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**Citation**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE  
MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC

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<b>Vice President/ Public Officer</b>	Mr Sean Parnell
<b>Secretary</b>	Mr Barry Frew
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mr Danny Bacon
<b>Committee</b>	Mr Gary Manison Mr Denzil McManus Mr John Woodcock Ms Chantel Fischer Mr Saus Grant



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It gives me a great deal of pleasure to write this first message as President of the NT Police Museum and Historical Society.

I have had an on and off relationship with the Museum and Historical Society over the years, unfortunately mostly off rather than on due to work and commitments to other voluntary organisations. Fortunately when outgoing president Sean Parnell asked me to consider standing, I had no commitments outside work and I felt that I could give the job the sort of commitment that it needs.

I find the Society in good shape I think, with many willing volunteers keen to see the good works continue and expand. I hope I am able, in my new position to facilitate that.

In the spirit of those remarks, I have recently had the opportunity to continue to put the Museum's case in regard to the provision of space. It has been a long and complicated issue for the Police Force and at every step the Museum has received earnest consideration and support, especially from the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner. Without wishing to raise anyone's hopes too high, the subject of accommodation is again reaching a decision point with Government and I am hopeful that the Museum will be able to be given suitable premises within the CBD within the boundaries of that process.

This, of course, raises a number of issues for the Museum, not least of which will be the question "Once we have the space what will we do with it?" Expectations will be high, but I am sure we will be able to meet them.

I look forward to a productive and successful year ahead.

Mark McAdie.

## VOLUNTEERS

**Rosemary Rowe** and **Val Watters** have been contributing their valuable talents to the museum for over five years, working here a number of days a week. With a carefully planned preservation and conservation schedule, they have not only continued to preserve an impressive array of historical data on former and present day members, but have a cross-filed index for easy access to information on members and a variety of subjects. Members are probably unaware of their valuable contribution, and we are greatly indebted to them. Thanks to both of you, and please keep up the good work, Val and Rosemary – we **need** you.

A vote of thanks also to **Barry and Clare Frew** who have kept the correspondence, office and membership records in order for the last 15 months or so. Happily for them, but unfortunately for us, the Frews are presently overseas visiting Canada, United States, England and Germany. An impressive postcard from Frewy assures us that they are having a fantastic time, and particularly enjoying the great array of wildlife and beautiful scenery. We look forward eagerly to their return on 3 November.

**John Woodcock** has volunteered to edit this newsletter from January 2006 and we are anxiously awaiting his return to Darwin.

Deirdre **Hurwood** is always a willing volunteer when she is in town.

## CHIT CHAT – Visitors and Letters Received etc.

We spoke with **Janell Cox** during August – Janell, who was our Curator for some years, now lives at Amamoor Qld. Janell's Great Great Grandfather built the first or second house in Katherine – back in the days when Emungalan was the town on the other side of the Katherine River. Mr Cox then moved to Pine Creek where the Cox family spent many years – some of you might remember Cox's Stores in Katherine – yes the same family.

**Ron Corbin's** brother from Victoria phoned last month. He had spent a week or so in Darwin, and phoned the retired police office on the chance that someone may have known his brother. The duty volunteer hadn't heard of Ron, but later asked me and I phoned Ron's brother – he was catching a flight out of Darwin that afternoon. Ron, long deceased, had left Darwin in 1961.

Ron's brother didn't know Ron well, Ron being many years older and having left home when the brother was a youngster. Apparently Margaret Corbin passed away a few years ago, and while their son has remained single, Margaret, the daughter is married with children.

On the 31 August, West Australians **Dorothy and Tom Deering – Bluey Harvey's** sister and brother-in-law - called in to the museum. They had already been in contact with David Swift. They said Bluey has his good days and his bad days but still fondly recalls the Northern Territory and the NT Police.

**Basil and Molly Courts** visited the RPANT office a couple of weeks ago; they were visiting their son who lives and works in Katherine. Both looked well and are enjoying retired life in Bargara Qld.

**Bob Thorning** has bought a house at 40 Ryan Street, Moonta SA 5558 and his phone number is 88253786.

**Tassie Young** of Macksville NSW wrote during August, including some original paper work pertaining to conditions when he joined the job with the wish that the items sent would be of some use to the society.

**Bert Mettam** of Adelaide corresponded early last month. While many of us had heard of Bert and some had met him at the 60 year reunion, I had no idea that he was a prisoner of war and worked on the Burma Railway, and that his great grandfather and grandfather were the Messrs Holtzes of the Darwin Botanic Gardens fame. Bert (who is 86), his Mother and Grandfather were all born in Darwin.



