

Further detail on the Life of Noel Morich

Bernard Noel Morich, known to family friends and associates as Noel, was born on 30th January 1944, under a tree on the banks of the Boyerine Creek near Moojebing Reserve 10 km north west of Katanning. He would always tell his family about how his Great Granny Lucy Morich nee Penny tied his cord, which left a scar on his navel.

His great grandfather had worked for many local landholders having been relocated from Perth to Katanning as a shepherd/labourer during the 1880's during the land releases near Katanning. For a short period his grandfather and two other Aboriginal labourers were granted blocks in the Katanning district only to lose their land a few years later.

Noel and his mother initially lived with his Great Grandparents Elijah and Lucy (nee Penny) Morich in and around the Moojabing Reserve. Noel shared stories of how he would disrupt card games on the reserve by throwing a dead snake into the card ring.

His Grandfather Elijah Morich who was cared for by his mother Agnes, died in 1947 when Noel was 3 years of age.

Noel and his family moved on to the Carrolup Mission when he was a small boy where his mother Agnes gave birth to his younger sister Karl. Noel loved to share stories about this period of his life when he had a large kangaroo dog named 'Devil' which he would take out hunting for rabbits to help feed his extended family.

They then later moved on to settle at the reserve on the outskirts of Katanning and shared a camp with Agnes's mother Jane and her family with Cecil Edgill. Cecil and family treated Agnes and her family as part of their family and these ties have endured through the years with the entire Edgill family.

During these times Noel and his brothers would fight the pigs on the reserve for the good fruit from the leftover food destined for pig feed, which he would wash up and remove the spoiled parts so the family could have some fruit.

He, also with his cousin Francis 'Willie' Edgill often collected and bagged coal spilled from the Steam locomotives which was then stored and used by the family to keep warm during the winter. He regularly worked on farms with the Edgill's around the Great Southern district.

During this time Noels mother Agnes was working with her sister Phyllis at the St Marys Catholic Convent in Katanning.

Soon after, Noels mother Agnes passed away in July 1953 in Perth from Acute Myeloid Leukaemia at the age of 28 when Noel was just 9 years old.

He and his sister Karl were then sent back to live on the reserve with their Aunty Phyllis and her three children until she could no longer care for them, and they were then sent to live with the Wells family, members of the Native Welfare Committee in Katanning.

It wasn't long before the government authorised Noels removal from the Wells family and he was sent with a small cardboard box and a tag around his neck stating 'Send this boy to TARDUN Mission'. He was sent by train and then cattle truck to Tardun run by the Pallottine order where he spent the early years of his life.

During these years he worked in the kitchen from where he would smuggle food from the Christian brothers to feed the other boys. He spent several months on the run in the Mid West after running away with Monty Walgar and hitching rides on trains. They were eventually returned to Tardun by the Police after surviving on hunting and food from Yamatji people from the towns in the district.

Noel was a bright student and as the authorities saw that he had potential, they sent him to newly established Pallottine Centre in Rossmoyne to further his education.

Noel was a very caring boy, who chose to give rather than receive. During his time at Pallotine, he saved his pocket money to buy his Granny Jane small gifts. Jane lived in an aged care facility in Guildford at the time, and Noel would ride his push bike to her all the way from Rossmoyne. Noel carried this generosity all throughout his adult life. He then went on to work on A. D. Richards' farm, "Sleepy Hollow" east of Beverley, where he was a general farm labourer.

After working for a while at the farm, Noel then moved onto Perth to stay with his Uncle Raphael Edgill at Allawah Grove. In this time he worked as part of an Aboriginal railway gang led by Joe Walley in the Pinjarra and Southern metropolitan area.

After being in Perth for a while, he moved onto Pingrup to work on the railway with Bevan Hayward where he started working as a labourer laying railway tracks in the Great Southern.

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given by them remained with him throughout his life and he was willing to share what he had learned to anyone who wanted the information. We all know how much Noel loved to talk and share his stories.

Noel then decided to go with his Grandmothers Brother Roy Mourish and wife, whom he referred to as Pop Roy and Granny Lila. They took him for a holiday down to Beverley where they then became Noels legal guardians. Noel then went to work with his Uncles around the Avon district mainly Beverley and Brookton doing farm work and whatever was required of them including hay carting, fencing and farm work.

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He met his future wife Patricia at the age of 18 years. They moved to Canna for a year before returning to Beverley, where their first son Noel Jr was born. During this time, Noel had returned to the Richards property to work, again as their farm hand.

