

# Chapter 12

## The education years: 1980s

Governments tend to swallow up people when they gain power. Though some win and some lose, after each government's rise to power, their supporters either profit from the success on the outside, or are brought in to bring a change of political emphasis to the bureaucracy. That is the way it was with me and many other Aboriginal people; the challenges of the Whitlam government were long gone and the realities of conservatism had arrived. I was not the only one struggling with the new reality, and I can recall daily struggles between Barry Dexter and Charlie Perkins over when an Aboriginal person would head up a department to become the most senior public servant. By the early 1980s it was becoming obvious to me that my lack of tertiary qualifications was going to be a stumbling block in gaining promotions. I also felt a sense of alienation from what was happening in Aboriginal Affairs, compounded by the fact that the Fraser government had its own band of policy advisors. In 1981, with this sense of dissatisfaction swirling around in my head, I decided to seek re-entry to the Australian National University. This time I sought advice from student services and chose more wisely a liberal arts degree, majoring in what was then called Australian Studies.

In the early 1980s a number of issues plagued my mind and uppermost among them were the Nookanbah dispute, public health in Aboriginal society and again eye health. The background to the Nookanbah dispute was that a decade earlier the Walmatjirri and Nyinkina groups had walked off Nookanbah Station in a dispute over management's treatment of Aboriginal workers. In 1976, in support of these workers the Aboriginal Land Fund bought the land and handed over the property. But antagonistic miners used their political dominance to register hundreds of mining claims in search of diamonds and other mineral resources on the land and created an access road to a mining site that violated a sacred site. The Yangnara people blocked the road and took the miners to court under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA). While all this was in process an oil mining company decided to use its legal clout to drill for oil close to other sites of significance. The dispute went to the Western Australian Parliament in 1979, resulting in further government action; the miners subsequently attempted to bulldoze the community blockade under police guard. In hindsight this dispute was local but became both national and international with recall to the United Nations as a political strategy of last resort. By the time the Nookanbah dispute

was over the question of 'Land Rights' in Western Australia was as far away as ever, I was beginning to believe that the return of Aboriginal heritage was an impossible dream.

I was feeling quite low, as I am sure other Aborigines were feeling, about the episode at Nookanbah and the fact that health in Aboriginal communities did not appear to be improving worried me. I had just spent six months on a special economic inquiry into Aboriginal health while working at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Prime Minister Fraser had called for an investigation into spending in this area and also to assess state and federal progress in a budgetary context. The inquiry found that aspects of Aboriginal health, such as primary health, were being funded, but that there was an overburden of public health measures that remained unaddressed. On a personal basis I found the work at Prime Minister and Cabinet interesting in itself; the process was fairly simple: bureaucrats articulated Cabinet discussion with briefing papers, Cabinet discussed the ideas from the briefings, and then bureaucrats prepared written statements of acceptance or rejection along with follow-up advice. Cabinet was divided into two parts: decisions and follow-up. All these processes made me realise that governments made 'paper decisions' prepared and followed-up by bureaucrats. It kept coming back to me how people in the general society looked after themselves, taking public health for granted. The drinking water problems of urban dwellers posed no obstacle, their sewage was taken as a matter of fact, their waste water was out of sight and new technology was something few people thought about. Money for their own maintenance was no object when wide spread disasters, such as floods, affected their way of life.

The Whitlam reform period had raised hopes of better health outcomes for Aborigines, but this did not seem to be happening. More housing had been provided but lack of maintenance caused as many problems as it solved. Run-down housing rendered Aborigines in danger of not just exposure to the vagaries of weather but to seasonal epidemics and poor maternal health. Infant mortality among the babies of Aboriginal women was still much higher than their white counterparts and this coupled with post-natal infections, rampant sexually transmitted diseases and other social diseases meant that the cycle of poverty was ensured. In general, Health Departments across the north failed to properly supervise remote community outposts, they were controlled by a few untrained community advisors, and 'Rafferty's rules' applied.

Periodic ideological policy changes and vacuums, not fully understood either by government agents or policy recipients, were tolerated without review. Infectious and preventable eye diseases remained in epidemic proportions decade after decade. The small political battles that friends of Aborigines or Aboriginal leaders raised in protest came to nothing. I was totally despondent. On my return to the Health Department my mind was awash with political and

personal concerns about the administration of Aboriginal Affairs and my own future. It made me question the role I was playing in the Health Department. After three months in Cabinet I returned to the planning section of the Health Department and started preparing my return to university.

