

ABORIGINES OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY COMMUNITY



DEPARTMENT
OF THE
INTERIOR



Aborigines of the Northern Territory Community

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INTRODUCTION

A tourist bus operator, a cadet journalist, a Catholic nun, a trainee potter, a garage attendant, a Methodist Minister, a pre-school teacher—seven people, following seven diverse vocations, speaking seven different languages, as well as English, but with much in common. They are fullblood Australian Aborigines facing the multitudinous problems of social advancement and cultural change being experienced at present by their people in the Northern Territory.

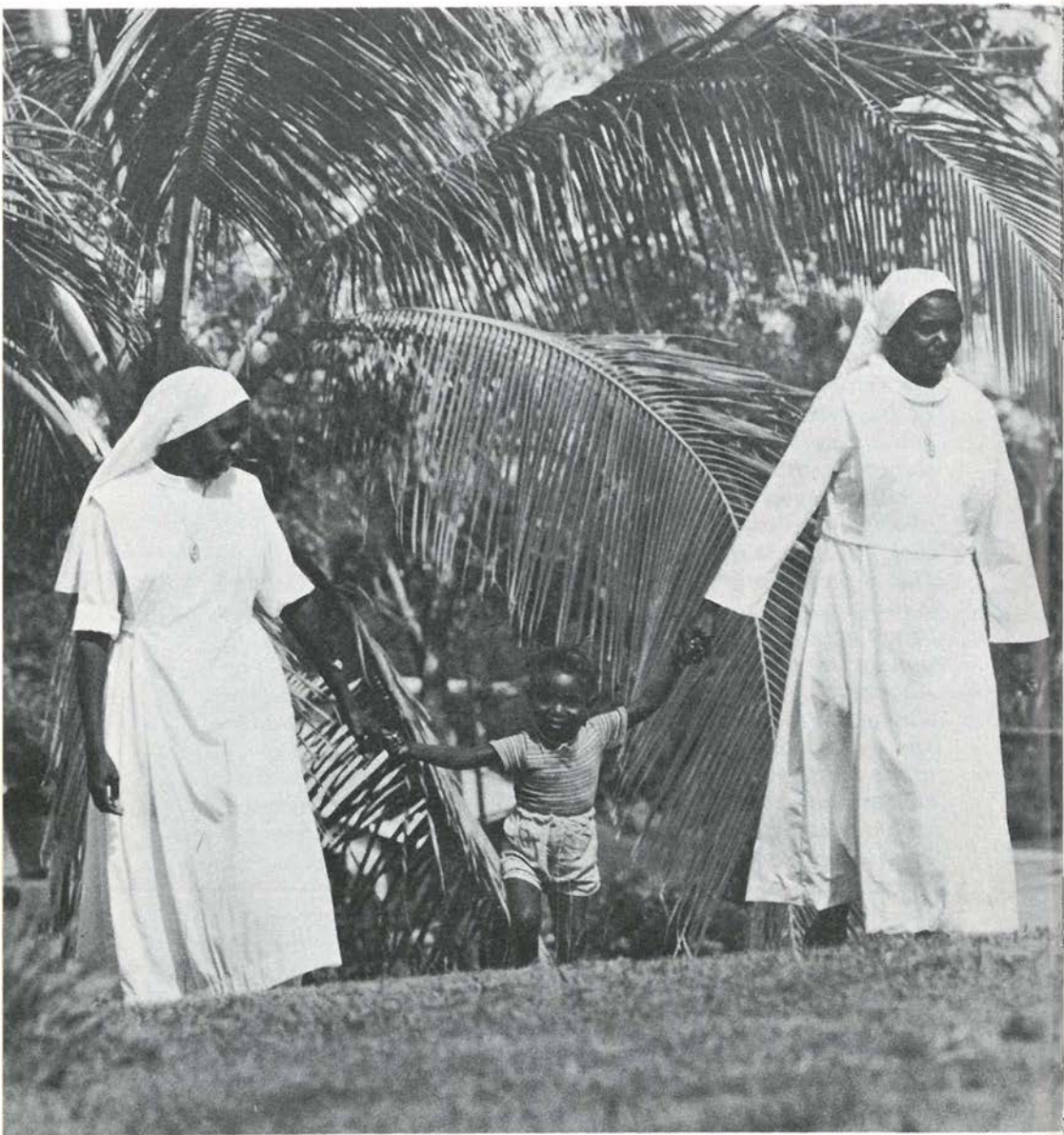
Their success in overcoming many problems to hold effective positions in towns and on settlements and missions throughout the Territory is the result of their perseverance and hard work. To the average white Australian this success might appear small and insignificant and, in comparison with general Australian standards, this may be so. But for Aboriginal people, whose ancestors lived for thousands of years in complete isolation in a physical environment and with an unprogressive material culture, their advance is remarkable.

This is particularly so when the Aboriginal's concept of work is taken into account. In his indigenous state, this concept was based on a day-to-day need for survival with little, if any, thought for the future. As a consequence, the progress of Aborigines from the traditional group, kinship and co-operative way of life to the competitive nature of the European culture is, and will continue to be, a slow journey.

In the Northern Territory where some Aborigines have had only limited contact with European civilisation, a change in work attitudes and habits is necessary before Aborigines taking part in the normal work situation become the rule and not the exception. The changes are taking place and will continue.

The Aborigines, members of one of the oldest races on earth, are at a meeting place of two cultures—the vast past that has endured for about 30,000 years in Australia alone and modern European civilisation. They must, by force of circumstances, live as members of one Australian society.

The task of the administrators of the advancement policy in the Northern Territory is to prepare them for this. By their achievements, the bus operator, cadet journalist, Catholic nun, trainee potter, garage attendant, Methodist Minister and pre-school teacher have shown, along with many others, what can be done. These are their stories.



Sister Mary Agatha (left) and a tiny patient

SHE CARES FOR THE SICK

Mirian Midaring was born in the bush 27 years ago, a member of the then nomadic Brinken Aboriginal tribe which roamed the rugged north-west coast area of Australia, about 200 miles south of Darwin. She was carried for a time, but then, as soon as she was able, she walked the bush with her father, mother, sisters and brother as they moved from place to place. In Mirian's words, 'We didn't like staying at one place.' Mirian was four years of age when her parents, along with relatives in the Brinken tribe, filed into the Roman Catholic Mission at Port Keats. As was the custom at the time, Mirian was placed in a special house with other young Aboriginal girls to ensure that she received adequate food, medical care and protection. She saw her family daily, first went to school when she was 10—a small, thoughtful girl with a flashing smile—was baptised, attended church and studied hard. Then at 16, with a whole new world opening up for her, she was suddenly thrust back into the bush in which she had been born. She had been promised in marriage on the very day she entered this life and now her parents wanted her to honour that tribal promise. Mirian 'talked and talked and talked . . . it was like wrecking their tribal law . . . but I did not want to go through with it. You see, I had other plans.' Her parents finally relented, a revolutionary decision for them, and Mirian went on her way, also a revolutionary course.

