the Keewong, Trida and Marfield mobs, and even beyond Ngiyampaa country into Wiradjuri country to the south-east, along the Lachlan River as far as Condobolin.

The style in which they travelled changed to match. There was no more walking, 'carrying our little rags and bags' over the shoulder. They rode in a wagonette with a new range of belongings. They had a tent, a camp oven, 'our beautiful old iron bed, and our tucker-box in the front under the seat so we'd have a snack going along. And we learned to always carry a few chooks. If we got a permanent job we'd have a crowd of chooks in no time'. They took on any work they could get, mainly looking after stock, boundary riding, and occasional contract work fencing, or cleaning out silt for tank-sinkers. Sometimes Eliza was able to sell some of what she baked, or to find some sort of domestic work while George 'would help in the tank, scooping [it out] or yoking up horses, nine or ten horses, maybe more'.

Speaking of herself and her generation of Ngiyampaa women, Eliza says that 'We woke up to ourselves mainly through our husbands'. This was the period when Eliza 'came out of the shell'. She had been a person who wouldn't ride a horse ('it took me all my time to ride in a cart'). Now she learned to drive a car. Her husband taught her what he knew on a Dodge utility truck at Marfield Station, but she was the one who got the licence:

'They wouldn't give him one because he was a boozer'. 'Coming out of the shell' meant not only acquiring new skills but asserting herself in a setting where she expected that her ideas and feelings might not be respected, so that she could exploit the new skills as she thought fit rather than be herself exploited for having them. The sort of way in which she eventually managed is illustrated in the following story from later on in her married life.

Jimmy Evans, who married Eliza's cousin Cissie, was a shearers' cook. Eliza had learnt from watching and asking him both how to cook as he did (pastry and yeast cookery included), and how hard shearers were to satisfy. So when the station boss at Wardry was shorthanded and asked her to cook for the shearers, she was reluctant. But he was 'such a nice old fellow' and she thought:

Oh well, I'll do it for his sake, not the shearers' sake. I lined these fellows up and give 'em to understand "I know you fellows are hard to please. I can't read nor write, I can't give youse anything in the modern line, dainty dishes and all that. I know nothing about that". I told them "First one that moans, I'm just going to drop everything". By gee, they smooched around then. "Oh, we'll see there won't be any of that". "There won't want to be, because I'll give you the kitchen quick smart".

Eliza cooked her best, 'no shortage of anything':

They were well satisfied, the brutes. They said they wanted me to go with them to cook, they'd be happy. But I said "Nothing doing. This is not our people's way. We just poke about, always together, we know what we're doing. We'd probably get out with you fellows somewhere and we'd be dumped".

After nine years of marriage young Georgie Kennedy was born in Condobolin, in 1932, and a shady spot was found for him in the wagonette under a sheet over the front board. He was their only child. That she should have only one child when so many of her relations were having large families is something that worried Eliza then and still puzzles her.

In 1937, when George was five and ready for school, the family moved to Menindee on the Darling River for a few years. George Kennedy got a job as handyman at the Menindee Aboriginal Station. This had been started by the New South Wales authorities three years earlier when they realised that Carowra Tank would not long continue to provide enough water for the 250 or so people then living there. In September 1933 the Aborigines Protection Board moved all the Carowra people (but not all their possessions) to Menindee, shifting them by truck and then train out of their own *ngurampaa* into the country of the Paakantji, and set them down to live in a white-run institution with Paakantji people whose own recent experiences had scarcely been more reassuring. The Ngiyampaa people were not consulted, or even given a chance to contact absent relatives: 'I don't know what their ideas was, to get them onto a permanent water I suppose mainly'. The period which followed was one of fear, disease and death: 'They averaged one a month, the deaths. Nine of our people died in the first nine months they were there'.

Members of the Marfield mob were particularly vulnerable and only a couple of them survived. There were plenty of possible explanations, but the people had no control over any of the causes which they could identify.

The Ngiyampaa 'drylanders' had always been wary of the Paakantji 'river people', whose language and way of life were very different from their own. 'Only lot we were very frightened of was the Darling mob, supposed to have been a mob of clever people. There were very few clever ones among our people, like one or two that I remember'. Maybe the Paakantji were using the power of their doctors or 'clever men' against the intruders.