In many ways, escaping the bureaucracy was not an easy task for both strategic and psychological reasons. Uppermost in my mind was the notion that I could not simply down tools because I had a family to support. I had to find a means of going back to university with some kind of financial support. From a psychological perspective I failed to see how I could make further contributions in the bureaucracy to improving the way of life for Aborigines; so I looked for a different way of making a difference. And so it came about. I turned to Gloria Brennan, an Aboriginal public servant from Western Australia, for advice. Gloria was born in the Ngatjutjara country of Mount Margaret, part of the western desert communities. She had been removed as a young girl and grew up in Sister Kate's Children's Home in Perth. She later put herself through university in Western Australia, became an active member of the Labor Party and champion of Aboriginal rights. Sadly, Gloria succumbed to a breast cancer that was terminal a little over two years later; but she had made a powerful impact.

Gloria had come to Canberra to work in the public service in the late 1970s. She was close to Gail Redford, a senior bureaucrat endeavouring to work out how the public service could fashion policy options to support Aboriginal bureaucrats. I met them for lunch at the then Forrest Lodge Hotel and talked about some of the problems Aborigines faced in the bureaucracy, not just about promotion but adjusting to the rigours of clerical life. I talked to them about the idea of going back to university, supported by a public service scholarship that would protect my entitlements. They asked me to apply through my department together with a letter confirming my matriculation status to the Australian National University. While waiting to hear whether anything would come of this proposition Norma and I started planning in earnest for my return to academia. We felt the decision had been made regardless of the scholarship outcome, and as a fallback position Norma started work on a full-time basis. However, very early on in the first semester we learnt that my scholarship application had been successful. I was the first Aborigine to receive one of these scholarships and support also came from the Health Department to return to the Australian National University in 1982 to begin my new life as an undergraduate.

I began my undergraduate studies with vigour taking three subjects: history, prehistory and politics. History was a subject I had done very well in at matriculation at Sydney Technical College, and the magic all came back to me when I started attending lectures at the Australian National University; the history lecturers made a profound impact on my intellect. I recall John Ritchie's

lectures on Australian history; he was a great lecturer and the only one who wore a black academic gown. His way of organising work was easy to follow and I remember he used things like slides to enhance the reading along with music of the times. John was my first history tutor and John Clanchy was my student advisor. Under the two Johns my writing and capacity to think things through improved out of sight. During those early university days I would on occasions meet up with Jack Waterford, Susie Bennett and Gloria Brennan to catch up on Aboriginal politics, and ask them to read my essays. It was a good time in my life; I worked hard and felt a new sense of maturity that enabled me to cope with subjects like Australian politics as well as prehistory which became a subject of immense fascination. Under Professor Fin Crisp, my lecturer way back in the late 1960s, politics had seemed so difficult and foreign, whereas this time it began to make sense. Through John Mulvaney's Prehistory lectures, the distant Aboriginal and European past began to reveal to me a past shut out by religious ideology.

Professor Manning Clark showed me too that academia was a liberating force. I had three lectures from Manning. The first lecture was about the value and distinction between primary source material and other collections of information as historical tools. The second lecture was an ABC lecture on historiography. One point stuck in my mind and that was about Karl Marx. Manning Clark said 'that no serious person studying and writing history can by-pass Marx's contribution to history'. 'Britain', Clark said, 'gave the world capitalism, France gave the world modern democracy while Germany gave the world modern historiography.' 'Marx', he went on, 'revealed to us the scientific nature of history and helped us to understand the important distinction between "god" and man.' The third lecture was on Alfred Deakin. On this occasion Manning Clark came down the stairs from his office into a lecture theatre known as the Tank with great aplomb, at the same time removing his ten-gallon hat placing it on the cupboard and sitting next to it with his knees facing the students. He spoke non-stop for 50 minutes on Deakin's nature, politics and contribution to the Australian nation. Alfred Deakin, I heard him say, was born on 3 August 1856, in Fitzroy, a suburb of Melbourne. William, his father, and Sarah his mother had migrated from England in 1850 arriving first in Adelaide then because of the gold rush moved to Melbourne in 1852. From Clark we learned of Alfred's early education and influences that came directly from his sister Catherine. As a public person Alfred was known as a statesman, an orator and one of the 'fathers' of the federal system and three times Prime Minister. He was known also as a mystic, a student, an intellect, a nervous, sensitive, egotistical and imaginative person. These qualities, Clark pointed out, were with him at the centre of the political action in the first ten years of the Commonwealth until his death in 1919. Manning Clark impressed me from the moment his first lecture began, and he set me on a history odyssey that has continued.