As Sister Mary Agatha of the missionary order of the Congregation of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, she has been working among her people at the East Arm Leprosy Hospital, near Darwin. The little black girl who was born of pagan parents is now one of five Aboriginal nuns in the order. Sister Mary Agatha was professed five years ago and has taken the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. She renews her vows every 12 months; in another four years—after nine years in the order—she will be allowed to take perpetual vows. Sister Mary Agatha was 12—only eight years out of the bush—when she first told missionaries at Port Keats that she wanted to be a nun. For the nuns, her teachers, it was gratifying indeed that

their young charge aspired to work one day alongside them. But at that time there was no religious order for native people to enter. Permission was obtained for the order of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart to take Aborigines, and a special group of interested girls from Port Keats and other Catholic missions in the Northern Territory was organised. The small group of oblates went to East Arm Hospital, wore habits, made promises to be obedient and good, and worked with their people. They then went to Daly River for secular studies to prepare them for training in the southern States. Sister Mary Agatha went to Leura (in the Blue Mountains district of New South Wales) for two years schooling and in 1964 entered the order as a novice, training for three years at a convent at Bowral, about 80 miles from Sydney. From Bowral she went to Kensington, Sydney, where the congregation has its Australian headquarters, for a further two years of study. She returned to the Northern Territory in 1969 and began working at the East Arm Hospital.

Among adult patients at East Arm

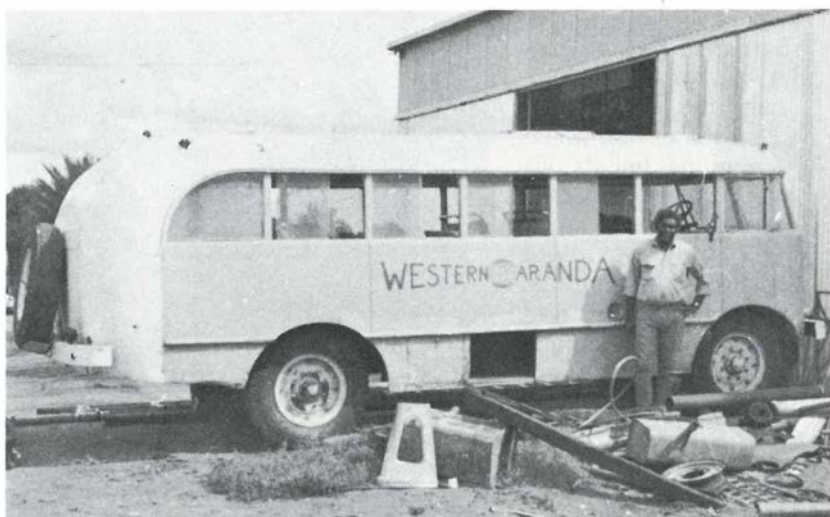


The incompatibility between the Christian principles of Catholicism and the legends and myths of traditional Aboriginal beliefs has caused her no difficulties. 'I really didn't know a lot about the old Aboriginal customs,' she says, 'so I was never particularly worried. My contact with the missionaries at Port Keats started early in my life. They taught me differently to my parents but religion was never pushed onto me. When I asked whether I could definitely train to be a nun—I was then 16—they made sure that I took two years to make up my mind. The two years at East Arm were spent

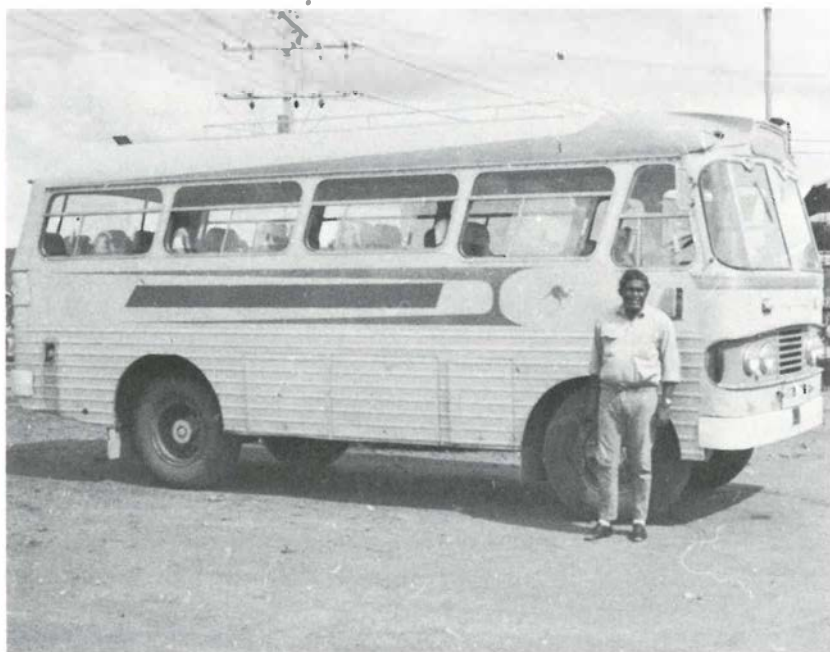


'You see, I had other plans'

in mainly helping the Aborigines with leprosy, but it was also the testing out period. I was more determined than ever after the two years and since then I have never had any doubt that this is my vocation.' Interviewed last year, Sister Mary Eulalie, the Sister Superior at East Arm Hospital, was full of praise for Sister Mary Agatha. She was, the Sister Superior said, an excellent, dedicated girl. 'She applies herself to everything she undertakes and although working with her own people, fits into European society very well—as she must. She has a wonderful sense of humour and when we are all together she is usually the one telling the jokes. And it must be hard on her at times. We are all human and often, because we identify her completely with ourselves, we may be critical of the Aborigines after a long hard day. But she doesn't worry.' The Sister Superior had no doubt that Sister Mary Agatha was a nun for life. 'Naturally I have been associated with many nuns, and I am sure that this little one is with us forever,' she says.



Gus Williams and his buses. The original vehicle (top) has been replaced by a more modern bus (below)



TOURISTS ARE HIS BUSINESS



Gus—the family man

Things changed as soon as the tourists discovered that Gus Williams was 'not dumb'. Not that many thought him so, but the occasional tourist forgot his manners when he saw a 'real live black' bus driver and guide. But Gus' command of the English language, his knowledge of Central Australia—the country they had travelled so far to see—and his modest and good natured personality soon won the day. 'At first,' he says, 'some of the tourists tried to talk down to me. I figured it was because I am coloured. But they were surprised when I spoke English so well. There were never any big incidents. Anyway, now the word is around and I receive cards from passengers who have travelled with me. And I am making money.'