## FROM THE PAST

**Mrs Dorothy Thomas** nee Stretton wrote from Victoria and sent a number of articles including the following:-

**Inspector Paul Heinrich Mattheas Foelsche** was born in Hamburg Germany in 1831. He joined the S.A. Mounted Police in November 1856. He was a man of high courage, scholarship, and versatility and was an ardent collector of plants, photographer of merit, anthropologist and keen historian.

He had been with the S.A. Mounted Police for 14 years and arrived in Darwin on the "Koh i Noor" in January 1870 in charge of the N.T. Mounted Police which had arrived a day or so before on the "Gulnare".

Capt. Bloomfield Douglas (Govt Resident) stated on his arrival "It affords me much satisfaction to state that members of the Police Force stationed here are under excellent discipline and are performing their duties most satisfactorily. Mr. Foelsche is eminently qualified for the post he fulfils".

He had studied the aboriginal laws and had a gifted understanding of the natives. Their standard of ignorance of white mans rules and their Tribal superstitions were his real problem, and he devoted most of his 33 years as head of N.T. Mounted Police, to finding a solution of the problems they created.

He created a paper on Northern Aboriginals, and this was sent to the Royal Society of S.A., and was read by Sir Charles Todd in 1881. Inspector Paul Foelsche had high qualities as a policeman. A contemporary comment reads. "A veritable sleuth hound of the law. In him the detective instinct was natural and he had the mental powers to make him a man to be dreaded by criminals."

A true Pioneer, he retired in Jan 1904 after 48 years service. He was awarded a gold medal by Kaiser Wilhelm 11 for his work in N.T., and was also honoured by King Edward V11, and awarded the Imperial Service Medal. He remained in Darwin till his death in January 1914, only a short time before WW1 began between his native land and adopted country.

Although no memorial had been erected in 1963 and very few references made, his principles of equity and humanity have been models for his successors - Waters, Dudley, Stretton, Littlejohn, and Graham, who have faithfully upheld them. That is indeed the memorial Paul Foelsche would have valued.

"Inspector Foelsche was highly respected by all who knew him. My father said of him that he ruled the Police Force with a great sense of discipline, although any penalty he inflicted on his subordinates was just and merciful."

Signed. A.V.Stretton (Former Superintendent)

*It may be of interest to our members that Mr. Foelsche's extraordinary photographic skills documenting the birth and early development of what was then Port Darwin will be exhibited at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory from 21 January to 19 March 2006.*

A further article forwarded by Mrs. Thomas related to **William George Stretton** who was part of the first contingent of Mounted Police from South Australia, but who arrived slightly ahead of Paul Foelsche:



**STRETTON WILLIAM GEORGE** (1847-1919), policeman, storekeeper, miner and public servant, was born at Stratford on Avon, England, on 1 February 1847. He arrived in South Australia in January 1854 and was educated at Baijeauts School, Kensington, and Taplin's School, Salisbury. At the age of 18, on 14 February 1865, he joined the South Australian Mounted Police and saw service at Mount Gambier, Wallaroo and in the Barossa Valley.

In 1869 he was selected to be a member, at wage of seven Shillings and seven Pence a day, of the first contingent of police then being readied to travel to the Northern Territory. With Masson, Keppler, Board and Smith under Corporal Drought, they reached Port Darwin in Gulnare on 4 January 1870. Inspector Paul Foelsche (q.v., vol. 1) long to remain at the helm of the Territory's police arrived later in the month.

Stretton left the police force to work on the construction of the Overland Telegraph and was Chief Storekeeper on the northern section. When this was completed in August 1872 he turned his hand to mining. In May 1873 he was asked to head a mining party, named the Adelaide Prospecting Venture, which had been financed by the Jewish community and amongst whose members was the young V.L. Solomon (q.v., vol.1). The standing joke of the day, it was said, was that Stretton resembled Moses. Why? Because he led the children of

Israel into the wilderness. The prophecy was not entirely fulfilled as the party discovered the Woolwonga goldfield.

In March 1876 he rejoined the Northern Territory police force with which he served until 1/10/1878, and among other duties acted as the armed escort from the goldfields to Southport (N.T.). As with many of his contemporaries, he was often called upon to act in other capacities. For two years from 1885 he was, for example, Clerk to the local Board of Health and Sanitary Inspector. In 1879 and for some years thereafter, in his private capacity, he acted as one of the auditors for the Palmerston District Council.

In September 1887 he joined the Customs Department as a landing waiter and was appointed to Borrooloola. The following August as a 'worthy and popular officer', he succeeded G.R. McMinn (q.v., vol. 1) in the McArthur River District as Postmaster, Deputy Protector of Aborigines, Warden of the Goldfields for Mining District B, Justice of the Peace, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Commissioner for Affidavits and, when necessary, Harbourmaster.