The site chosen for the settlement was unfortunate: 'They built the mission on a bit of a sand ridge and when the wind was blowing the sand away you'd see skeletons lying full stretch.' Powdered human bone was one of the ingredients of *pathampatha*, the poison traditionally used against enemies — 'Blacks were superstitious about human bones'. Nobody knew whose these bones were or how they came to be there. Some of the Ngiyampaa people 'raked them up and bagged them and they made a cemetery. A lot of them people died'. It was thought that others too might have 'died from dust from off that ridge', which blew everywhere on windy days, getting into the food as it was being cooked, and making the tea gritty.

The housing was no better than at Carowra. They had the same two-roomed tin huts with no windows:

no windows at all, just open. There was no door to separate the kitchen and the bedroom, no privacy whatever. They could hang any old bag or blanket I suppose. Family of people, they'd just have to lay around anywhere and they didn't like that at all. A lot of them added a little more onto their house that had a big family, or couple of families might've been living in the one place.

There was very little furniture. When they first 'really settled down at Old Carowra', some people had improvised 'stick bunks. Forky sticks at the corners, railings, keep on putting railings either crossways or longways, then load it up with bushes, *kirraa*, for a mattress'. Later wooden bunks were carpentered, with an 'auger bit to bore holes in the head part — there was wire netting and wire about then'. But 'A lot of them had no beds, the only time they had beds was when the St Vincent de Paul men came out and they could see what was needed, and they sent out wardrobes, dressing tables, beds, things like that'.

There was only one difference between the tin huts at Menindee and those at Carowra — they had floors. This apparent improvement, given the lack of beds, actually made matters worse:

They all had cement floors which wasn't right because most of them lied on the floor, and I think that's why a lot of them died. Cold and pneumonias I suppose, because the ground would warm up quicker than the concrete.

When people fell sick they were taken off to hospital in Broken Hill. This only increased their relatives' fears: 'My poor old uncle reckoned "They

must be doping them in Broken Hill, they don't seem to come back from there". Eliza had her own speculations as to why they didn't return:

Probably might have died when they didn't know how they were going to be treated in hospital. White people mauling them and bathing them might have killed them too, that's a thing we knew nothing about, dipping in old dams.

By the time the Kennedy family reached Menindee, the diminished 'Carowra mob' was inured to the new way of life, though far from reconciled to it. The authorities continued to organise the people's lives with little reference to their possible reactions, and the people continued to act according to their own views. George and Eliza, arriving on the scene from a background of other experiences, saw the irony in some of the situations which arose. It was part of George Kennedy's job to issue the rations and weigh out the meat. They were much better rations than those at Carowra — peas, beans and rice as well as meat, flour, sugar and tea. And expectant mothers got cocoa, custard and milk. But the Carowra mob didn't know how to deal with the dried peas and beans, they put them down the toilet because they wanted the bags:

They did not say "Can I have something else in the place of this?" They might've got more rice which was easy to cook, or a bit more meat. That was where the tucker used to go, down the toilet, go and get more, get the bag and sell it.

Soon it was wartime, when 'you had to have coupons for everything. They didn't even realise how lucky they was with all this tucker'.

Eliza herself drew on the skills she had learned during her life with George. For cooking, the huts had

just a big old open dirt fireplace. You couldn't do much by the time you'd made a big fire in there, why it'd roast you. We fitted a old stove that somebody give us. I'd use the camp oven as well if I was doing a lot of cooking, we knew more about the old camp oven, how much fire to put underneath and on top. The stove you just had to guess how much wood. But I managed very well. Lot of them used to come to me to buy a loaf of bread or some buns or jam tart or apple tart or whatever.

Eliza's nephew Ralphie, one of Lily's boys, learned too. (Eliza had reared his elder brother Rossie for three or four years: 'He was my little mate before I had my own kid'). The other children

were sitting there hungry looking at him. And they'd tell one another 'Yata yuwan wirrinya yaay, kuniingkulaay luku, kapaanytya luku, lovely buns he's turning out, just like his mother, and his auntie.'

It was at Menindee that Eliza made up her mind about Christian religion. When she was younger, 'We knew nothing about church really, not to be inside of a church, only when I got married as a Catholic'. At Menindee she was confirmed by Bishop Fox and services were held in her house 'with the mantelpiece done up for an altar'. She was able to reconcile her Catholicism with the beliefs she had learnt in childhood, to which she

remained and still remains loyal. When Pastor Cec Grant, related to the Menindee people and now preaching in the Wagga district, was talking to her recently about how to receive Christ, she told him, 'Our people knew there was something up there with more power, but they called it *Kurikuta* — that was the same thing'. And it is to that power that she is grateful for the survival of her people during the difficult early days when 'we should've died, the way we lived. We was taken care of, thanks to God and this stuff that He put on this earth and in the ground and everywhere for us to eat. That was His gift to the blacks, we knew that'. There are rules which she learnt as a child that Eliza, like most of her generation of Ngiyampaa people, has never broken since to do so would offend *Kurikuta* 'the same as people are afraid of Lord Jesus, if you do something wrong you've got to confess'. For instance, she has never cooked emu in any other way than 'in the hole', lest *Kurikuta*, smelling singed emu fat, should descend and scorch the earth — 'in the hole, that's his place'.

