

Naydene Robinson's mother was removed from Mulga Downs Station as a child. She was the child of Lang Hancock, the Mulga Downs leaseholder, and born to an Aboriginal Station worker named Gertie, or Gardie. This is Naydene's story.

“My traditional country is Banyjima Country, which is where my mum and her parents were from.

My mum's parents, Gardie Tucker and Ginger Parker, belonged to the Banyjima language group.

In 1936, my mother (Sella Tucker) was taken away from Mulga Downs Station at the age of six and placed in the Moore River Native Settlement (Mogumber Mission). She stayed there until she was 14, and was always told (even though it wasn't true) that her parents were dead. She ran away a lot, and when she was picked up and brought back they would shave her hair and put her in a cement cell nicknamed the 'the boob' lock up as punishment. She was locked up for two days at a time and was given only bread and water.

When she was finally able to leave the mission, she started working on farms in and around the town of Moora.

She had my eldest brother Chris, and then he was taken away from her when he was 18 months old and placed in Sister Kates' Childrens' Home in Perth.

Mum met my father, Reuben Robinson, the next year and had nine children to him. My father was another stolen generations victim. He and his six sisters and three brothers were taken away and put into Moore River.

My mum and dad lived together in Moora, which is where I was born in Moora. Then we moved to Cue, which is where I grew up with my five brothers and four sisters.

Cue is my father's country. His mother, Irene Robinson, was born at Millie Soak, 10 km north of Cue. She was a Wadjarri woman. My father's father was a white man from Mullewa.

MY MUM AND NANNA REUNITE AFTER NEARLY 30 YEARS APART

In the early 1960s, when I was just a young girl, an Elder from Meekatharra came to Cue one day and told my mum that her mother was looking for her. My mum said “I don't have a mother. She died. That's why I was put in the mission.”

The Elder assured mum that she was alive and she would like to meet with mum at the Meekatharra (Meeka) races, which was in a few months' time.

Mum and dad took us all to Meeka to meet our nanna and pop. I remember this day very clearly. When we got there mum went straight to her mum. Nanna asked her “how come you came to me? There are two other ladies here and you came to me”. Mum told her “I have never forgotten you or your face never, nor dad's face.”

We all went to the races and then they came back to Cue with us for a while. They told us kids we were Boorangoo and belong to Banyjima Country.

We never knew anything about this until then, because at the mission they made mum “unlearn” her culture. That’s what the missionaries did. They washed the kids’ mouths with soap every time they spoke in their language. So Mum lost her language. But she never forgot the place she came from - Mulga Downs. She also used to talk about White Springs too, which was a mission there in the Pilbara. Then pop and nanna left to go back to Nanutarra Station, which is where they worked. They came back to Cue a few times more to visit.

RECONNECTING TO OUR COUNTRY AND OUR PEOPLE

Then, in 1965, mum and dad took us nine kids through all the stations: Mt Vernon, Ashburton Downs, Kooline, Mt Stuart. All the families were waiting at the stations on the way... they had word we were coming and came to meet us and give us some “goodies” and into Nanutarra Station (there wasn’t any roadhouse there then). That was the first time I met pop (Timmy Parker’s father) [dec.] and his family. I remember playing and swimming in the Ashburton River with all of the kids, especially his eldest daughter [dec.].

When we got there we were told nanna and pop were out at the outcamp so Mr Andrews [dec.] and his wife took us in their green International truck to the outcamp. We stayed there for a week or more before going into Onslow in the green “Inter” with Mr Andrews and his wife to get stores in Onslow... and to see the ocean (us kids had never seen the sea before).

Before we left there to head back to Cue, all of the family told us to come again. Nanna and pop said they would come when they got time off work. But they never came together again because we lost our nanna. She passed away at Nanutarra and is buried there at the station.

Pop came back to Cue many times, and he would always tell us to come back to Banyjima country so that he could show us the country. He told us “it’s my job now to make sure you come back because your Gunthay isn’t here now, I gotta do it.”

While I was at high school in Geraldton I used to write letters to my pop at Peedamulla Station. He used to get someone to write the letters for him and send them to me... and there was always \$10 inside. I thought it was great getting money in my letters from my pop.

I went to visit my pop at Peedamulla in 1976 with my three oldest girls Connie, Carmen and Donna. Their father did a few weeks work there for the manager Peter Salmon and then we went into Onslow to meet my nanna (Archie Tucker’s mother) [dec.] for the first time.