On 8 January 1890 he was appointed a Special Magistrate for Borrooloola and he remained there for the next four years. J.G. Knight (q.v., vol. 1), then Government Resident had a very high opinion of him: 'Mr. Stretton is a most zealous and able Magistrate and his hand should be strengthened in every possible way.'

He served as Chief Warden of the Goldfields from November 1894 to August 1896, when he resigned and was then appointed Sub Collector of Customs, after Alfred Searcy (q.v. vol. 1) had been promoted to Adelaide. Again he held a number of commissions, including that of Chairman of the Licensing Bench, Visiting Justice to the Fannie Bay Goal, Receiver of Public Moneys and Insolvency Registrar. He was gazetted Deputy Harbourmaster on 30 November 1897 and, notwithstanding that Stretton was not a mariner, was appointed to the position in November 1898 after the retirement of Captain H.R. Marsh (q.v.1). He remained Sub Collector of Customs and Harbourmaster, adding Surveyor of Ships in November 1903, and Protector of Aborigines in June 1908 until he was compulsorily retired on 1 February 1912 at the age of 65. He had completed 42 years of service with the South Australian government and it was said of him that he had 'capably and strongly filled the different positions to which he had been appointed'. But he was far from ready to retire.

On 1 March 1913 he was appointed Chief Protector of Aborigines. During a strike of wharf labourers when public servants discharged the ships he and his 'black satellites' were commended for their good work. He was appointed a Special Magistrate on 1 March 1914 and from then until his death he regularly sat whenever he was needed. In July 1916, for example, he was at Pine Creek. As a magistrate he was well regarded by the counsel who appeared before him. A piece in the Northern Territory Times and Gazette on his retirement omitted the detail of his more than 20 years on the bench and attention was drawn to it by J.J. Symes, long a practicing lawyer in the north.

When the Northern Territory was transferred to the Commonwealth in January 1911, Stretton, as one of those longest residents, had the honour of hoisting the flag. Similarly he read the commission confirming Gilruth's (q.v., vol. 1) appointment as Administrator when the latter arrived in the Northern Territory in 1912.

His sporting interests were those pursued by 'gentlemen'. He was an accurate shot and in the 1880s, before he went to Borrooloola, frequently headed the lists of results from the

Palmerston Rifle Club. He was also a keen racing man and in 1916 was a judge for the annual racing club meeting. In 1903 he was Vice President of the committee which staged one of the first agricultural and horticultural shows, then to become an annual event.

Stretton died unexpectedly on 29 November 1919 aged 72, while at Oenpelli, where he was buried. At his death he had been a Territory resident for five weeks short of 50 years, a record then unmatched. He was to have returned to Darwin to give evidence to the Ewing Royal Commission but the usual stores vessel was over two months late and when it arrived he had been dead for six weeks. His family was later to claim that the lax communication between Darwin and the coastal settlements had been the reason for his death as medical treatment had been unavailable. During his years of residence in the Northern Territory he was said to have enjoyed splendid health.

He married Alice Anna, nee Arthur, in Palmerston on 31 March 1876 and 10 children were born of the marriage, seven of whom survived him. He was predeceased by his wife, who died on 6 February 1897 at the age of 40 from the effects of malaria. The shock of the devastating cyclone which hit Palmerston the month before was thought to have contributed to her death. Stretton left an estate sworn in at 2,000 Pounds to his children.

D. Lockwood. The *Front Door*. 1969 Age 29 April 1920: Northern Territory Times and Gazette, 4 July 1885, 22 September 1887, 25 January 1897, 25 November 1897, November 1898, 22 February 1901, 4 September 1903, 30 October 1908, 14 July 1911, 21 July 1911, 6 May 1913, 12 June 1913, 28 May 1914, 1 June 1916, 10 January 1920: Observer 18 August 1888.

### Do you have a story?

**John Woodcock is looking for a tale or two to include in Citation. Please forward them for inclusion in a future edition. In this issue are included the following stories from Andy McNeill's Musings (Andy served from 1959 to 1992):**

#### DRINKING AS A RECREATION

Drinking was the major form of recreation for us in those days. On day shift you either wore a t-shirt under your uniform or took a spare shirt to work and at 4pm went straight to the "Vic" Hotel. There you drank until closing time or at least until the evening meal, when you had a break and then had a few more drinks before going home to the barracks. If you had a mate on evening shift you took at least two bottles of Victorian Bitter "VB" back to barracks for him when he knocked off at midnight, along with your own supply. There were no stubbies in those days only the normal size bottles and larger bottles, which held about four litres and which were later named the "Darwin Stubby".