Gus Williams, baptised Kasper Gus (he's not sure why) into the Lutheran faith, is now one of the best-known Aborigines in the Northern Territory. He conducts a successful tourist bus service four times a week, is a member of the Advisory Committee of the Aborigines Benefits Trust Fund, and at 34 is raising, with his wife Rhonda, a family of three girls and two boys. Not quite a fullblood, Gus identifies himself with the Aboriginal people and lives at Hermannsburg Mission, about 70 miles from Alice Springs, in Namatjira country. He calls his tourist bus company, which he owns himself, Western Aranda Tours, after his tribal group. Like the famous artist, Albert Namatjira, Gus is an Aranda and many of the tribe live at Hermannsburg.

But unlike the brilliant artist, Gus has made the grade by 'bucking the system'—that is, the Aboriginal system of sharing with everyone else. Garry Stoll, the Superintendent of the Hermannsburg Mission says: 'Gus was at the mission 13 years ago when I arrived. He has always been prepared to be a little unpopular with his own people without disowning them. He has worked hard for his family and himself and others here are jealous of him for that. I feel hundreds of other Aborigines have the ability to do the same, but they are afraid to alienate themselves with their own people. Basically they are envious of his guts in doing just that.' Just what has Gus Williams achieved in the harsh environment into which he was born? He started school at 10 years of age and went no further than fifth grade. He moved to the Hermannsburg Mission when he was 16, after his parents had died, and worked in various jobs on the mission until he was licensed to drive all types of motor vehicles. Three years ago he started work for Boomerang Tours, an Alice Springs-based company, as a tourist guide and driver. His job? Driving tourists in an old bus from the mission to Palm Valley, a fauna and flora reserve 10 miles away, where ancient palms grow. The job was interesting, it was new and it was lucrative. Boomerang Tours moved from the Alice so Gus bought the bus with money he had managed to save. . . . a beaten-up old army blitz waggon that I spent as much time working on as driving. When I stripped it down to paint my company's name on the side I saw it had been a Royal Mail bus on the Alice to Darwin run. No one could guess how many miles it had up . . . Gus and the 'blitz waggon' spent a year together. Then, in 1970, another Alice operator had a more modern bus for sale and a loan of \$4750 (repayable over six years) from the Aborigines Benefits Trust Fund enabled Gus to continue in business on firmer wheels. Business is now booming—more and more people are making their way to the centre of Australia and once they get there more and more people are travelling with Gus. And many of the tourists drop into the Arts and Crafts Shop at Hermannsburg

and buy the Aboriginal artifacts.

Gus, the businessman, is manager of the shop.

But business is not his whole life.

He is away from home regularly as a member of the

Advisory Committee of the Aborigines Benefits

Trust Fund—a position he takes very seriously.

'We, the committee, take a great deal of time with our deliberations. We think hard about all the applications. They can be a great help to all the people.

No one knows that better than I do.'

And what of the future?

Education of the highest possible standard for

Serena (12), Ingrid (11), Warren (5), Baydon (4) and

Debbie (3) is his first concern.

'I want them to learn as much as they can.

Maybe they can be teachers and nurses and come back to

Hermannsburg and help the other young kids here.

This is their home. I would like them to teach their people.

I wouldn't like them to go away and learn and not come back as some of the others have done.'

Gus has his roots at Hermannsburg.

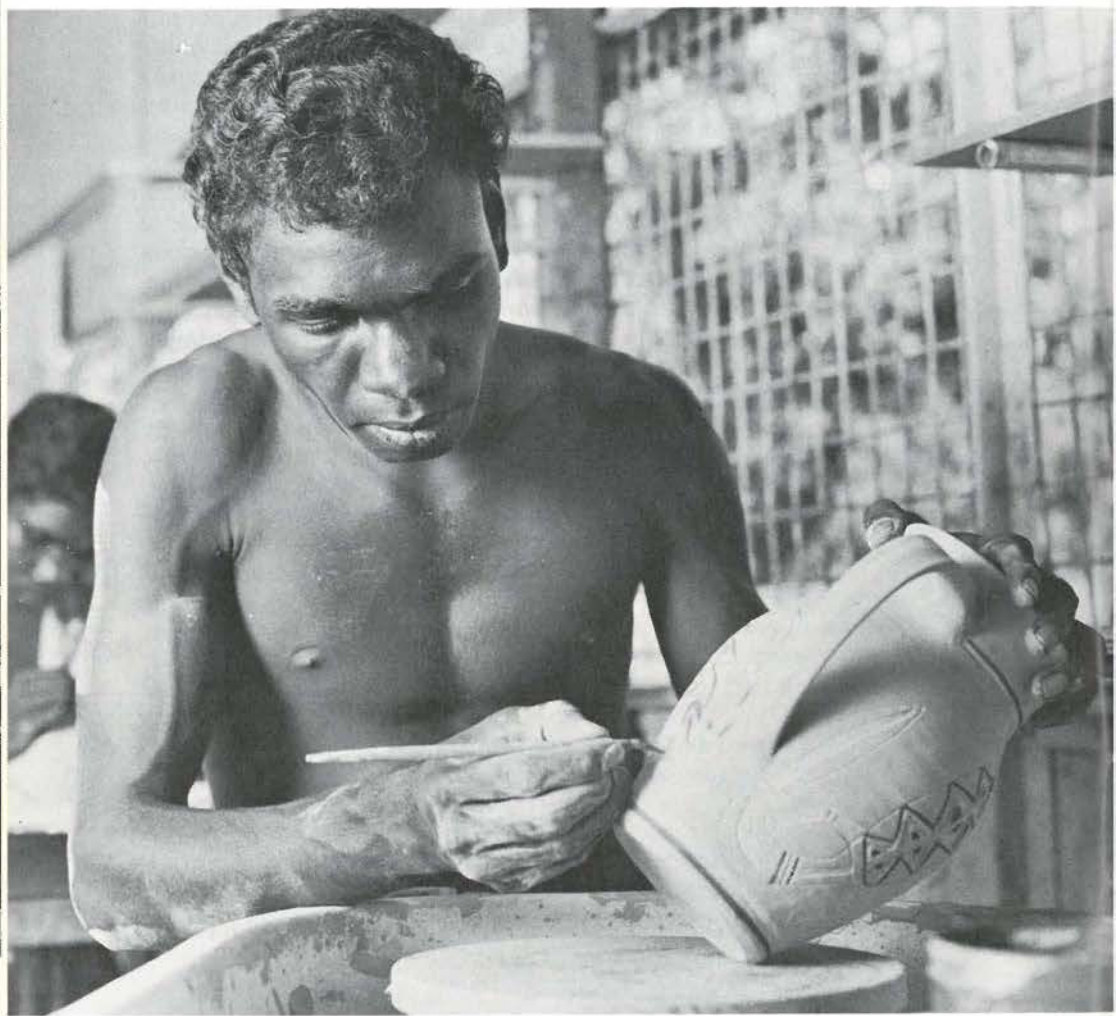
His grandfather and grandmother were among the first six people baptised at the mission last century, and his own children have been baptised in the new church.