When a Sydney nun adopted a Ngiyampaa baby from Menindee whose mother had died in childbirth, Eliza was asked to:

look after her for a fortnight to build her up, because she had these sweat boils breaking out on her little backside and up her little back and she was really miserable, coming out of hospital like that mind you.

Nine months later, when 'she had improved out of sight' and she was starting to call me mummy and the old fellow daddy, the old bishop and the nun came and took me and the little girl in, and they allowed them that was fond of her to come with us, and we seen her off at the train.

When European visitors came to the mission, the manager's wife used to tell them to take a look at the Kennedys' place, with its flower garden in front. Often these visitors would comment to Eliza:

"Why can't they all live like this now?" Well, I simply told them, "They just too tired, too lazy, that's all that's wrong with them".

This is not quite the righteous answer that it sounds like to someone who has not grown up in the Ngiyampaa tradition. 'Too tired, too lazy' is the closest English can come to *yalamakirri*, a verb which simply describes the state of not feeling like being active, without assigning any cause to this feeling. 'Tired' says too much by suggesting a physical cause and 'lazy' by suggesting a blameworthy lack of moral strength. Eliza was certainly alarmed by the apathy some of her people were experiencing, but her chief reaction was less to judge than to help where she could: 'If they wanted anything mended or cut out, I'd do the best for them'. Another cause for concern at Menindee was the way in which some of the people she had grown up amongst were now taking to drink:

We never seen no drunks at all in our time. There was only one old fellow and he was a harmless old fellow. All around Carowra there, wherever we seen him, just to get away from him we used to duck out in the scrub and camp for the night.

But it was not until after their second uprooting, when the Menindee people

were shifted to Murrin Bridge outside Lake Cargelligo in 1949, that women as well as men, and eventually children of school age too, began to drink to any extent.

The people took what opportunities they had to protest against their condition, as for instance when:

The head fellow came down from Sydney and they had a meeting there and a lot of them said the huts wasn't good enough, wouldn't be a good enough place for their cowsheds, because they were cold in the winter and roast you in the summertime. They were cruel, no verandahs, no ceilings or anything.

But the people were without power. Even the manager, who was all-powerful in the residents' everyday lives, was unable to influence the Board to substantially improve their lot: 'They didn't like the manager that done too much for the blacks, they'd sack them fellows'.

In the early 1940s, after experiencing both sympathetic managers and one who proved to be 'a no good fellow and stingy', the Kennedys left the mission at Menindee and 'come back out again on the stations'. George Kennedy had had enough of his job there, particularly issuing out the rations. 'He used to get accused for a lot of things and he was more or less trying to help the people, so he got sick of it and left'.

It was at this time that Eliza's mother Rosie left Coombie Station in belar country for Menindee, and was taken from there to Broken Hill hospital, where she died. All Eliza's sisters had married and had travelled beyond the scenes of their childhood. Lizzie married 'Cobar' Williams, whose language was a little different from the Carowra people's Ngiyampaa — 'Where we'd say *pumali* for "hit", he'd say *kumali*'. He had got a medal for his service in the First World War, and ever since he had worked as a station hand, mostly in his wife's country. They were never at Menindee, but eventually went to Murrin Bridge. Lily's husband Harold Hampton came from further north too. He had grown up speaking English. After meeting Lily in Condobolin he came to Carowra. He worked mainly on stations around there, mostly at Trida, with periods elsewhere, for instance at Griffith. The Hamptons had been shifted to Menindee when the Mission was started there, but they had left again very early on. Lily was particularly incensed by the way in which the authorities had promised to bring her turnout across from Carowra, but had left it behind. As she says, 'They made a fool of us'. Elsie married Duncan Ferguson, a brother of William Ferguson, founder of the Aborigines' Progressive Association in 1937. As a resident at Menindee, Duncan Ferguson was able to keep his brother in touch with conditions there.⁷

For the next ten years, after they had left Menindee, Eliza and her husband wandered as they had before, over the same area, though 'old Mount Manara and Marfield was our main beat'. There were reminders of the vanished Marfield mob:

⁷ See Horner's (1974) biography of William Ferguson for a brief account of Duncan Ferguson's protests about conditions at Menindee.