Later, me and the kids went to Wittenoom with my pop Ginger, nanna (Archie’s mother), pop Alec Tucker and his wife Jill in their HR Holden car. We also went to Mulga Downs and out bush.

Nanna (Archie's mother) lived in Wittenoom with her husband. He worked at Mulga Downs and her eldest son (Archie's eldest brother) [dec.] worked at Frank Sodda's cool drink factory. He used to bring little bottles of cool drink home for his grandchildren (my girls).

After a few months in Wittenoom and Mulga Downs, we headed back to Onslow with Alec's father [dec.] and his wife and pop Ginger. We stayed there for a while with pop (Maitland Parker's father) [dec.] and his wife before heading back to Meekatharra.

I went back a few times to see pop (Timmy's dad) and his family - they were staying out at Gorge Mill on Mulga Downs. Then the next time I went back they had moved just outside the Mulga Downs boundary. That was the first time I met aunty Dawn Hicks (nee Parker) and her family there at the bottom camp. We would go bush around Cowra. The next time I went back he had moved up on the hill there were no houses, only bough sheds.

In 1995, after spending Christmas with my two uncles Archie and his brother [dec.] and their families, and my sister Sandii and her family, we all went camping at Gregory Gorge and visited Millstream and another places. When we got back to Roebourne, pop (Timmy's dad) came around to see me and told me he now had two houses on the block (at Youngaleena) and wanted me to spend some more time there.

So I lived in Youngaleena for a time, and my daughter Teeharnee and grandson Ricky did School of the Air there. Connie and Carmen and her two daughters, Rachel and Romnee, were also living there, as was my daughter Naydene's child Felicity (they were all littlies).

FIRST TALKS WITH THE MINING COMPANY

Around this time, Hamersley Iron would sometimes come and visit the Elders at Youngaleena. One day the company's liaison officers Jeremy and Brian came to meet with us. Other Elders came as well: David Stock, Gordon Yuline and a number of others... they were all sitting under the tree in between the two houses and pop (Timmy's dad) sent for me to join them.

He told me they were having a meeting about mining that was to take place on our country. When the men had to talk "men's business" pop told me to go back home and he would send for me when there were things I could listen to (my two daughters Connie and Carmen kept the sandwiches, tea and coffee going for the visitors).

It was at this meeting that the name Gumala was chosen for the group. The Elders said "because Gumala means 'altogether' in Banyjima, that was to be the name". I feel privileged, humbled and honoured that I was the only woman at that first Gumala meeting and witnessed the name choice selected by the Elders.

I am so proud that my pop chose me to sit in on that very first meeting. He told me "you belong to my eldest brother and his eldest daughter. My brother is not here, but you are here now." That was the first of many meetings on our country. Then, that same year, me and Brian Tucker were chosen (by the Elders) to be signatories of the

Yandi Land Use Agreement with the Elders. We all went to Hamersley Iron's office in Dampier and signed the agreement.

Then I went to live with my nanna (Dawn's mother) [dec.] in Wakathuni.

It was exactly 30 years from my first visit to the Pilbara until I went to stay for a length of time with the family in my mother's country. I have also spent holidays on my uncles' block, Wirrilimarra.

CONNECTION TO COUNTRY

I'm glad I continued to go back when the Elders were there to show me country, without there being any locked gates.

Even though I have lived and worked in Perth for many years now, and as a teenager I worked on Berringarra Station near Cue and Three Rivers Station near Meekatharra, my home is Banyjima country.

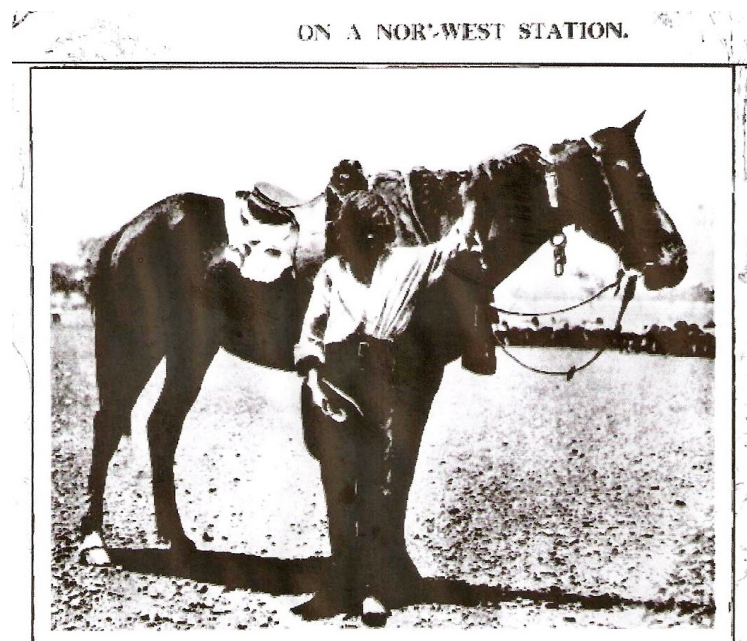
I have six daughters, eleven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