But the boys of his family, unlike many other young

Aborigines, will not be initiated in the ancient tribal ceremonies. 'I was initiated but they won't be,' he says.

'They will retain enough of our culture without that.'

Bobby Wunyimarra at work decorating one of his pots



POTTERY IS BOBBY'S ART

How does one become a successful exponent of the ancient craft of pottery? Well, for a start, it's handy to have a high level of hand dexterity, particularly finger dexterity, and eye-hand co-ordination. It also helps if your hand, arm, foot and leg movements are co-ordinated in an almost perfect rhythmic pattern.

And if you have a strong sense of form and are able to work very effectively with natural materials you are well on the way.

There's a lot more to it than that, of course, but all the above skills are, generally, possessed by the Australian Aborigines. One in particular, Bobby Wunymarra, 20, from the Methodist Mission at Milingimbi, east of Darwin, has an abundance of them. So much so, that he is now in his fourth year of training as a potter, working from the Ceramic Research Unit at the Bagot Aboriginal settlement in Darwin. He is so involved with his work and dedicated to it that, unlike most young Aborigines who leave their homes for vocational training in Darwin, he has never been homesick.

He sells his pottery often on the open market and in 1970 organised and worked at a display at the Royal Easter Show in Sydney. During the show he met Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip — 'He asked me if I minded if he looked around' —, and he also discussed his work with representatives of the University of New South Wales.

It was with the assistance of the University that the Ceramic Research Unit at Bagot was established. In 1966, the Research Section of the Northern Territory Administration's Welfare Branch in Darwin and the Department of Industrial arts at the University, headed by Professor L. M. Haynes, began a research programme into the ethno-technology of Aboriginal culture.

The aim of the research was to document in detail the processes and materials used by Aborigines in the making

of common artifacts and to analyse their skill patterns and work habits. The research showed that the Aborigines were probably more versatile in the utilisation of materials than other so-called primitive people. Overall, the results were considered significant enough for the introduction of pottery manufacture to the Aboriginal people of the Northern Territory. Observations since the establishment of the unit indicate that the Aborigines' learning rate in the field of ceramics is faster than that of Europeans of comparable age, skill and interest.

Bobby Wunymarra was one of the first trainees at Bagot and is now by far the most advanced. He intends to keep training for another two years at least before making a decision about his future. At the moment the quiet little Aboriginal considers the world his oyster. 'But wherever I go,' he says, 'it will have to be where I can get good clay for my work. I could go back to Milingimbi, work and train my own people pottery or I could stay in Darwin and work as a potter. And I could go somewhere else. Anywhere. I want to be a potter the rest of my life.'

Bobby, although fully aware he has above-average talent, also realises he has much to learn about pottery.

There are several technical methods he has to absorb, such as clay processing, and he knows little of marketing and valuation. One of his supervisors at the Bagot Unit, Brian Clarke, believes Bobby will achieve most of his aims within the next two years.

'He is particularly adept in the craft,' he says.

'Really you could say he is outstanding.'

Bobby was selected as a trainee four years ago by the noted English potter, Mr Michael Cardew, who was invited by the University of New South Wales and the NTA to set up the Ceramic Research Unit.

Mr Cardew was asked to include a pottery and materials processing section. He went to Milingimbi where Bobby was working packing fish.

According to a Welfare Branch officer who accompanied Mr Cardew to Milingimbi, Bobby was a 'natural':

The officer said: '... he was working in the factory, covered in fish scale and crab claws.

Mr Cardew handed him a piece of clay and Bobby immediately started to push it into various shapes.

Really his eyes shone and his face lit up as he worked the clay in his fingers . . .'

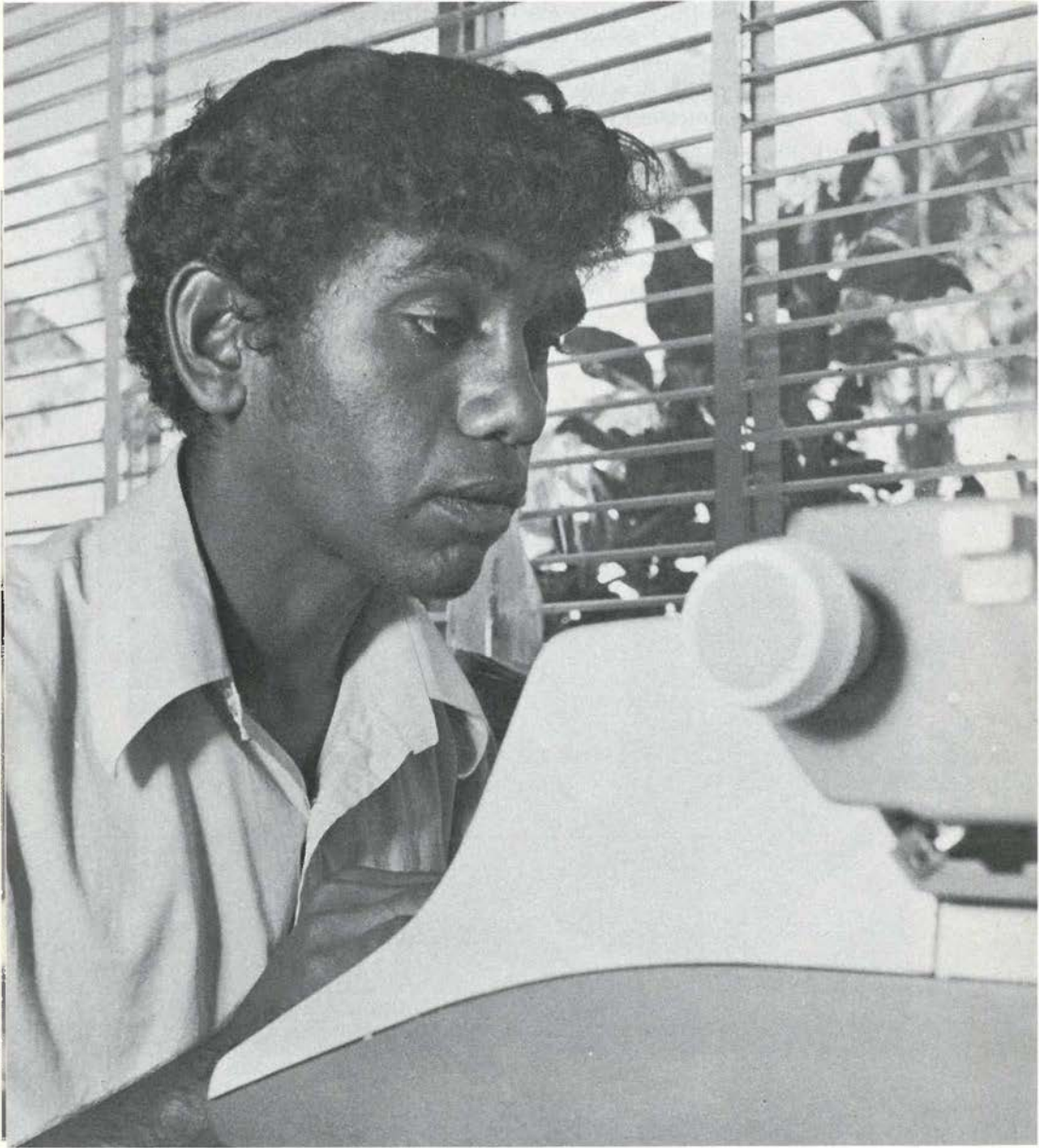
Bobby Wunyimarra has not looked back since—
not even to the hunting and fishing he enjoyed as a
youngster at the mission.

