

Descendants of Nathanha, Pirripuri and Winnie

The Parker family are descended from the brothers, Ginger (b. abt 1908), Horace (b. 1910), Jonah, (b. 1918) Herbert (b. 1921)¹, and Wobby Parker (b. 1924). Herbert had six children between 1942 and 1959, Horace had fourteen children and Wobby had eleven. Horace states: 'My mother was a full blood, she was known as Whitehead her Aboriginal name was Payungu and my fathers name was George Parker, Mandu [b.1875]. My fathers father name was Pirripuri [b.1850]. My fathers mother was Thanpanha [b.1860]. My mothers mother was Thuranha and my mothers father was Nathanha.² O'Connor describes Horace's mother, Whitehead, as 'a northern Pandjima woman' (O'Connor 1991:26).

Alan Dench recorded the names of the Parker brothers' father and grandfather in a statement by a Banyjima leader translated from the Banyjima language:³

All of these Marntiyarrangara of this name – my grandfather, Herbert Parker's grandfather, the father belong to them, my father, my uncle [Jurlu-layi, jurlu-rla marntiyarrangara nyiya yini, *Wirrilimarra, Pirtupiri, Marntunha, Pilypangkanpangu, Pirtanganpangu*],

In this hill, on the top of the Hamersley Range, they were the boss of what's left behind, us little fellas [*Nyiyangka marntaka pirturula Karijinila pantiku maatha ngajupantharriku kupijarriku*].

The statement infers that 'Pirtupiri' (Pirripiri) was a contemporary of Wirrilimarra who was born in about 1860, and the two families held the same rights to country in the Hamersley Ranges (Karjini).

Horace's brother, Wobby Parker, stated: 'Father to Whitehead was buried at Stonehut (Joombunna). He was Banyjima. He belonged to Cowra through Mulga Downs.'⁴ In acknowledging a different father to his brothers, Wobby added: 'I'm not really a Parker. I'm a Coffin.'⁵ Wobby's son explained that the distinction is important in ceremonies as it gives their branch of the Parker family authority as representatives of a separate lineage.⁶ According to this interpretation of the genealogies, the apical ancestor of Wobby's children would be Winnie, the Banyjima woman who was the mother of Sam Coffin [b. abt 1893].⁷

¹ Approximate age from Police file 952/44

² Affidavit of Horace Parker, 27 May 1999.

³ Transcript of interview with Percy Tucker recorded by Alan Dench at Onslow Nhuwala Centre, 19 June 1980.

⁴ Undated draft statement by Wobby Parker

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⁶ Personal communication with Johnny Parker.

⁷ In 2005 Archie and Greg Tucker took me to the burial site of Sam Coffin on Mulga Downs (Day 2005c).

However, obviously descendants of Wobby would also be descendants of Wobby's maternal grandfather, Nathana.⁸

Sam Coffin was also married to a Banyjima woman named Bidy who bore five children to Sam between 1952 and 1958. These four sons and a daughter would also be descendants of Winnie and are step-siblings of Bidy's two sons to Horace Parker, Winston and Peter Parker, who were born in 1947 and 1951. Bidy's relationship to Horace Parker is a further connection between the descendants of Winnie and the descendants of Pirripiri.

Wobby Parker's descendants from relationships with an Indjibandi woman (Egypt)⁹ and a Nyiyaparli woman (Queenie) also confirm the close ties that exist between these neighbouring language groups and the Fortescue Banyjima. Another example is Wobby's promised marriage to Lola Cook, a descendant of Wirrilimarra's daughter, Putha, or Lucy Tucker.¹⁰

Explaining these connections, Wobby Parker told Noel Olive (1997:47):

My mother and father were Punjima. [They] worked on Munjina station where I was born. My grandparents lived and worked at Munjina also, Tommy Tucker and Sam Coffin. And old Jacob, the oldest one of grandfathers belong to me and Brian Tucker, he was there ... Dora and Lola [Innawonga] are my cousins out of my mother...

Horace Parker was a remarkable man who maintained his family's connections to country and in later years established the Youngaleena community excised from Mulga Downs. In a eulogy, Louis Warren acknowledged Horace's efforts:

In the early 1960s, Mr Parker started work as a dogger for the Agricultural Protection Board, where he worked for many years.

Importantly, this work kept him in touch with his country at a time when opportunities to leave the Onslow district and go back to station work in Banjima country were limited.

⁸ Herbert Parker's surname is from Ronald Parker, the owner of Warrie Station. At some stage, Herbert told his brothers, 'We are all brothers we should have the same name.' (Pers. Com. Wobby Parker).

⁹ Egypt is the mother of Wobby's son, Ronnie Mills [b.1942], and also the mother of Alec Tucker [b.1943].

¹⁰ See Lola Young's biography, *Lola Young: medicine woman and teacher* (Young and Vitenburgs:2007).

Mr Parker should always be remembered for the passion with which he pursued the maintenance of his people's cultural heritage and identity. In the late 1980s he began his first steps to bring his family and other Banjima back to the lands they traditionally occupied.¹¹

Clarke and Smith (1982:9) wrote: 'The Panjima were consulted about the survey [to Weeli Wollji] at Onslow. Herbert Parker and his brothers were regarded as the most appropriate informants. The survey area was Herbert's grandfather's country...'¹²

O'Connor (1996:10) also commented on Horace's responsibilities:

From the commencement of the consultation process it became clear that apprehension over the future of the Springs had been one of the main reasons for Mr [Horace] Parker calling such a wide-ranging meeting. His fundamental position in this regard was that the springs are a cultural resource for all Aboriginal people associated with the Fortescue River catchment area and that, as senior elder for this group, responsibility for protection of these Springs had been placed upon his shoulders.

Tonkinson and Veth (1986) also consulted the Parker family when conducting heritage surveys for the BHP Yandi development. They describe their initial contacts:

By telephone I contacted Mr Slim Parker, in his capacity as Chairman of the Pilbara Aboriginal Land Council and also as a member of the Parker family which speaks for Barnjima interests in the Yandicoogina area. Slim had accompanied his father, the late Herbert Parker, into the area during the earlier survey, to be shown the sites there (Tonkinson and Veth 1986:2).

¹¹ *North West Telegraph*, Wednesday April 12, 2000, page 7.

¹² Presumably this refers to Pirripiri.