That was their area. Little miamias everywhere, some of them was still standing. This yarran [hardwood used for the frames of the shelters] lingers, it's very strong. I often used to think about them people. And they went to that mission, and that's where they all disappeared, excepting one or two.

Many of the anecdotes which Eliza tells about work on the stations concern her reaction towards the European people she got to know, and theirs towards her. The Kennedys were at Orana station immediately before going to Menindee:

At Orana we used to live outback at a place called Mulga, minding the stock out there, and Mr Williamson [who brought the food out] always used to bring this forequarter part of the sheep. We'd fancy a nice roast leg, say for Sunday's dinner, because this schoolteacher used to come around sometimes, but shoulder, shoulder, shoulder, shoulder we'd get always! I asked him one day 'Do these sheep have hind legs?', and he brought us some legs after that.

The Kennedys camped quite a few times on Booberoi station, in the fertile country near the Lachlan river:

On what they call the Farm they used to grow everything, hay and oats and barley, and a bit of cotton too. Sometimes there were over fifty men just working on this farm, independent of the station.

Though many of these workers would be 'white', 'It was a great place for blacks just the same', with frequent opportunities for employment. (Further out, in the Ngiyambaa dryland, overseers and bosses were 'white', while station workers were 'mainly black, because no whites'd hang out in them parts of the world I suppose. Except for the shearers, of course they only come whatever season it was shearing times'.) One time at Booberoi, Eliza and one young 'white' woman who had also come with her husband were the only women. The Kennedy camp was on the bank of the creek:

waatyin [the white gin] was living not that far away from me. 'How do you keep your place like this?' she said to me. 'I just throw water about and sweep it over with a broom.' And in the kitchen I'd have bags to walk on and she said 'It's just like cement!'

The admiration was not mutual, for the couple were careless, both in how they kept their camp and how they looked after their baby. The husband tried to persuade Eliza not to bother carting away her ashes, so that she would have hot coals in the morning: 'To my idea', I said, 'that's only lazy people's fashion, fire's no trouble to light. I've lived like this for years and you's telling me how to light a fire?'

It was on the way from Booberoi Station to Euabalong that George Kennedy had a stroke:

He fell backwards out of a spring cart and he never got conscious till he died. He died on his birthday in 1952 and he was sixty-nine the day he died... That's when it rained and rained and rained, and we had to move from Euabalong out to the west, living there in tents [a 'calico town' set

up by the government] for three months before the road was dry.

The first years of her widowhood Eliza spent in Euabalong, ten miles from the new Aboriginal station at Murrin Bridge. Her son George was now in his twenties. At Murrin Bridge he met Violet Collins who had come to live there too, after growing up mainly in Tingha, Tamworth and Armidale. (Her father was from further north and had a reputation for speaking half-a-dozen Queensland languages.) They married and began their own career, sticking roughly to the same area as the Kennedy parents, working sometimes on the railway (which had been laid through *belar* country in 1919) and sometimes on stations, and spending a while at Wilcannia. Eliza stayed in Euabalong, doing domestic work for a couple called Silverside, and having younger relatives to live with her so that they could go to school.

Between 1956 and 1958 the anthropologist Jeremy Beckett was spending time in Euabalong, Murrin Bridge and Wilcannia.⁸ Silverside recommended Eliza to him as a knowledgeable person. By then Fred Biggs, a whole generation older than her and a prolific composer of Ngiyampaa songs, was already teaching Beckett, so she rebuffed him. 'If you can't learn anything off Fred Biggs it's no good of your asking me'. It was a question of proper reticence, the Ngiyampaa feeling of *kuyan*. Not only was Fred Biggs older and more authoritative, but Beckett was a man. And anyway the language was not a thing to be lightly exposed to strangers. Thinking back, she feels 'I would've got a bit of help there, if I'd've took notice of Beckett'.

Eliza visited George and Violet every time a new grandchild was born. Then when George got a job as a railway fettler at Trida, she joined them permanently. They were to stay there until, after a dozen years, George's continuing career with the railways involved them in further moves. The little school at Trida was populated mainly with Eliza's own grandchildren, and it was here that she eventually found an opportunity to try to read and write for herself. The teacher was young and enthusiastic: 'That would have been great for him, to teach an old Aboriginal woman to read and write'. But the experiment was short-lived:

I was too old to think about going to school. And Lily was saying "I suppose we'll see Liza when she comes up for her school holidays!"