He is well on his way to becoming a successful
'maker of earthenware vessels'.



Pots made at the Bagot Ceramic Research Unit

Harold Ulamari meets a deadline . . .



REPORTING THE NEWS

By Harold Ulamari—that byline could be a familiar sight on many stories in the Darwin newspaper, the Northern Territory News, over the next few years. The first fullblood Aboriginal to take up a cadetship as a journalist on an Australian newspaper, Harold has been with the News since December 1970. He has settled in well and has had many small stories published. Harold's entry into the competitive world of newspapers was no overnight decision—it was a move carefully calculated over a number of years. In his first year at Darwin High School he won a prize in English and impressed teachers with his quiet, diligent manner. The Editor of the Northern Territory News, Mr Jim Bowditch, was approached by a teacher about the possibility of a journalistic career for Harold. Mr Bowditch and the teacher agreed that if Harold successfully completed another three years at school, he could join the newspaper as a cadet. Harold continued at school, often went into the News office to 'get the feeling of newspapers' and in 1970 gained, after four years of schooling, the equivalent of the South Australian Leaving Certificate. He was 19 in 1971 and as a first year cadet was earning \$57.25 a week (the average wage for a labourer in the Northern Territory without overtime is \$80 a fortnight). Jim Bowditch did not employ Harold 'just to give an Aboriginal boy a go in the newspaper business. There were many discussions, as is often the case with cadets, before we decided to make the position available. I had definitely been looking out for a suitable Aboriginal boy, but I had also been thinking of what such a boy could do for us as well as what we could do for him.' As an Aboriginal, Harold would be invaluable in communicating with his own people, particularly in the more sensitive areas affecting them, Mr Bowditch said. 'Basically, when the

heat is on they will trust him more than a white journalist. And I don't think this is a racist outlook. It will help us obtain more accurate and better stories about what are often complex matters,' he says. Harold, however, has not been hired solely as a contact between the newspaper and the 22,000 Aborigines who make up almost one-quarter of the population of the Northern Territory. He is being given all-round training in court, general and sports reporting and has already covered minor court stories. And there is very little fear that he will not make the grade. 'He is going well,' Jim Bowditch says. 'Initially his copy for a cadet was very good. It went off the line for a few months but has picked up again with tighter subbing. He is a very intent lad and has taken on additional studies at night. The shorthand teacher employed by the company to instruct all the reporting staff has described his work as excellent.' Harold Ulamari never longed to be a journalist—in fact he had seen only a handful of newspapers before going to Darwin. Born one of 10 children to Mr and Mrs Albert Ulamari he wanted, like his father, to be a stockman. Albert Ulamari was, for many years, the head stockman at Beetaloo Station, about 460 miles south of Darwin. Harold was born on Beetaloo Station. . . . 'we lived in a fairly rough old house' . . . and started to learn English when aged about five. Mona Bathern (now Mona Rennie), the daughter of the late Mr Watty Bathern, of Beetaloo, taught many of the young Aboriginal children. Harold continued his schooling when his family later moved to Newcastle Waters. He still wanted to be a stockman when he left Newcastle Waters in 1965 for Darwin where he attended Nightcliff Primary School in grade six and Rapid Creek Primary in grade seven. 'I went to Darwin High School the following year and it was then that I realised I would be better off gaining a full education.' He has no regrets about not becoming a stockman and after seven years away from his home—except for occasional holidays—never feels homesick. He spent eight weeks at his married sister's home in Sydney two years ago . . . 'a bit too big that place' . . . , has a girl friend in Darwin and, like most members of his profession, drinks and smokes. But he was a nervous young boy when he first started