In the recreation room at the barracks there were a couple of large tables placed end to end and around these we sat every night drinking, reliving the day's experiences, singing songs, telling yarns and generally enjoying life. Bill Jacobs would play the guitar, spoons and mouth organ. Two out of the three of the latter at the same time! Bluey Harvey would play on any surface available with his drumsticks and on the odd occasions Peter Hamon gave us a tune on the clarinet. Everyone sang a song or recited some poetry. There were no inhibitions at all and we had some great nights. The evening shift blokes always had a few drinks when they got back to barracks with who ever was still around from day shift.

At the end of the seven days midnight shift it was customary to go straight to barracks, put your weeks washing in the old concrete mixer type washing machines provided, add a liberal amount of Rinso or Persil washing powder and then head to the "Vic" Hotel for a long drinking session. This practice later became known as "Choir Practice", but we had not adopted this American expression then. When you started to fall asleep at the bar it was time to head back to the barracks. Once there you had to try to unravel your clothes, which had been knotting up for several hours in the washing machine and hang them out to dry. Then it was probably a few more beers before going to bed and sleeping, hopefully for the next ten to twelve hours. What a life!

One afternoon I went over to the Vic Hotel beer garden for a quiet drink and said to Lilly Fong Lim, who was serving behind the bar, "What can I have for a change instead of a beer Lilly?" Lilly thought for a moment then said, "There is a new drink they tell me is all the go in Sydney. It's called Tia Mari and you mix it with Coca Cola, why not try one of them?" I agreed and Lilly quickly mixed the drink for me. To me it tasted just like a chocolate-milkshake not bad but not something I would drink all the time. Lilly's brother Richard walked into the bar as I was enjoying my first drink of the day. He came over and said, "Good day Andy, what are you drinking I'll buy you one?" I said, "Thanks mate mines a Tia Mari and coke." Richard looked hard at me and said scornfully, "That's a poofster's drink". Quick as a flash I replied, "I'll have a beer".

There were two breweries in Darwin, the Carlton United, which produced Victorian Bitter and the Western Australian Swan brewery. They were flat out trying to keep up the supply of amber liquor to the Territory. On the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1960 just after 8pm, a fire was reported at the Swan Brewery. Every copper on and off duty and every fireman in town responded to the call. The fire, which wasn't all that big, was extinguished within an hour. However the firemen kept pumping water onto the smoldering ruins until the next morning.

The fire broke out in the bottle warehouse, fortunately not in the brewery, and Sergeant Danny Sprigg my boss in Traffic, borrowed some oxy gear and cut a hole into the bottle warehouse so that the firemen could get in to fight the blaze. Ron Hughes had recently transferred from Alice Springs and was Station Sergeant, and he was there with us making sure we did the right thing. We reckoned once the fire was out we needed something to quench our thirst so the brewery manager Mr. Watt generously took us to the free beer tap for our reward. This beer was the only Swan beer I ever enjoyed and we were still enjoying ourselves at about 9pm. At this point I am sure some of the drinkers were planning exactly how they could start a fire at the Carlton Brewery the next night, having enjoyed the free beer at the Swan fire so much. Suddenly, through the door walked the Darwin Inspector, Jim Mannion. Ron Hughes, always a quick thinker, handed Jim Mannion a beer and then explained that we had been working flat out to get the fire under control and needed a drink to stop dehydration. Mr. Mannion unfortunately wasn't born yesterday and he had us out of there in no time flat. Soon after the fire, the Swan Brewery found they were very short of bottles. They found it necessary to set up special collection points and a telephone hot line so that people could return bottles to them to make up for the losses.

Many of the Territory's inhabitants at that time considered drinking as their major recreation. Liquor licensing laws were reasonably strict, and on Sunday the pubs only opened for two sessions, from 1 lam to 2pm and 4pm to 6pm. Ten o'clock closing was the norm during the week with late nights on a rostered basis between the town pubs, to midnight on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. Clubs had similar hours. The golf club used to play the Sunday competitions around the drinking session hours. There were not too many clubs in those days



and this was one of the reasons why several of us joined the Royal Antediluvian Order of the Buffaloes so that we could get a drink out of hours. There did not seem to be too many restrictions on the "Buffs". You could get a drink any time they were having a meeting. Peter Young was already a member and Neil Plumb, Harry Cox and I joined up to get in on the drinking privileges. We had some good times at the meetings, mainly entertaining the other members singing and telling jokes.

There were only three really big clubs in town. The Buff Club, which was on the Stuart Highway at Stuart Park and the Workers Club in Cavenagh Street. Both had more members than the Darwin Club, the home of Darwin Society in Mitchell Street, but were more or less pubs. Buses used to pick up and drop off the wharfies at the Workers Club and the Buff Club, when they were going to and coming from work. The Buff Club wasn't a bad place although there were plenty of fights there and the club safe was broken into regularly.