Nothing will ever surpass the feeling of joy that I had when Norma, Gloria Brennan and I ran up to the result's board at the university and found that I had passed all subjects with a distinction and credits. This opened the door to completing a history degree with honours – I grabbed the opportunity. I dearly wanted to learn to write about the Aboriginal past. The subjects I chose over the following years helped me work towards this goal and gain a deeper understanding about the discipline of history. My second year majors were European history and the history of the Spanish Civil War; both at honours level, with political science as my sub-major. In third year, the final year of my scholarship, I studied the history of Russia and China at honours level and a compulsory honours subject, History and Theory. But the time came when I had to return to the public service, this time to the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. The Institute gave me time off to complete my fourth year honours requirements, a thesis and a unit called 'Orientalism'. The time at university was one of the happiest periods of my life. I had been successful in gaining a research degree that covered subjects steeped in the discipline of history with my family financially secure. It enabled me to complete a thesis on the effects of capitalism in a region of Australia that my family came from. This exhilarating experience gave me a taste of what life could be about and I knew I wanted to take on more complex studies.

Looking back on my family life it seems to me that roughly every ten years we as a family moved house. There was nearly a decade in Sydney, a short stint in both Alice Springs and Adelaide, then in early 1974 we moved back to the eastern states and settled in Evatt, a westerly suburb of Canberra. By 1983, we were planning to move once more to a nearby suburb called Mackellar. The Australian Capital Territory government had opened up land for auction in a neighbouring new suburb and we liked the idea of building a new house. The agent who sold our Evatt house, Mario Despoja, a stalwart of the local Croatian community and colleague of mine from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, introduced us to a local builder Andy Rosin. Andy came with us to the Albert Hall where the land auction was to take place. I mention this story not so much to highlight our regular moves but to document the strain of buying land through the auction process. The hall was packed so full that there was standing room only. Andy, Norma and I got there early and chose three middle row seats so that we could see and hear clearly what was going on. We had a list of the blocks that we were prepared to purchase but quickly were outbid on the first few and as our target list got shorter we became more desperate. The land was proving to be very desirable, and at one point I got so worked up that I put my hand up and mistakenly sent the price higher for our new neighbours! But things worked out in the end when Andy was able to secure one of our final choices. My head was both hurting and spinning as Norma and I drove across Commonwealth Avenue Bridge to get the cheque to secure the block.

It was about a year since Norma's father had died and she was feeling a little anxious as to how her mother was coping on her own. We decided that now was a good time for her to visit England, between selling the Evatt house and building the new one. We rented a house in Kaleen and while Norma flew to England I settled in to look after Lisa and John. I felt that this was a great time to get to know the children's routine better as I was able to study mostly at home. Aaron by this time was in Sydney studying for an Arts degree at the University of New South Wales and living with Fred and Gabi Hollows at Farnham House. Aaron had been very popular at high school and College and had shown a great deal of leadership. I had begun taking a closer interest in his choice of studies at college, and suggested to him that physics and computer studies would enhance his prospects for university entry. While my advice was respected the force of his own character steered him closer to an interest in the more liberal arts. Scholarship was not uppermost on his mind until he scored a part-time job at one of the local department stores. He soon realised that customer service was not a long term working option for him but was unsure where his future lay. It was not that he saw working as a shop assistant an unworthy task; it was more that he wanted a more challenging life and started working towards this goal. Our younger son John, who always enjoyed taking his bike to pieces and putting it back, enjoys more mechanical things and working with his hands and became an apprentice boilermaker when he left school.

Once more I imagined that the transition from undergraduate to graduate studies would be easy; I was wrong again. It seemed that I always had to travel the hard road. I was planning to do a Master of Arts in the History Program and assumed that this would be a simple process. However, my biggest hurdle was that I had only achieved a third class pass in honours. To go any further the history fraternity insisted that I complete a Master's qualifying degree. I felt that this was like saying that you are not good enough so do another honours degree. But I struggled on. I knew I had problems in that I lacked a proper grounding in English, mostly due to my education baggage; I needed to re-learn how to write, think and articulate my ideas better.