Making fun of me. Well, you can always make that!

But she did learn to tell the time, by watching the clock when her grandchildren came home for dinner:

"Oh it's such and such a time now" they'd say, I'd look at that, then they'd run back to school. And they'd come home and the school had ended and I'd look again. No trouble. I suppose learning lessons would have been just as easy but I couldn't settle down to it.

After Trida the family returned to Euabalong for a while until they got 'that *minyangkaa* [rubbishy] old place at the Lake [Lake Cargelligo] that we used to have when you first started coming around'.

⁸ See, for example, Beckett 1959, 1965, 1978 for a sympathetic description of the lives of the Wangaaypuwan and their neighbours in far western New South Wales.

At this point, having entered the story which I have been writing down, I should explain myself and how I came to be told it. In 1971 Luise Hercus, who had been recording Australian languages for many years, took me with her on a field trip. During her travels in northern Victoria and up into New South Wales she had met and worked with several speakers of the Wangaaypuwan variety of Ngiyampaa, all of them of Eliza's generation, and she felt that their language deserved to be properly recorded by someone in a position to work on it full-time. The purpose of the trip was to introduce me, then a graduate student in linguistics at the Australian National University, to the people she knew. Unsurprisingly, most were at Murrin Bridge. Luise and I spent some time talking with two sisters, Sarah Johnson and Mamie King. They mentioned a number of other people there who were able to speak Ngiyampaa, including several of their brothers and sisters ('brothers' and 'sisters' including for them their parallel first cousins).

When I returned by myself to visit them again, we drove out from the 'mission', partly to get privacy for my language lesson, and partly to see if we could find any of their sisters, who had gone off feeling 'ashamed' or 'shy' at the thought of my approaching them. As soon as they saw my car coming across the paddock they 'scooped into the bushes' just as they used to at the sight of a car more than half a century ago. Unobserved, they watched us boil our billy.

Within a few days a sort of routine began to establish itself. I would ask Mamie and Sarah what they would like to do, and after a few skirmishes during which they said '*Ngintu maatha kara*' ['You're the boss'] and I replied in my beginner's Ngiyampaa 'No, you two are the masters', we would usually end up going on a hunting expedition, mainly digging for rabbits with crowbars. Each time more people would join us until the car was regularly crammed. And as we sat round the dinner-camp fire cooking our catch and talking into the tape-recorder I was outnumbered by teachers and in an ideal language-learning situation.

However from time to time my questions taxed my teachers' memories and they would say 'Better ask so-and-so', mentioning one of a number of names, usually their oldest brother at Murrin Bridge, Archie King, and sometimes Lizzie Williams, who would not leave her house unsupervised to join us. Often they spoke of Lizzie's sister, saying '*Lizakaa thiirrpayaga*' ['Liza might know']. I asked if they would take me to meet Mrs Kennedy, but she was away visiting their other sister Lily Hampton in West Wyalong. When I got there later, on my own, I did not need to explain myself. The news had travelled ahead of me.

The three of us sat down with a cup of tea and the tape-recorder and Lily and Eliza put me gently through my paces, asking what I had learnt with the others and correcting me where I had made an imperfect job of it. Eliza explained to me how she had refused to talk to Jeremy Beckett nearly twenty years earlier: '*Wangaay tyu na ngiyal-kuwa-nhi* [not I him speak-kuwa-past] I didn't want to tell him nothing'. She included the suffix *-kuwa* in the word

for 'spoke' and I asked her what it meant if you put that in. She said, 'That makes it a sort of a pitiful word, that.' Then she went straight on to give another example: 'Say if the old man comes in and he says "Hurry up with my tea!" you might say: "*Mal-kuwa-nha thu na*" [do-kuwa-present I it], I'm doing my best!'" I knew that I was in the presence of someone with an analytic turn of mind and a loving feeling for her language who had decided to trust me. I drove back to Canberra buoyant with the realisation that between us all we should be able to make a decent record of the language, and that writing it down was a project that was approved of.

In the event, this was only the first of many many hours of collaboration, discovery and rediscovery, in the course of which Eliza and I sometimes sat up obliviously late, in my hired caravan in the park next to her home at Lake Cargelligo, drawing together examples of some particularly pleasing Ngiyampaa way of putting things. At times she would wake having thought of something new for the record, and I with a nightful of questions turning in my head.