The Workers was another story. They really didn't like police coming into their establishment at all and for young keen coppers that was like a red rag to a bull. When Neil Plumb and I worked in C.LB, we used to visit there regularly. As often as possible we would use the Consorting Act to warn the licensee against serving certain individuals who had criminal records.

The leading club in town then was the Darwin Club. The members of this establishment tolerated the senior ranks of the Police Force, but did not really like the rank and file members coming to their domain. It was not our preferred drinking place even though it was only a short walk from the barracks.

The Navy, Army and Air force Bases all had their own messes for various ranks and we were always welcome. We often frequented the service establishments, mainly because of the company and the cheap drinks. The Navy then had the Petty Officer's Mess on the corner of Smith Street and the Esplanade where the Administrator's Office now stands. The Army Mess was at Larrakeyah and the R.A.A.F. had their Mess out at the Base.

Only a privileged few living in barracks owned motor vehicles and Harry Belton became one of these in 1960. One night a few of us had been drinking at the Petty Officer's Mess and Harry Belton offered to drive us back to barracks in his newly acquired second hand "Singer" sedan. He had been having problems with the clutch on the Singer, and it would not fully disengage. This meant that to start the car we had to push it until the gears were engaged. Harry would then drive around the block, and we would run along side and literally jump in, one at a time, whilst he drove as slowly as possible. Somehow five of us got into the Singer and Harry headed for the barracks.

Then someone suggested that we should check the mail at the police station on the way home. This meant driving past the police station as slowly as possible, whilst two of us did parachute rolls out of the Singer onto the roadway. We then ran into the station and collected the mail. Getting back into the Singer meant running along side and jumping in once again. We carried out these manoeuvres whilst reasonably full of the demon drink. Harry eventually drove the Singer to Melbourne on leave although I don't think it made the journey back to Darwin.

## **DID YOU HEAR ABOUT.....**

### **FAMILY:**

Three sisters ages 92, 94 and 96 live in a house together. One night the 96 year old runs a bath. She puts her foot in and pauses.

She yells to the other sisters, "Was I getting in or out of the bath?" The 94 year old yells back, "I don't know. I'll come up and see."

She starts up the stairs and pauses "Was I going up the stairs or down?" The 92 year old is sitting at the kitchen table having tea listening to her Sisters. She shakes her head and says, "I sure hope I never get that forgetful, knock on wood."

She then yells, "I'll come up and help both of you as soon as I see who's at the door."

### **DRIVING:**

Two elderly blokes were out driving in a large car, both could barely see over the dashboard. As they were cruising along, they came to an intersection. The stoplight was red, but they just went on through. The fellow in the passenger seat thought to himself "I must be losing it. I could have sworn we just went through a red light."

After a few more minutes, they came to another intersection and the light was red again. Again, they went right through. The man in the passenger seat was almost sure that the light had been red but was really concerned that he was losing it. He was getting nervous. At the next intersection, sure enough, the light was red and they went on through.

So, he turned to the driver and said, "Graham, did you know that we just ran through three red lights in a row? You could have killed us both!" Arthur turned to him and said, "Shit am I driving?"

### *Editor's note regarding the following article:*

*When I first read this article I immediately thought it was another of Jim Mannion's well written yarns, and I was delighted to later discover that his daughter Nancy Litchfield nee Mannion had written it, she being the little girl in the story. Is there any chance that more stories have been or can be written Nancy?*

## **"A MOTHER'S MEMORIES"**

Jean was sitting outside on the verandah, trying to get some relief from the stifling heat of Darwin's "Wet", when she heard a child coughing in one of the neighbouring-houses. The sound carried her mind back more than 25 years, to that other night, hot and sticky like this one, when she had awoken to the sound of her own child coughing.

Her husband, Jim, had been in charge of the Roper River Police Station at the time and was then away on one of the frequent patrols that had to be made of the vast area of Arnhem Land under his supervision. She was happy, though, knowing that he'd be home any day

now. It was a lonely life up there in those days and more especially during patrols, when she had just the two young children at home with her. During the days, the two native girls who helped with the housework - wives of the trackers - were cheerful company, but they went to their own quarters after tea and the nights passed slowly for her. There had been a welcome break in the routine the week before, though, when a young family from South had passed through on their way to the Mission further down the River. They had stayed with her for a couple of days and the little boy had provided a change of playmate for her own children, while she had thoroughly enjoyed the unexpected company of his parents.