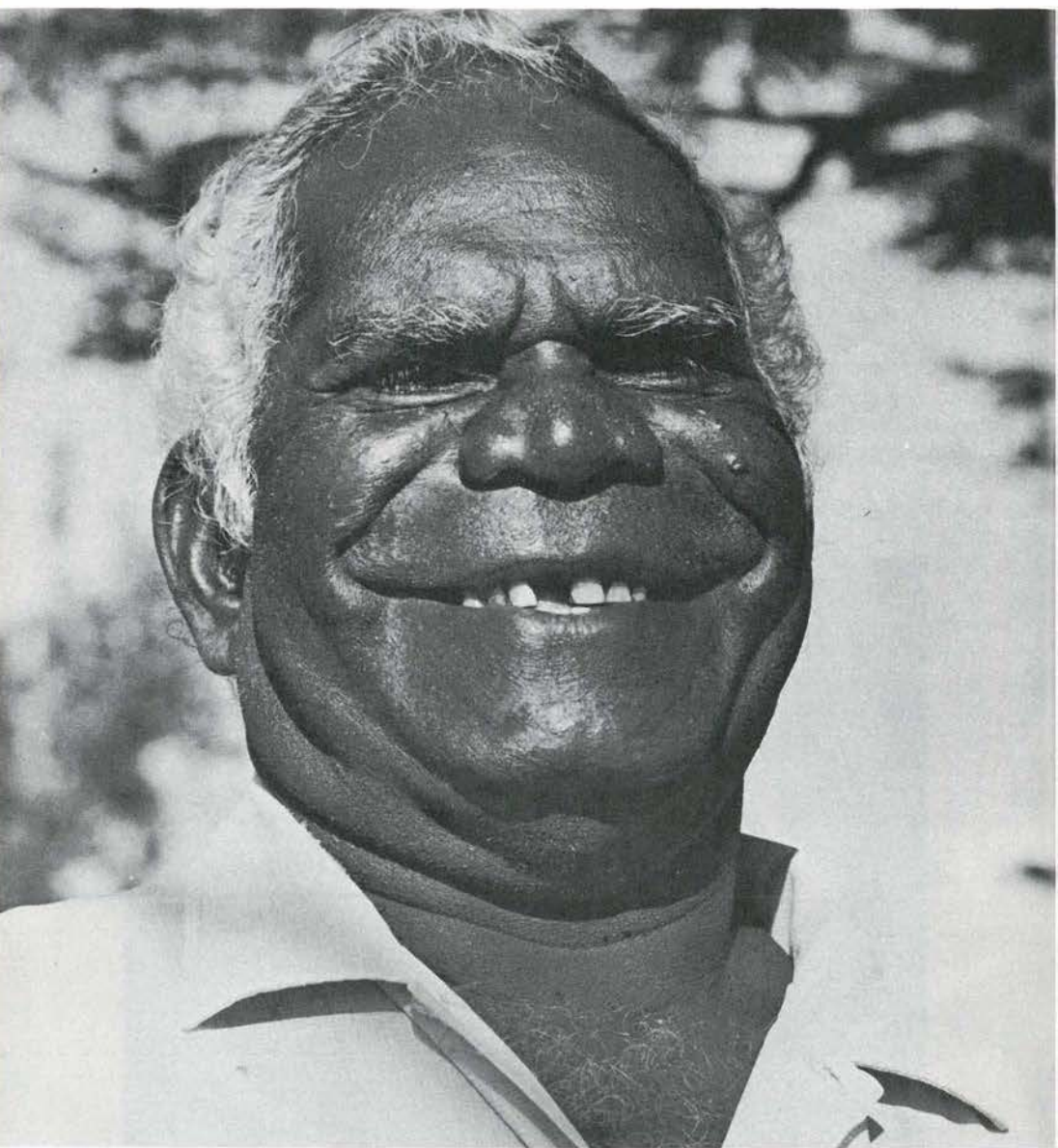
at the Northern Territory News. 'I was really shaky for the first few days and my first small interview was a terrifying experience. It's not too bad now, although I sometimes feel I lack enough confidence for all the personal contact necessary.

I'm improving though. Everybody tells me it's a matter of experience.' Harold feels his presence as a journalist in Darwin will, specially in the next few years, help his own people.

Maybe, he says, he can correct many of the wrong impressions people have about the Aborigines. Still, he is not a crusader, and at this stage of his career has set no limit on how far he will travel in his quest for experience in the news media.

... and a byline is the result





*Mr Lazarus Lamilami—the first fullblood Aboriginal
to be ordained a Methodist Minister*

COUNSELLOR OF HIS PEOPLE

In the Top End of the Northern Territory the stories and anecdotes that have grown up around the Reverend Lazarus Lamilami have helped make him a legend in his own lifetime.

Mr Lamilami is the first fullblood Aboriginal to be ordained a Minister of the Methodist Church, and is one of only a handful of Aborigines who hold offices in Australian churches.

A leader among his own people, Mr Lamilami is a widely known and respected member of the Territory's multi-racial community. A typical anecdote about him invariably concerns his mastery of the English language, a language that even today is still a second language

(and a difficult one to learn) for nearly all the Territory's Aborigines. Typically, the story would describe a meeting between Mr Lamilami at his home on Croker Island and a visitor—nearly always a 'southerner'.

The visitor, anxious to be understood, addresses Mr Lamilami in pidgin, a type of English spoken by many Aborigines in the remote areas of Australia. As the story inevitably goes, Mr Lamilami listens with rapt attention as the unsuspecting stranger holds forth. Then, when the visitor has usually got himself hopelessly tongue-tied, Mr Lamilami, in flawless English, politely suggests to a now astonished listener that perhaps it would be more convenient to converse in a language that he (Mr Lamilami) might be able to understand.

Significantly, this oft-repeated story points not only to Mr Lamilami's genial sense of humour, but also to one of the many ways in which he stands out among his own people.

Mr Lamilami believes he was born around 1910 (he has never been sure of the date) on remote Brogden Beach in north-western Arnhem Land, the son of nomadic Aborigines from the Manganowal tribe.

About the time he was born, more and more of his people were making contacts with the first Europeans to make regular journeys across the vast tracts of Arnhem Land

and nearby islands. One explorer was the Rev James Watson, a pioneer missionary who, in 1916, established a Methodist mission on Goulburn Island. Together with the mission, Mr Watson set up a school for young Aboriginal children. Thus Lazarus Lamilami (he took the Christian name of Lazarus as a youngster when he became a member of the Christian faith) became one of the first of his race in northern Australia to attend a school and learn the ways of the European.

Even after leaving school he continued learning. Reading more books, learning new skills, and all the time finding himself drawn closer to the teachings of the Christian missionaries.

During the Second World War, Lazarus Lamilami played a minor role in patrol work by the Royal Australian Navy, and spent much of his time working as a carpenter on Croker Island, not far from Goulburn Island. 'It was after the war that I made a decision to work towards becoming an ordained minister in the Methodist Church,' Mr Lamilami said.

'I had always been a Christian, but only in a half-hearted way. With the help of European ministers, I began the long task of preparing myself for the ministry.' The preparations included studies in Christian theology, other religions and the social sciences.

Always convinced that he would be of greater assistance to his fellow Aborigines if he became their minister, he worked on steadily for several years towards that goal. In 1966 he was ordained into the ministry. Shortly afterwards he went to Croker Island permanently as minister to the island's Aboriginal population of nearly 300 and European population of 12.

His church is a modest structure made from bush timber.

From the outside it is distinguished by its high roof and church bell. Inside, pews stand in neat rows on an earthen floor, and spiritual paintings by Aboriginal artists adorn the walls and timber pillars. Predominant among the Aboriginal designs is the repeated portrayal of a fish. Mr Lamilami sees the fish as a symbol uniting the tribal culture of his people and the European culture. 'The fish has a symbolic significance in the tribal religions of my people who have always lived near the sea,' he explained. 'The fish, of course, also has a special significance in Christian teachings.' On Croker Island, Mr Lamilami counsels his people as a church minister, and also as an advisor well-versed in the understanding of problems accompanying the social advancement of Australia's Aborigines. He is openly proud of the progress his people are making towards establishing



Aboriginal paintings adorn the walls of Mr Lamilami's church

their own industries and a completely self-supporting community. Two projects that have been most successful on Croker Island are a beef industry and a fishing industry. 'We supply beef and dugong (a large fish) and turtle meat to Elcho Island and Yirrkala on the mainland,' Mr Lamilami says. 'The beef industry has been built up gradually over a period of years, and today it is run with much assistance from Aborigines. Fishing, naturally, is something at which my people have always been expert.' As Mr Lazarus Lamilami continues with his ministry on Croker Island, he looks forward to the day when more of his people will take their place in the modern Australian community. Although he might not admit it, he will have played no small part in helping them achieve that end.