I feel we have the opportunity to give our children many things, because they are our future. Let us leave some of their country for them to camp, hunt, fish, and to find themselves.

A place with no locked gates, where they can go. A place they will remember what they already know and for them to dream and contemplate and learn what they need know.

A place for them to find out who they are and what they are capable of becoming... in a safe, serene and quiet place... for them.

A place that belongs to them. Most importantly, a place where they are free to get back to nature, to learn who they are and to be proud descendants of the Banyjima Nation.



Gertie, a Fourteen-year Old Musterer.



Sunday Times

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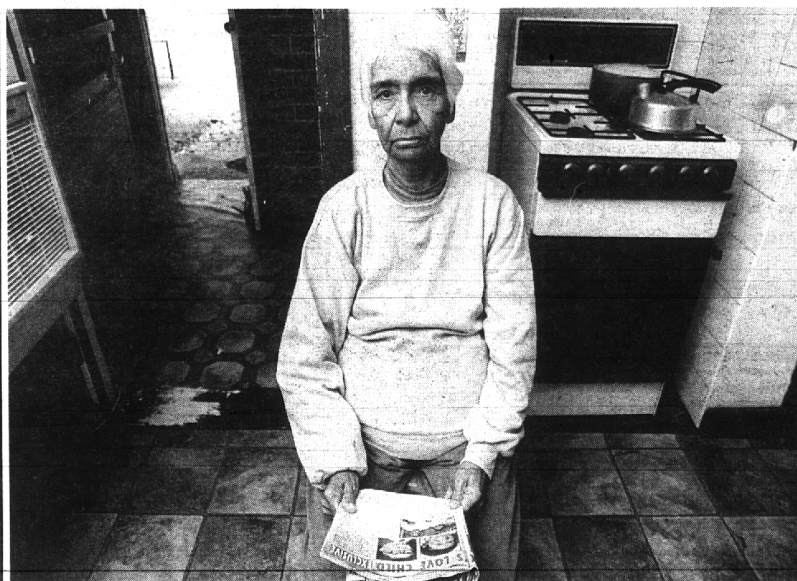
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Is this Lang's love child?



□ Stella Robinson in her humble kitchen... all she wants is a little house in Cue. Picture — IAN CUGLEY.

By BRUCE BUTLER

TWO part-Aboriginal women now claim that millionaire mining magnate Lang Hancock was their father.

A Cue woman, Stella Robinson, who was born to a full-blood Aboriginal woman on Mr Hancock's Mulga Downs station in 1932, says she is the first-born Hancock child.

Earlier this week a Geraldton woman, Mrs Hilda Kickett, 49, said on national television she had evidence the former iron ore king was her natural father and was prepared to be DNA-tested to prove it.

Both women's claims were rejected yesterday by the Hancock family lawyer, Mr Alan Camp (See Page 2).

Mrs Kickett's lawyers plan to file a paternity suit in the WA Supreme Court to stake a claim for a share of his massive estate, now estimated at \$150 million.

But Stella Robinson says money is not the reason she is claiming the late entrepreneur as her father.

She maintains that 22-year-old Lang Hancock, then helping his father George run Mulga Downs pastoral station in the Pilbara, was her father.

The *Sunday Times* traced her to her daughter's Perth home, where she was recuperating after several weeks in Royal Perth Hospital.

She said she had been taken away from Mulga Downs as a child. She had lived a virtually itinerant life and did not want millions from the Hancock estate.

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Lang Hancock's love child claim

● From Page 1

"All I want is a home, even just a little house in Cue," she said.

Mrs Robinson, a mother of eight children, also makes the claim that an Aboriginal half-sister of Lang Hancock, Dorothy (Doris) Mynnette, died last November, aged 65.