Listening to the baby coughing, she began to feel uneasy because of the strange timbre of the cough, which was becoming rasping and unlike anything she had heard before. She jumped from her bed and hurried to the children's bedroom, where the sight that confronted her brought a great wave of fear rushing over her. Her baby son, not yet a year old, was lying in his cot bathed in perspiration, forcing out those dreadful dry, hacking noises which had first awoken her. His eyes were wide open, but he didn't seem to register her presence in the room. His little lips were tinged with blue and when there was a break in the coughing spasms, he lay there limply, grasping for breath, before the coughing began to shake his body once again.

Fighting to overcome the panic rising in her, she forced herself to think of what to do to help the child. She ran back to her own room and grabbed the two pillows from her bed, then rushed back to the baby, placing the extra pillows under his head and shoulders. After a few moments in this upright position, his breathing seemed a little easier, although the coughing still persisted.

Next she hurried to the kitchen and lit the big wood-burning stove, grateful that her young helper, Mary, had laid the fire earlier that evening in readiness for the next day's work. She fed the fire recklessly with all the wood it could take, so that it was soon roaring lustily, then filled her two largest pots with water and put them on to boil.

She returned then to the baby, pausing only to snatch from the bookshelves a large volume on medical symptoms. The coughing had eased; although some instinct warned her that it would certainly begin again before long. The child's lips had lost their awful blueness, but his cheeks were flushed and his breath still came in gasping sobs. Mercifully, his six-year old sister in the bed across the room still slept soundly and to prevent her waking, Jean thumbed through the medical book with the aid of only a torch. She found the section on "Coughs and Respiratory Ailments", but within moments closed the book in near despair.

There were so many different conditions, with such similar symptoms, that she had no way of deciding which one had attacked her child.

For a moment, she sat with her head in her hands, panic rising within her once more. Then the baby began to cough again and she forced herself to be calm and to keep thinking of ways to help him. She remembered the water on the stove and on checking it found that it had reached a rolling boil, giving off great clouds of steam. She went to lift one of the pots from the stove and realised that she would never manage it alone. She had to get help. Without stopping for shoes or dressing-gown, she wrenched open the back door, raced down the track to the back yard, where the natives had their camp, and banged on the door of Mary's hut. In a few seconds Mary opened the door, her expression passing from sleepiness to alarm at the sight of the wild look on the Missus's face. Grabbing her hand, Jean pulled her back along

the track to the house, gasping out enough words on the way for Mary to realise the baby was badly ill and help was needed.

Inside the house, the women struggled to get the pot of steaming water off the stove and into the child's room, where they hurriedly set up a makeshift tent around the cot with the aid of an old tarpaulin. They pushed the pot under the tent and watched as the steam billowed up around the baby's cot. Knowing that still more steam would be needed, Jean sent Mary to the kitchen to fill another pot with water and set it to boil, while she stood at the foot of the cot watching anxiously for any change in the baby's condition. After 10 minutes or so, the child's breathing was noticeably smoother and she thanked God for the idea of the steam. She and Mary brought in a fresh pot of the boiling water, returning the first pot to the stove to reheat.

This done, she sank exhausted on to a stool in the kitchen, trying to decide what to do next. She felt a touch at her elbow and found Mary standing beside her with a cup of freshly made tea, urging her to drink it down before doing anything else. The child was safe for the moment and the tea seemed the best she had ever tasted. As Jean drained the cup, Mary refilled it, saying at the same time –

"Missus might be you try get Mission. That Sister there. She come help baby."

Of course she would, Jean thought. She had been so frantic up to now that she hadn't thought of the Mission.

"Thanks, Mary," she said, "I'll try the Mission now."

She went quickly to the battery-operated radio in the office, while Mary slipped into the children's room to keep watch over the baby.

Taking up the microphone and forcing her voice to stay steady, Jean gave the station's call sign, identified herself and asked the Mission to come on the air. After repeating her call two or three times, she heard the voice of Dick Harrison, the Missionary, answering her. She explained the trouble and asked for medical assistance. Dick responded immediately, assuring her the Mission Sister would begin the launch trip at first light, no more than half an hour away, and ought to be with her by noon. In the meantime she should continue with the steam and keep the baby propped up for easier breathing. Jean thanked him and went to tell Mary the news. Mary met her in the passage and told her the baby was now sleeping, leading her to the door of the room to let her see for herself how peaceful and comfortable the child now looked.

Soon afterwards, the older child awoke. Mary gave her breakfast and the other girl took her swimming, so the baby could sleep undisturbed. Jean felt suddenly drained of all energy and realising she had had only about two hours sleep that night, lay down to rest, telling Mary to rouse her when the baby woke. It was eleven o'clock when Mary called her and after she had showered and dressed, they didn't have long to wait before the Mission Sister arrived, bringing with her an air of cheerful efficiency which seemed to make things better at once.

