

Dreaming stories

The law was very strict and we were not allowed to talk while elders were talking, or to be seen to be rowdy or interfere with conversations, because the law says that uncles don't talk to nieces. You weren't supposed to have anything to do with your uncles, very harsh I suppose. But we did talk to our uncles, and one in particular had been through the law, Uncle Tom [mother's brother]. He used to tell us little stories about the bush in the Dreamtime that we had no idea about, but it was fascinating and I always listened. Uncle Tom was one of the great family storytellers, along with my mother and my Aunty Eva. They told us whatever they had on their minds. It was a passed on thing but we weren't to know that. We were fascinated by the stories. We used to lie out in the open on hot nights, and you got the hot wind and all that, snakes all night. It was part of our life.

Besides what my Mum told me, and uncle and other old people, my aunty really told me a lot. But there were a lot of things she wasn't allowed to talk about, mainly because I think they were men's business or part of the business. But my Mum went through the law, so I was told, out from Mullewa, and the last of the law went on to Pia Station. There are two Pias. There's Pia One and Pia Two, and one goes not far out [from Mullewa] and the other one is further, north-east, that one's run by the Simpsons. Might be P-y-a but I don't think so. It's P-i-a.

The djurrnda stone

Really and truly I couldn't fault my mother, the stories she told to me. I know where there's women's business and other big corroboree grounds, and hidden things in different places. My mother told me about them and about one place in particular that's to do with fresh water in a big

lake. She told me about a big stone in a lake east of Morawa — it's now known as Lake Moore, and it's on the other side of Mount Gibson. It's shaped like a mushroom, that's what we were told anyway. Only special people would ever see the stone, and there's a special time of the year it would rise out of the lake. So, fair enough. I laughed because that was the story. *Djurrnda** stone they called it, with that twist to the 'r', *djurrnda*.

Old Norm and Aunty Eva went out many times to find it, because the word was it was pure gold and they wanted to see if it was true, but they went looking north. They hunted and hunted but this stone's supposed to be in Lake Moore, and Lake Monger was where they were going all the time. Mount Gibson is in between these two lakes. So Lake Moore is the one that's got this fresh water. I nearly freaked out knowing all these things. Many people say there was fresh water in the middle of Lake Moore, and all around the side there was fresh water. At one time there must have been freshwater lakes or something, an underground river maybe.

The mushroom stone came out through archaeologists' studies. And there are artefacts that match the stones. You know just pushed up through the ground. It's a permanent thing. When I met this chap that worked down there, something to do with tourism, he showed me a map that showed everything my mother said, including the story about the *djurrnda* stone. That's east of where we were but it's still in Widi country. It's just so uncanny really that my mother told me years ago about the *djurrnda* stone. I've never set eyes on any of it. We didn't have an opportunity. We had no vehicles and you know we weren't actually taken on walkabouts like normal tribal people. We were half civilised.

There's a little bit more to it. I didn't tell you the whole truth of those golden mushrooms. I went up to Paynes Find and somehow through the night I had some sort of vision or dream. This person was telling me about this stone. It wasn't really a golden mushroom like the one in the lake could have been. It was more to the point of some small tribe getting killed by mushrooms. I've only just had this story. Where it came from goodness knows. All these little mushrooms can be found, the mushroom stones. They've turned to stone. I could see them in my dream. Strange isn't it? It came to me the other day. I quite often get stories.

One feller I know used to work on a station that joins Mount Gibson, and you know how station owners have their paddocks mapped out?

The sheep were all disappearing. You know, he had to go round up the sheep and he'd do it on motorbike and horseback. But he said they ran into these sheep that were just heavily laden with wool and hadn't been shorn, which they call stragglers. They had inches and inches of wool, to the point where they could barely walk. So they followed them to this place, and then all of a sudden the ground dropped, more like I suppose crater-like, and they were wondering where this water was coming from to feed these sheep, cos their pads were going up this little hill in the middle of the crater and the water was running uphill. The water was in the top of this hill. It was being pushed up somehow. I was told that before by other people.

The map also gives a list of the animals that were there, and in that list is *dunart*. When I was telling the anthro he said, 'Oh, well, I'm sure this must be the story you told me about the Dunart and the Bungarra.' This is the country, so I'm sure it is too. I've never heard anybody else tell the story about the *dunart* but that's what that little animal was. That's also in the list, the mushroom stone, and some other animals that are found down here, some possums and bilby. I think originally they wanted to make a tourist thing of it and so somebody went out there and listed all the animals and all the birds and everything. But I don't think it ever got off the ground. Too rough the country. Anyway all those things my mother was telling me about, I never knew whether they were true or not because I couldn't prove it.