Mr George Hancock, Lang's father and the original owner of Mulga Downs, was Dorothy's father, says Mrs Robinson.

She grew up with young Dorothy on Mulga Downs, until they were taken — because of the Native Welfare Department policy of removing half-caste children from their parents — to Moore River native settlement, at Mogumber, north of Perth.

Mrs Kickett, who is married with four grown children, said she decided to reveal her claim publicly, after years of silence, when she was turned away from Mr Hancock's death-bed days before he died.

One of Mrs Kickett's strongest supporters, Dr Ian Wronski, director of Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services and a family friend, is convinced of her parentage.

Dr Wronski, who has lived in Broome for 12 years, said: "I don't think there is much doubt about it."

"Hilda is right and she has a right to part of the Hancock estate."

Lawyer: Not his style

HANCOCK family lawyer Alan Camp yesterday rejected the claims of the two part-Aboriginal women.

Having known Lang and his daughter Gina Rinehart for more than 20 years, Mr Camp said: "Everybody who knew Lang and his father was quite adamant it was not Lang's style. That wasn't the kind of thing Lang Hancock would do."

"I have spoken to young men who worked around Mulga Downs with Lang and I have spoken to confidants who say nothing like this was ever mentioned or rumored."

After seeing Mrs Hilda Kickett's claim on television, Mr Camp said: "I was satisfied when I spoke to people that the story wasn't true."

Mrs Rose Hancock admitted in a TV interview several weeks ago that she had heard that Mr Hancock had part-Aboriginal children.

She said: "I have never heard it from my husband, but I have heard of it from very reliable sources. It came to me in the form of a rumor and sometimes where there is smoke there is fire."

Mrs Robinson said her mother,

"There is no way that I or any lawyer turned her away from Lang."

"She contacted the hospital and family members before Lang died and Lang was told that a woman claiming to be his daughter wanted to see him."

"He did not acknowledge her as his daughter."

"He was lucid and clear right to the end. At times he was exhausted, but always lucid. If there is any truth in it I consider he would have wanted to see her."

"Lang was not the kind of man to turn anyone away. If she was his child Lang was the kind of person who would have acknowledged her."

known only as "Gurtie", was one of three full-blood sisters working on Mulga Downs in the 1930s.

After being taken from the station when she was "about five or six" she was reunited with her mother more than 20 years later. It was then, at 28, that she learnt she was Lang Hancock's daughter, she says.

Mrs Robinson said her mother told her: "You know the bosses

(Hancocks), one of them is your daddy."

"I said I'd heard of them. She was talking about the Hancocks and said: 'The young boy is your dad'."

"When my mum told me, I didn't know who Lang was. He was nothing then."

"He was only a young fella then, fooling around like the jackaroos."

"They took the gins (black women) and did what they wanted to do with them and left them to it."

"Mum said if she didn't do what the boss wanted she might get harmed. If you wanted extra tobacco, or an extra few bob or a fancy piece of material you had to do what the boss wanted."

"I am definitely Lang's daughter. I was his first child born on Mulga Downs."

Mrs Kickett, born in Port Hedland in 1943, 11 years later, says her mother Kathleen, then 23, was a part-Aboriginal station cook.

She said Mr Hancock, 34 when Hilda was born, had a three to four year relationship with her mother and said he would have married her if she was not colored.

Mrs Kickett said she was devastated at being turned away from Mr Hancock when she tried to see him shortly before he died.

The Supreme Court says no action has been initiated.

Woman's pain as 'Hancock's firstborn'



□ Stella Robinson says she is Lang Hancock's first child.

STELLA Robinson, the woman who says she is Lang Hancock's first child, was born on Mulga Downs to a full-blood Aboriginal woman named "Gurtie".

Under the native welfare program of the day — as a half-caste — she was taken from her mother and sent 1500km away to a native mission, to be raised with other part-Aborigines.

Lang Hancock was just 22 when she was born in 1932. Stella had 10 children and two died at birth.

Her remarkable life — but one that is tragically typical for part-Aborigines in WA's early days — unfolded this week when she spoke with the *Sunday Times*.

It is a life as different from her claimed multi-millionaire mining magnate father's, as black is from white.

"I would love to have Mulga Downs as a heritage, somewhere to call our home, just a home," she said.

With a look of pain and desperation, Mrs Robinson recalled the tough, barren existence for half-caste children at the Moore River mission.

"It was terribly hard for half-caste people in those days," she said.

She later met Ruben George Robinson, raised a family and travelled wherever he could get work — laboring or working on the railways.