I had heard on the grapevine that my Honours thesis was one of exceptional quality but a group led by one particular examiner felt that my work could not be judged just on the basis of its voluminous sources! But this snippet of information, or gossip, gave me the impetus to carry on. I always felt that I'd get marked down on my literary contribution but had no idea that both my thesis and topic would be the stumbling block to progression on to research. I accepted my fate and chose to do a Masters qualifying thesis researching primary source documents produced by the activities of the Weapons Research and British atomic testing processes. The Labor government had recently conducted an inquiry into the Woomera and Maralinga tests from which a large collection of

documents ensued. Geoff Eames and Dave Colette were the solicitors, and Dr Heather Goodall was the historian on a special section of the inquiry that looked into the impact of these programs on Aborigines. I decided to create a catalogue of these documents based on issues covered. I then computerised the material giving each document a name according to the issue it covered, and also cross referenced each document with those mentioning Aborigines. For example, if a researcher wanted to find any issues covered both by Prime Minister Robert Menzies and Aboriginal security issues then they could narrow the search down from the 18 volumes of bound documents. The project was accompanied by a 15,000-word thesis explaining how to use the database and issues covered.

Following submission of the thesis I heard informally that I could now progress towards producing a 50,000-word Master's thesis. The informal advice was that Dr Geoffrey Bartlett supported my inclusion into the postgraduate program and I should start formalising a research proposal. I took this advice and looked to build on the work I had just completed mainly because it gave me insight into Aboriginal history in the northern area of South Australia. In history books South Australia is mainly a story about Adelaide and its Liberal-Country Party past. I wanted to investigate how Aborigines had been written out of history during the period from the wars up to the Dunstan government's reform period. It gave me the opportunity to investigate my own family's past, how European political economy had shaped the Aboriginal people's past and the role played (or not played) by the Labor Party in creating a more humane way of life for Aborigines. The strategy I would use was to write a social history of an area north of Port Augusta, cover the Woomera and Maralinga projects and show how traditional Aboriginal society had been changed by the forces of political economy from the post Second World War era to the Labor reform period of the early 1970s. This history of South Australia covered the period dominated by conservative forces until the end of the Dunstan reform period.

This saga was part of my background and approaching it from an academic perspective gave me the capacity and opportunity to use my early Aboriginal political involvement as a tool. As a child I remember listening to tales of how the British people had salvaged German rockets that were bombing London, along with the horrifying tales of the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. After the war Prime Minister Chifley had jumped at the opportunity to allow the British to use the vast Great Victoria Desert as a testing ground for its new atomic bomb. Chifley saw it as a way of sopping up excess manufacturing capacity after the war, at the same time developing Australia's economic potential while playing host to a dominant European military power. I had heard about the atomic bomb testing at Montebello, and the explosion near Oodnadatta, when I was still at school. This was a place I knew well, and not just a childhood memory, it was country I travelled through many times as an adult. Some

years later while working at Port Lincoln 'Operation Antler' was carried out at Maralinga; a 25-kiloton bomb called Taranak was detonated. As a young person in Adelaide I remembered demonstrating about the potential negative impact these tests would have on traditional Aboriginal people and on nearby reserves. I was shocked at these events and still feel deeply about the disrespect the British and Australians showed for Aboriginal peoples' land, and the way these desert people were treated. But now I was about to embark on a research project that most probably would bring all these memories flooding back.

The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies gave me a Visiting Fellowship that basically amounted to a room of my own, while the Department provided me with travel and accommodation support funds for research in Australia and overseas. I began my field research and discussed ideas with my supervisor Dr Peter Read, who was at the time a member of the History Program in the Research School of Social Sciences. I put a research plan to him that included a number of trips to Adelaide, the Nullarbor Plains, Flinders Ranges, Marree and Oodnadatta. The narrative covered the idea that capitalism achieved these changes within most living Aboriginal peoples' lives through rail expansion, pastoral, international weapons and coal mining development.