Sister examined the baby and told Jean he had had an attack of Tonsillitis, but it appeared the worst was over. Leaving some medicine to ease his throat and advising them to stay with the baby for a couple of nights, while he slept, she set off back to the Mission.

The rest of the day passed quietly, with the baby appearing to be responding well to the steam-tent and the medicine and after dinner, Mary having volunteered to take first "watch", Jean went to lie down for a couple of hours. She seemed to have just drifted off when Mary shook her awake and one look at the girl's frightened face brought back with a rush all her own fears of the night before.

"What is it Mary?", she whispered, as if by whispering she could lessen whatever bad news was coming. "What's the matter?"

"It's the baby, Missus. Him all sweaty and make funny noises. Him wrong colour, too."

Rushing to the baby's side, she felt herself go weak. The little bay's face had turned an ashen grey and the blueness had returned to his lips, but was now a deeper, more frightening colour. His face and body were soaked in perspiration once more and he just lay staring upwards, taking shallow, and tearing gasps of air at irregular intervals. He didn't even cough now, apparently not having enough energy left for this, but the slow, dragging breathing was somehow more terrifying.

She re-arranged the pillows under the baby until he was almost sitting up, and then helped Mary bring in a fresh pot of steaming water. They then stood together watching for any reaction. As on the previous night, the baby's condition appeared to ease after about ten minutes, but Jean knew now that there was something horribly wrong, far worse than Tonsillitis.

"Mary, watch him, please. I'll have to try to get through to the doctor in Darwin,"

She ran into the office, sat at the microphone, and began repeating her call sign, requesting the doctor in Darwin to reply. She called half a dozen times with no response whatsoever and slowly realised that she wasn't getting through at all. Something must be wrong with the radio. She could find no obvious faults, so began calling again. Still no reply. It must be the batteries. They must be flat. Oh God, she thought dully, what can I do now. Without the radio ..... She couldn't bear to think what could happen if she couldn't get help, so started sending her call out again, with no real hope, but not daring to admit this even to herself.

Suddenly a woman's voice came over the loud speaker. She could hardly believe it at first.

"Jean" said the voice. "Is that you, Jean? This is Joyce at Elsey Station. Are you trying to call out? Your call is very faint. Your battery must be going. Please try again."

As though in a dream, Jean began her message again, speaking as clearly and loudly as she could,

"Joyce, this is Jean. The baby's terribly ill. I'm trying to raise the doctor in Darwin. Can you hear now?"

She turned on the receiver, almost frightened to breathe in case she missed the reply; like a miracle, she heard Joyce's voice again.

"I hear you, Jean, but keep speaking as loudly as you can. Your batteries are too weak to reach Darwin. Tell me the baby's symptoms and I will contact Darwin and call you back. Go ahead."

Trying to get the facts into some sort of order, Jean told her story to Joyce, almost shouting in her anxiety to be heard correctly. Joyce then signed off, urging Jean to try to keep calm and to keep the receiver open, so she could call her again when she had some news. Mary had all the time been hovering between the baby's room and the office, and when Jean got up from the radio set, leaving the receiver open, the girl led her gently into the baby's room and sat her on a chair next to the cot.

"You sit down, Missus, and Mary get cuppa tea. You see baby. Him not so bad, now,"

Jean sat down gratefully and fixed her eyes on the cot, although she seemed unable to focus properly, she was so worried. She roused herself as Mary put the cup of hot tea into her hands and they sat and sipped in companionable silence for a few minutes.

As though on cue, just as she put down her empty cup, Jean heard the radio. She rushed into the office and settled down in front of the set once more, hearing Joyce's voice coming in over the air.

"Jean, it's Joyce again. I contacted Darwin. They are sending the medical plane out at first light. It should be there by seven o'clock tomorrow morning. It's only a few more hours, Jean. Can you manage till then?"

She could hardly believe it ..... the medical plane coming so soon. She must thank Joyce.

"Joyce," she shouted, "it's Jean here. We'll manage till the plane gets here. The baby's breathing a little better. Thank you Joyce. I'm very grateful I...."

She stopped, horrified, as she heard herself begin to sob, from pure relief and thankfulness.

"Jean, this is Joyce. We know how you feel. Try to rest now. Everything will be okay. Leave the receiver open, just in case. Over and out."

The radio went dead suddenly and Joan sat there staring at it for a moment or two before getting up and going to tell Mary the news.

"You have a sleep now, Mary. I'll sit with the baby. I couldn't sleep anyway."