Noel then moved his family away to Lake Grace to work on the railways again as a labourer.

It was here where they welcomed their second son Terrence. The family then moved on from Lake Grace so Noel could return to Pallotine for further studies.

After this time, the family decided they would move to Mullewa and Noel resumed work for the railway, this time as a Guard and Conductor on the Geraldton to Meekatharra line. Soon after they welcomed their third son Lancel.

Noel then moved the family to Tambellup to continue work on the railway as a guard, and Tiffany, Karen and Juanita were then all born in Katanning. During these years Noel was reunited with his sister Karl and used his long service rail ticket to take his three sons from Tambellup to Melbourne to visit her and husband John Gunning and children Mary Louise and Sean.

Noel was accepted into the Williams family as a brother and Uncle, and made friends for life with his sisters and brothers-in-law. He always spoke highly of them, and was highly regarded by his nieces and nephews.

He and his brother in laws regularly hunted in the rural areas and fished the rivers of the Great Southern sharing their catch, kangaroos, sheep or wild ducks with family in Tambellup, Cranbrook and Katanning.

He also continued to maintain contact with the Edgill, Kickett, Mourish, Little, Collard, Michael, Hill, Moody, Webb, Bropho, Penny, John, Jones, Jacobs, McGuire and Thorne sides of his family.

As the older children went through schooling in Tambellup each of the boys were sent to the Pallottine Centre in Rossmoyne. The family decided to move the family back to Perth in 1979 so that their children could have a better education. At his time he moved to Forrestfield, where his Wife still lives today.

Noel created a lifetime memory for all of family who were present at the time, when he attended an Easter family reunion at Cape Riche National Park. At Easter, Cape Riche is a popular camping and holiday destination for locals from as far away as Esperance and Albany.

At the time he noticed a tiger snake crawling near the kids and after asking Uncle Jack, he lit a fire to try to kill the snake which eventually led to a massive bush fire and the evacuation of the entire National Park. At one stage while trying to put the fire out the tiger snake ended up swimming around his legs.

The commotion and the story of the events were reminisced and laughed about by family and will last for ever in the memory of all who were witness to that day.

Especially by his niece Sandra who had to relive the occasion when a little girl at school during her teaching placement from University, This little girl talked at show and tell of the day the Aborigines set fire to Cape Riche on her Easter vacation.

Noel's passion to improve the conditions for the Aboriginal People in general sparked an interest in joining the Swan Valley Community and other communities around Perth. Noel was a valued member of the Community, who along with others, had personally suffered the trauma of being one of the Stolen Generation.

Throughout life the experience remained with him, and he constantly reminisced about his mother and sister Karl, and how different his life may have been if his mother had lived.

Noel continued working as the children were attending school. Whilst he was employed at the Education Department, he worked as the sole Aboriginal Liaison Officer in the Perth Metropolitan Area.

After spending quite a few years at the Education Department Noel and Pat took over care of their granddaughter Tahnee, when she was 6 months old.

Noel followed his career to Western Australian Aboriginal Media Association (WAAMA), where he was chairperson on the committee, then taking over as secretary.

Noel kept up his work for the community, joining South West Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) as a part of the Whadjuk Working Group throughout the 2000's and up to his passing.

He spent the last few years performing Welcome to Country and clearances, where he would always like to take one of his grandchildren to show them their culture and history. He continued to do heritage work and to working group committee meetings. This includes being a part of the Whadjuk Working Group who were consulted in regards to Hartfield Park (Maamba) in Forrestfield.

In his later years Noel was cared for at the Kalamunda Hospice, as he needed around the clock care and medications.

He was constantly visited by his family, and always harassed Tahnee to bring in mangoes and milkshakes - things he wasn't meant to have.

He loved to sneak a beer when he was brought down for days out with the family, and would never pass you in the street without stopping you for a half an hour chat or more. People couldn't leave in a hurry, because when he found you, you'd have to yarn for a while.

He always gave the less fortunate Noongars and Wadjellas money they needed. He would always had to ask any other Noongar who their mob was. He regularly jumped on the train when everyone left for work and travelled to the city to the Seniors Centre to talk to all the older community where he sat and told stories for hours. More than once his family had to call around to find out where he was.

His passion for education was something he aimed to pass on to his children and grandchildren, and he was always extremely proud of his children and grandchildren's achievements at school.

Noel was loved and cherished by his family, especially his grandchildren, whom he shared a special bond with. He always had to time to take in each of their interests and encourage them to pursue their dreams.