*Mrs Mangiwa Mandjiridju moves freely between
Aboriginal and western cultures*



ONE OF THE 'NEW GENERATION'

Mangiwa Mandjiridju has probably seen more of the outside world than most of the other 250 Aborigines who live on Goulburn Island. A bright, happy person, Mangiwa is one of the 'new generation' of Northern Territory Aborigines.

She is well educated, converses fluently in either her tribal tongue or English, and moves freely between the tribal culture into which she was born, and the modern western culture into which other Aborigines are gradually becoming assimilated.

She has visited most of Australia's capital cities, attended a university course in Brisbane, and travelled extensively throughout the Territory. And all this happened to her in a very short time. Up until 1965 the only world Mangiwa Mandjiridju knew was bounded by the sandy shores of Goulburn Island.

Born there 20 years ago and educated at the Methodist Mission School, Mangiwa is a fullblood Aboriginal from the Maung tribe whose traditional land on the north-west coast of Arnhem Land includes Goulburn Island. Married with a young son, she has become a distinguished figure in the Northern Territory, mainly through her work for the economic and educational progress of the Territory's 22,000 Aboriginal population.

As a member of the Advisory Committee of the Aborigines Benefits Trust Fund, Mangiwa is deeply involved in its task of allocating moneys to Aboriginal enterprises. After two years membership, she firmly believes the committee is fulfilling a vital role for her fellow Aborigines in the Territory.

'In that one year there were more than 80 requests for grants, and we were able to approve exactly half of them,'

she says with obvious pride. Despite the demands placed on her by her Committee membership, Mangiwa considers it is only a small part of her busy life. She is in charge of the pre-school at Goulburn Island, and plans to make a career of teaching Aboriginal children. 'Aboriginal children, such as the children here on Goulburn Island, are quite different in the classroom to European children. They have a different



En route to an ABTF Advisory Committee meeting

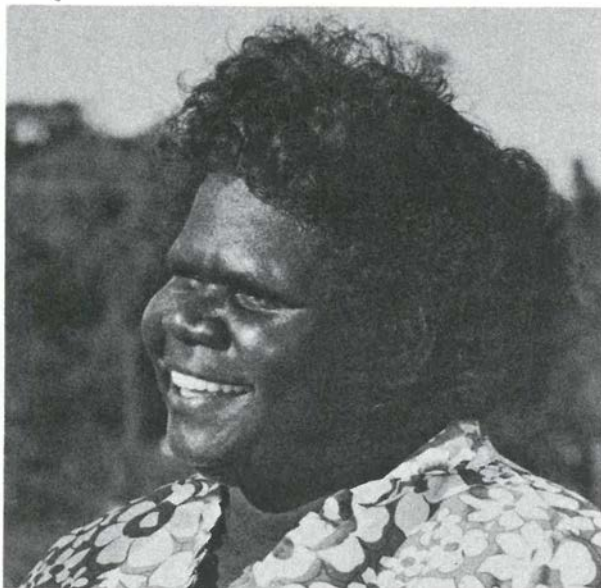
background, a different view of the world—like I did as a child—and even a different language.’ Mangiwa spoke her own language—Maung—before she mastered English. However, she could read and write English long before she was able to read or write her own language. ‘Originally, there was no written Maung,’ she says. ‘Then a few years ago the staff at the mission began writing it down. I was the first woman from the Maung people to learn how to read and write my own language.’ Mangiwa sees the use of Maung as a real asset in the classroom. She can see children understanding certain things far more quickly when it is explained in the language that they normally speak. Secondly, by learning to read and write their own language in the English alphabet, her young pupils should learn English more easily. As part of her training, Mangiwa

attended a general linguistics course at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, where she assisted mission staff in the lengthy and involved task of compiling a Maung dictionary.

Her ambition is to travel to New Guinea and New Zealand to observe and study methods for teaching indigenous pre-school children in those countries. Twice she has attempted to secure a Churchill Fellowship for this purpose, and she has been awarded the first scholarship granted by the ABTF, enabling her to visit Hawaii and Fiji. Above anything else, Mangiwa sees travel as one of the best ways of furthering her own education.

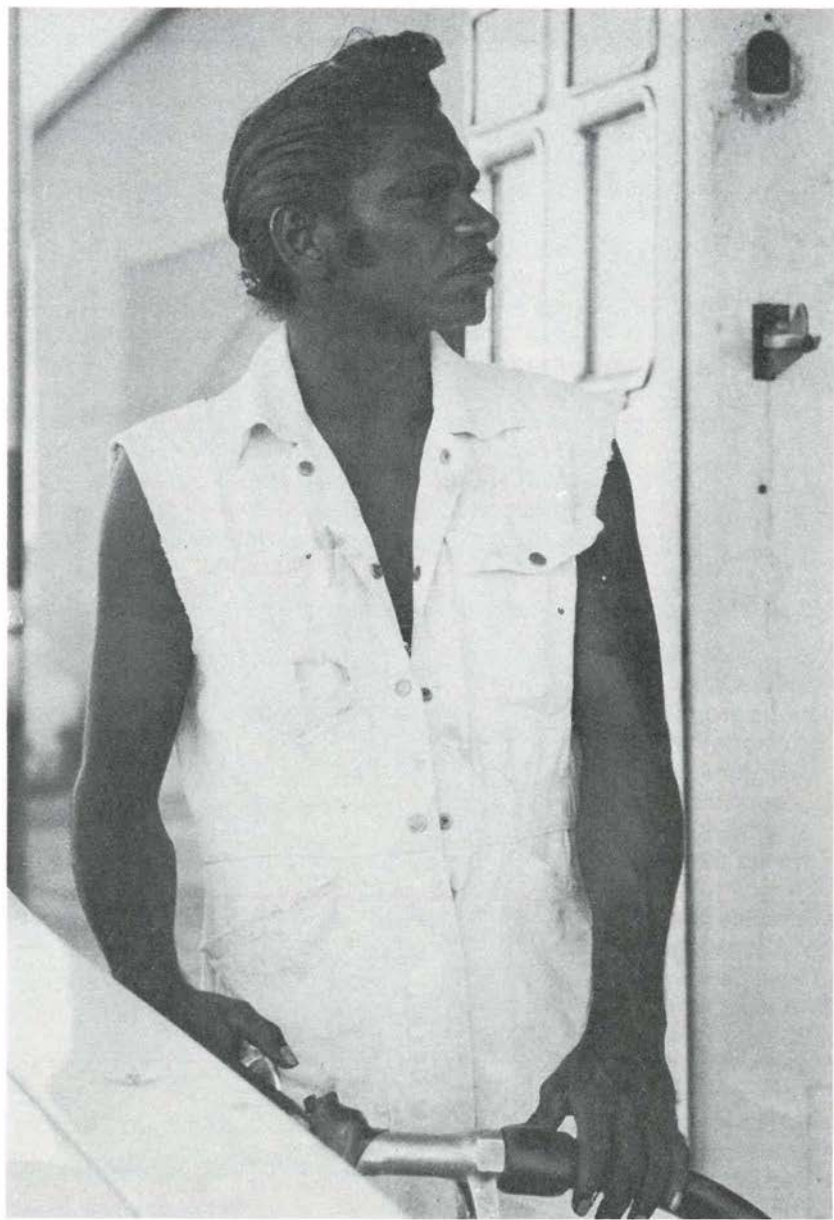
'Travel has not only enabled me to see how other people live and think, but it has made me think more, too,' she says. Among her most rewarding experiences as a traveller have been visits to the centre of Australia, where she has observed Aborigines of other tribes whose culture is so vastly different to that of her own people. Their ceremonies and art—two facets of Aboriginal culture fast disappearing in the transition to European culture—fascinated her.