The Dreaming, the spiritual things that are just unreal, made the people out of the animals. It's unreal and yet it's understandable; creation days the old people told us. Most of us now are young compared to those people. That's really because all the creatures, the birds, animals, all of them became Aboriginals, and through punishment or whatever that's how they come about. Funniest thing. Every being has a spirit behind it. Everybody has their different spirit [totem]. It could be an animal like a bird or a snake.

Beemarra

In that area I mentioned (above) there is a Dreaming track. You know how they say God is everywhere. This Beemarra would have been similar to the white man's God, because he's everywhere. They come from over there, Ernabella and into Western Australia, called Yakabindie in Western Australia but east, out from Wiluna, and there were two males and two female snakes. But I wouldn't go into that story.

The snakes separated and each one took a different direction. One went up north, right up to the Kimberleys. One went down over here to Wongi land and from there it travelled on. I don't know where ours went but I think it was Yakabindie. Our Dreaming track comes from Yakabindie to Cue and Lake Darlot. It covers the Mount Gibson area and the two lakes, and right away to near Northampton and the Bowes River, and down along the coast. Even the Wadjari people call that the Beemarra. I don't know whether it was before white settlement, but it must have been. They separated to the north and to the Midwest and lived in the south and the midsouth around Pingelly to populate and give water. They created the water and the land. This story comes from the Dreaming. This is before people.

It's fascinating and it conflicts with Christianity in one way, and yet it's quite like Christianity. I mean in death they buried people in the white words, 'ashes to ashes and dust to dust.' But our way, we return to the lands and the ground we came from. Even in the Bible it says God took a handful of sand and made man, and we came from the ground.

Christianity is a white man's name for believing in a saviour, but God says in the Bible, 'Believe in me for I am the truth,' and that's what I say is God. You can't put a face on God, but you can put a face on that Beemarra. And I always ask the question, on what day did God create water? I keep coming back to it. I can't help asking the question, but they didn't bring that water, it was here all the time. In the Aboriginal Dreaming, Beemarra created the water. What I'm saying is the white people brought Christianity to the Aboriginal people. They didn't bring the water. The water was there all the time because Beemarra created the water. Aboriginal names for Beemarra are slightly different between different areas. In some places they call it the Rainbow Snake and other places they call him Wagyl.

Red kangaroo

There's another place up there in Cue. Right next to Cue is Widi country and then it goes east, and there's a place called Wilgi Mia that every man and his dog knows about. People came from Queensland for that red *wilgi*, red ochre. There was a big red kangaroo and he was eating all the food and chasing all the other kangaroos out, the *marloo* and *bigudas*, rock kangaroos. He kept chasing them out and the Aboriginals there were starting to get hungry because this big boomer was eating everything. So they all got together and they started throwing magic

at it, but that didn't work on the kangaroo and he still ran rampant. So all the tribes from all around got together with their spears and boomerangs. They chased him down to this big hill and they hit him with everything. Of course they killed him, he rolled down that hill and landed with a crash and made a big hole. The red ochre is the blood of that red kangaroo. It's a sacred stone of course. That's what happened and they said because he was so big that was why it was such a big minefield for red ochre.

Porcupine (echidna)

The Porcupine was a greedy, greedy frog. Well he was like a frog and he was water. There was a drought during the summer and the water was drying up. But there was one place where there was plenty of water, so they used to go there and get their water and keep it safe, and nobody was greedy. But the frog went along and he drank all the water. While he was drinking the water all the other Aboriginals got on the hill and they threw spears at him. So he had to carry all those spears. That's how he got his spears (quills), cos he was greedy and drank all the water.

Bungarra and Emu

There's a story about the Bungarra and the Emu. Well Emu has always been an arrogant sticky-beak who picks up everything and is jealous too, but he was also friendly. But he got jealous of the Bungarra because they called it a racehorse goanna — you know, eventually the whitefellers did cos it could run. So he said, 'All right Bungarra, me and you have a race,' he said in their own lingo. Somebody kicked them off, I think it was the Turtle, and away they went. Well the Bungarra, he could run, but he had only little short legs. So of course Emu started out and beat him. So the poor little Bungarra he came back and he was blowing and going on and the Emu was giving him cheek. Oh, you know, things like 'You can't run.' And Bungarra sat and he thought. He said, 'All right then, I'll give you another race. I bet I can beat you in a race around that tree.' And the Emu said, 'Oh no worries.' So they got on their marks again and they went round the tree. Well the Bungarra ran straight onto the tree trunk, and ran it. He won the race cos the Emu couldn't turn quickly. So that's how the Bungarra beat him in the race. Emu