"Alright, Missus. I sleep now. But I stay here too," So saying, Mary ducked into the kitchen, came back with her blanket and settled herself on the floor at the foot of the cot, failing asleep almost immediately with the enviable adaptability of her race.

Jean must have dozed off, too, sometime later in the night, because it seemed no time at all before the dawn light was coming through the window and she saw that it was 5.30. The baby was still sleeping, although he was very flushed and his curly head was damp with perspiration. Mary, too, was sleeping, soundly on her makeshift "bed". Jean slipped out to put the kettle on and had just made a pot of tea when she heard movements in the yard outside. Opening the door, relief flooded through her as she saw Jim just dismounting from his big brown horse, and she almost flew down the stairs and into his arms, pouring out her story of the two dreadful days they had just spent. Calling to the trackers to attend to the horses, he took her back inside the house, going at once to look at the sleeping child. Mary awoke now, delighted that "the Boss" was back, and then slipped outside while Jean and Jim talked over what had happened.

They were still talking when they heard the sound of plane engines and hurrying outside they saw the medical plane coming in to land on the strip a hundred yards away. The next half hour seemed to fly past, and they were once again standing outside in the yard, this time watching the plane flying away, taking their baby to the hospital in Darwin. Jean had almost wept when she found she would not be able to accompany the baby on the trip, but the little plane was filled to capacity with the pilot, nurse and the space-consuming stretcher. Now all they could do was wait for news from the hospital once the doctor had seen the baby.

Early in the afternoon, the radio crackled into life and Jim and Jean hurried to hear the doctor's report, praying he would have good news for them.

"This is Doctor Johnson of the Darwin Hospital here. Are you receiving me?"

"Receiving you, Doctor," said Jim. "Please go ahead."

"Your son has Diphtheria," the doctor advised. "He has a severe case, but it has been caught early and I think we will be able to help him. We are doing all we can and by tomorrow I'll be able to give you a more definite report. In the meantime, we are sending the plane back at once for your daughter, who must be examined for any trace of the infection."

Jean and Jim stared at each other in total disbelief for a few moments. Diphtheria! Such an illness was almost unheard of so far out bush like this!

The doctor's voice was heard again -

"Now please try to think who could have carried this disease to your area. It is vitally important that we find the carrier before he or she infects more people. Over to you."

Who indeed! Who could possibly have carried it here? It couldn't have been a native, or dozens of his own people would have been affected long before the germ ever reached their station. No-one else had been here lately. No-one .....

"The Mission family," Jean cried, "It must have been one of them."

"What Mission family?" Jim asked.

"They came through last week," Jean explained. "A young couple and their son, on their way to work at the Mission. They stayed with us for a couple of days and it wasn't until after that that little Bobby became ill".

"You must be right," Jim said, and quickly told the doctor about the visitors.

"That sounds like it alright", said the doctor. "We'll have them brought in for examination; I'll call back as soon as possible. Over and out."

A dog barked shrilly somewhere down the street, and Jean's thoughts returned to the present. It was all so clear, it was almost as though it was happening again, she thought. Thank God it had all ended so happily.

The little girl had been pronounced completely free of the dreaded disease, although how she had escaped would always seem to Jean to be a miracle. Little Bobby had spent his first birthday in hospital, but would be home for his 26<sup>th</sup>, in a few months time. She must go inside and write to him now, so the letter would catch tomorrow's mail to Canberra. He would probably have quite a laugh at his old mother's dreaming, but she would always be grateful that they could smile, now, about that dreadful time so long ago.

*Robert (Bobby) Mannion was born in December 1944, so he must have caught Diphtheria during the third quarter of 1945. As Robert will turn 61 in December the "Mother's Memory" must have occurred in the third quarter of 1970.*

*A special thanks to Glenys Simpson for securing this article for the society, and whoever preserved it, probably Val and Rosemary.*

*Us Johnny-come-latelys never knew that Mrs. Mannion was called Jean by her husband and friends – to us, she was only known as that sweet, kind and generous "Mrs. Mannion".*

*Daughter Nancy later writes "I can remember walking along Mindil Beach with one of the nurses. So the Hospital staff obviously looked after my leisure needs as well as my health". After she was released from hospital Nancy was looked after by Mr. and Mrs. Joe Mutch, until she could travel home.*



Mrs "Jean" Mannion, her daughter, granddaughter and great granddaughter.



**VALE**

Anne Teresa Jacobs  
23.10.1925 - 9.10.2005

Wife of Senior Constable Bill Jacobs (dec), Anne was fondly remembered by all as a "gentle lady", and especially by those who received her caring attention when she nursed at the hospital. Our sincerest condolences to Anne's daughters, Kiim, Leanne, Tanya and their families.

S Grant  
For the editor.