"I was born on Mulga Downs, in those days they couldn't get you into Roebourne to have a baby," she said.

"I met my mum for the first time, after I was taken away, when I was 28.

"I remember Lang as a young man and George (Hancock) and his wife. We used to live and camp on the station in a back shed.

"My mother used to live further up, in a sort of staff quarters. They used to dress up in little pinafore things like the American negroes."

Mrs Robinson said she regretted her family had not done more to convince her she was Lang Hancock's daughter, in the years before he died.

"Having been told he is my father I could have gone in and had a talk to him when he was alive," she said.

"He could have refused me, but he was my father and he's dead now and I never even went near him."

Mrs Robinson also claims her aunt, Dorothy (Doris) Mynnette, was fathered by George Hancock. Ms Mynnette died last November.



□ Dorothy Mynnette — said to be fathered by George Hancock.

FOOTREST FROM

\$69

Lang DNA test may decide fatherhood

By BRUCE BUTLER

A SAMPLE of Lang Hancock's body tissue — retained after his autopsy — could prove conclusively whether the millionaire is the father of two part-Aboriginal women.

Hilda Kickett, 40, of Geraldton, this week publicly claimed the iron ore giant as her father.

Mrs Kickett has said on national television she had evidence to prove Mr Hancock was her father and planned to use it in a paternity suit.

A senior Perth doctor, who cannot be named for ethical reasons, has confirmed the existence of a tissue sample from Mr Hancock's body.

"There is definitely a sample of Lang Hancock's tissue, retained from the autopsy," he said.

Mr Hancock's body was

'Sterilise part-Aborigines'

LANG Hancock called for the sterilisation of all part-Aborigines in October 1961.

Outlining his theory in a television interview, Mr Hancock said: "They would all have to gravitate towards Karratha to receive their pay cheques and when they had gravitated there, I would dope the water up so they were sterile and they would breed themselves out in future and that would solve the problem."

When asked if he was advocating killing Aborigines, he replied:

cremated and his ashes scattered on his beloved North-West station, Mulga Downs, after his death on March 27 and an autopsy several days later.

DNA samples — taken from blood or body tissue — are commonly used in criminal trials, in

"It is not killing them, they are just not going to breed any more of their own kind."

Mrs Hilda Kickett said she was outraged when she heard the comments, coming from the man she believes is her natural father.

"I was very angry. I said to mum and dad — 'That is just like poisoning us. He might as well line his grandkids up and poison them, too'."

"But he is not here anymore and he has been judged for that and I cannot sit in judgment."

paternity suits where maintenance is disputed and in rare cases such as Mrs Kickett's, according to Sir Charles Gairdner clinical hematologist and DNA expert, Dr John Raven.

Mr Kickett, a mother-of-four, says she is happy to be DNA-tested

to prove whether Mr Hancock was her father.

Dr Raven said testing could be done, provided Mr Hancock's DNA was available.

But that could rely on the Hancock family — or his widow Rose — releasing it for testing.

When DNA and blood testing was available from the child and both parents, there was a medically guaranteed 99.99 per cent (to the sixth decimal point) accuracy, Dr Raven said.

Mrs Kickett's mother, Kathleen Whitby, died in 1985.

But Dr Raven says other family members — Mrs Kickett's mother had 11 children — could be used to piece together the genetic jig-saw.

"DNA is the genetic matter that is present in all cells that have nuclei," he said.

"It can be in a man's seminal fluid, a woman's vaginal fluid, blood, scrapings from the body, it really doesn't matter where the tissue comes from."



□ Hilda Kickett. Photo courtesy Channel 9.

It did not matter how old the tissue was — DNA had been identified in 5000-year-old mummified Egyptians and the Iceman recently discovered in Austrian Alps.

Perth family lawyer Trevor O'Sullivan said the onus of proof rested heavily with Mrs Kickett.

He said that if she could establish she was Mr Hancock's daughter she could then stake a claim to a share of his massive estate.

"There used to be other ways of proving paternity before DNA testing. It becomes an evidentiary thing," he said.

"But a court would have to look at the weight of that evidence, given that it comes to light after his (Mr Hancock's) death."

Mr O'Sullivan said Mrs Kickett would have to prove Mr Hancock's acknowledgment of her and contact to have a legitimate claim on his fortune.

He said such claims were unusual because they were rare, difficult to prove and seldom was there an estate "worth attacking".