As a result of her own experiences, Mangiwa believes that there should be more contact than at present between the various groups of Aborigines located around the Territory. 'It would mean more understanding by Aborigines of many, many things,' she declares, with the conviction of a person who has come to understand many, many things herself.



'A bright, happy person'

Teddy Cooper . . . long-service leave after 15 years



CITIZEN OF DARWIN

Shyness and a compelling homesickness—the desire to go back to their tribal land, family and friends—make it hard for many

Aborigines to stay in permanent employment in the larger population centres of the Northern Territory. Teddy Cooper suffered neither from shyness nor homesickness and, as a result, qualified for long service leave after 15 years continuous employment when he was only 30 years of age. That is unusual in any Australian community and even more so when the work habits of the Australian Aborigines are considered. In his indigenous state, the Aboriginal worked, but for a different reason from that of the European. He worked to survive, whereas to the European work is an integral part of society. Teddy Cooper, offhand, cannot even remember the name of the tribe into which he was born on Cobourg Peninsula, and he has no traditional Aboriginal beliefs.

He is, as he says, a 33-year-old Darwin citizen, married with four children, too old to play football any more but young enough for a game of basketball. A fullblood Aboriginal, he was brought up by his grandparents and lives a life typical of many of the semi-skilled residents of the Northern Territory. He remembers very little of his childhood on Cobourg Peninsula where he stayed until the outbreak of the war when 'we all went bush for the duration'.

After the war—in about 1946—his grandmother took him to Darwin and made him attend school regularly. 'I can remember going to school for the first time,' he says, 'and although I was a little scared I was not shy. You could say I was accepted and from that day until now I have never consciously been aware of being discriminated against because of my colour. I feel sure that if most Aborigines were not so shy they would not have a lot of trouble fitting into the larger centres. Shyness can be mistaken for many things and this is where trouble starts,' he says. Teddy left school and worked as a trainee motor mechanic in Darwin before he joined the Northern Territory Administration, working in the transport area as a bus driver and later in the Welfare Branch. In 1969 he drove a four-wheel-drive vehicle over a rough track from a spot north-east of Katherine to the Nabalco bauxite project on Gove Peninsula with the wife of the then Prime Minister, Mr John Gorton, and a

Minister in the Federal Parliament, Mr William Wentworth, and Mrs Wentworth, as VIP passengers. He handled the task well—so well in fact that the Nabalco company offered him a job as their official driver. 'I took one week of my long service leave,' he recalls, 'and went back out to Gove and joined the company.' He enjoyed the work but the project was in its early stages of development and lack of housing prevented him taking his family to the site. After 7½ months of living in the single quarters at Gove, Teddy was homesick for the first time in his life—for his family in Darwin. So he resigned and returned to Darwin and rejoined the Administration and is now working in the transport area—successfully and regularly as in the past. Teddy Cooper was one of the Territory's outstanding Australian Rules football players and won the best and fairest award for the Darwin League in 1957/58 and 1961/62. He still watches football at weekends if he is not out shooting with his family or friends. He has no other special interests and is not active in any Aboriginal organisation, although he would like to see more of his people 'integrated into the Darwin community. This would be the best for them. They would advance much further. They should not want to remain isolated.' Supporters of this view need go no further than Teddy Cooper himself for a good example.

CONCLUSION

In many instances, Aborigines such as Harold Ulamari, Teddy Cooper and Gus Williams have had to make a decisive break from the traditions and beliefs of their parents and their parents' parents, handed down over centuries, to take their place in the broader Australian community as a whole. They know, probably as well as anyone can in today's society, where they are going. Mangiwa Mandjiridju and Lazarus Lamilami have found success in the wider community while still working closely with their people and sharing the many social and cultural changes that are taking place on the settlements, missions and pastoral properties in the Northern Territory. They, too, know where they are going. Mirian Midaring, converted to Christianity and committed to a life of poverty, chastity and obedience will remain amongst her people as their social revolution continues. Sister Mary Agatha has found her way. Bobby Wunyimarra, on the other hand, is the embodiment of the young Aboriginal emerging in the Territory today—not totally committed to the legends, culture and tribal structures of old, but not entirely secure in the complex European community. Confident, but at the same time unsure. In need of guidance to determine his path. It is the Bobby Wunyimarras with their diverse values, embodying the best of both Aboriginal and European cultures, who will be the driving force as the Aborigines slowly merge with their fellow Australians. Regrettably, many will not receive the necessary encouragement and assistance from their elders who, because of a widespread distrust of the European and his values, believe such thinking will lead to a loss of identity for the Aboriginal people. As a result, through their strong sense of kinship, they will be hesitant to alienate themselves with family and friend by leaving settlements and missions to gain a wider education and better employment opportunities. But it must be done. It was not long ago that a young Aboriginal reached the second term of third year at Darwin High School and, despite the strongest counselling that could be given him, decided that the gap between himself and his peers was too wide. He believed he was getting too far ahead of his people. He abandoned his schooling and returned to his settlement. This is not an isolated case. But it is one that is being tackled through education of the young, from pre-school upwards. Education to make trainee potters potters, garage attendants mechanics, stockmen managers, pre-school teachers teachers, cadet journalists journalists. Education that eventually, it is hoped, will produce a host of tradesmen, clerks, professional men, university graduates. This will happen—but it will happen only on the wider plane when a youngster concludes that while retaining those aspects of his culture that can enrich his future life he must shake off the inhibitions that plagued the young man who thought he was getting too far ahead of his people. By shedding these shackles, the young Aborigines will pave the way for future generations to live at social and economic levels which do not place them at a disadvantage with their fellow citizens.