One of my discoveries, which somehow remained hidden until I was committed to the Ngiyampaa people through their sharing with me, was a purely personal one: I was repeating family history. My grandfather had devoted much of his life to compiling the remaining texts of Cornish, the disused language of his forebears, collecting words still surviving in Cornish English, studying the language and teaching it in a small weekly class in St Ives. As a child I had taken very little notice of his work, and was shyly sceptical of his passion for it. I did learn to count in Cornish — because he would only push me on the swing if I counted the pushes. Now I could understand what saving his language meant to him. I was in a way acknowledging my own cultural roots, while putting down new ones in Australia.

For Eliza, the opportunity to work on her language came appropriately at a time when her accustomed range of activities and influence was shrinking. Physically, she was almost immobilized. Forty years earlier she had 'fallen into flesh' after her son was born. Before that 'You could put a span around my waist, and emus' legs was big alongside of mine'. During the 1970s various medical complications made carrying her weight more difficult until she became unable to walk more than a few steps at a time. Within the family, her eldest granddaughter was expecting her first child, and of the nine other grandchildren in the rickety old house at Lake Cargelligo with its single outside tap, the two youngest were already attending the pre-school at Murrin Bridge. Much of her emotional energy was taken up with worrying about the lives ahead of her growing grandchildren, anxieties that they were powerless to set entirely at rest however much they might wish to, since she felt their approach to things was unlike her generation's at the same age. 'We listened to our people. They reckon they're in this modern world and they go along with it'. Under the Voluntary Family Resettlement Scheme financed by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the Kennedys were promised a five-bedroomed Housing Commission home in a suburb

COMING UP OUT OF THE NHAALYA

PLATE 2

Top: Lily Hampton (L) and Eliza Kennedy (R) at the Condobolin Show, 1952
Lower: Eliza Kennedy with Tamsin Donaldson and three of her great-niece Faye Johnstone's children, at Ivanhoe, 1980

Photographs courtesy of Eliza Kennedy (A.I.A.S. 1857-2) and Tamsin Donaldson

of Wagga Wagga. They were to move 'within three months'. The three months stretched into five years of waiting. When eventually they did move, material conditions improved enormously, but Eliza was further out of her 'beat' than she had ever lived before, and emphatically surrounded by the modern world.

In the summer of 1980 I had a phone call from Wagga Wagga. The five-bedroomed house had burnt down through an electrical fault in its construction, and the family were again in temporary overcrowded accommodation. Would I take Nanna for a trip somewhere?

We headed out towards the country Eliza had grown up in. She brought her copy of the now completed Ngiyampaa grammar to show to any Ngiyampaa people we visited who had not already seen one. I brought a tape-recorder as usual. I had told her that friends of mine (some of whom she had met on a visit to Canberra) would be happy if she would like to add her story to a book of the life stories of Aboriginal women. So this time she recorded her reminiscences in English.

This account of her life is based on a verbatim transcription of those recordings. Excerpts on the themes she returned to most often are arranged so as to form a chronological story. Most of the recordings were made as she talked over old times in company with others who shared many of her memories. Besides her immediate family, these included, at various stages of our journey, Eliza's nephew Bill Williams, born at Carowra and overseer at Wee Elwah Station for the past thirty-three years; Gloria Bartle, a 'white' woman at Trida, now herself a grandmother, whose comment on the grammar was 'Nanna never ever tell us the talk when she was up here!'; Edie Kennedy, a daughter of old Dave Harris and Eliza's aunt Emily who, after a lifetime of fetching wood and water and cooking 'with a kid sitting on her hip', is still battling on out in the scrub at Ivanhoe, and 'can get around straight as a gunbarrel'; and Eliza's great-niece Faye, her husband David Johnstone and family, whose rabbit chiller was the only cool spot in Ivanhoe while we were with them.

This story is only part of what Eliza feels is a more important story. Shortly after this expedition, I received a letter which she had dictated to a grandchild; in it she remarked that the trip had been a waste of time because we had not picked up enough of the lingo when we were with others such as Edie who know it well. What Eliza Kennedy most hopes to have live on within the pages of a book is that vanished way of life whose obvious hardships and satisfactions she has described here in English, but whose most intimate qualities can only be captured in the language of her mother and her mother's people. To this end, the next project on which I shall have the privilege of working with the old-timers from *Kirraawara* will be a Ngiyampaa dictionary-cum-encyclopedia.

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