I bought a Kawasaki motorcycle whose purpose was twofold; it was cheap to run and it enabled me to get to lectures and park easily while in Canberra and it gave me the independence and convenience to carry out my social research in South Australia. On a number of occasions it took me back and forth to the Great Australian Bight and Sydney. It was important in my research that I talked to South Australian locals and also to research local newspapers. While in Adelaide I stayed with Vincent Copley and from there would visit the State Records Office at Mile End, the Mortlock Library, the Barr-Smith Library at the Adelaide University and the Elder Smith's pastoral company's records in Curry Street. At the time I was there the Weapons Research body was writing its own history of the weapons and atomic testing and I was unable to access their records. But my earlier research covered this area.

While researching material in the Flinders Ranges area I stayed with Faith Thomas, born a Coulthard. Faith was removed from her family as a child to a Christian mission at Neppabunna. This mission was created in 1931 by the United Aborigines Mission in the northern part of the Flinders Ranges near Lake Frome and near the towns of Leigh Creek and Copley. Creating a mission there caused great conflict with local pastoralists but the mission survived and acted as an advocate for Aboriginal pastoral labour. Faith Coulthard was removed to Dr Duguid's orphanage for girls of mixed Aboriginal descent at Quorn, and later to the Eden Hills' home for Aboriginal girls. There she reached high school, became a registered nurse and played hockey and cricket for the state in the 1950s. Faith went on to be selected as a fast bowler for the Australian women's

team that toured England in 1958. I knew Faith from Eden Hills when she and other girls like Malcolm Cooper's wife Aileen Cooper came to celebrate social events at St Francis House at Semaphore. Faith was a long time friend and I stayed with her while I researched material such as the Port Augusta newspapers and the Railway Union journal. Faith gave me a bed and fed me while at the same time telling me stories of the area that I wrote about in my thesis.

Out on the Nullarbor Plains I stayed with another Aboriginal woman, Margaret Laurie, who I knew when she was a nurse at the Adelaide hospital in the 1950s, and again when I worked with her in the Aboriginal health branch of the Commonwealth Department of Health in the 1970s. Margaret made sure I became acquainted with all the Ceduna Aborigines, and those with whom she had lived with at the Koonibba mission Aboriginal Children's Home. I went out into the Maralinga lands under her guidance and fishing at Thevenard for St George whiting, the biggest whiting I had ever seen. I was familiar with this location from my days as a fireman carting wheat to Port Lincoln for the South Australian Railways. It was also the place where my uncle Rupert Maxwell Stuart began his summary trial for the alleged murder of Mary Olive Hattam in December of 1958. Many in the area remembered the trial of Max and were still shocked by the whole affair and I was reluctant to raise the subject while I was there, relying instead on secondary sources.

I met up with Spencer Wheatra who took me on some field trips out bush; he was one of the old St Francis House boys, and a first cousin to Vincent Copley. One of the places we visited was Cook, a railway town owned by the South Australian Railways on the Nullarbor Plains, halfway between Port Augusta and Perth, Western Australia. People at Cook were fascinated at meeting Spencer because he held the dubious honour of being the first Aborigine to become an inmate in the Cook jail some years earlier. This structure was a wooden box with just enough room for two, most frequently used to house truculent drunks who were travelling on the train west from Port Augusta or east from Kalgoorlie. Stations in earlier times tended to be named after Australian Prime Ministers or State politicians. The town struck me as a classic institutional town where people came from urban areas and became changed by the isolation or confronted with the prospects of alienation. The Nullarbor Plain is a featureless salt bush plain interrupted only by a railway line and a road leading to Maralinga some distance away. It was a place from which I frequently rode my Kawasaki motorcycle back to Canberra.

In the process of my research and the long distance travel to and from the southern parts of Australia on a motorbike I sometimes found it physically difficult. On one of my later trips from the western coast to Adelaide I found the cramps and pain in my lower abdomen overwhelming and felt compelled to do something about it. Vincent Copley took me to a general practitioner at

Burnside in Adelaide who saw me straight away. The doctor said I had a bowel infection caused either by appendicitis or a growth. He gave me antibiotics to ease the immediate pain and suggested that I see a doctor in my home town for a more intense investigation. Meanwhile I still had to complete my MA thesis so I worked feverishly on what turned out to be the penultimate draft. My supervisor advised that the content and theory was good but the text itself needed some rewriting. I was naturally distraught at what could have been a long delay. But the turning point came about in an unexpected way. At the time I was also writing my entry on 'historiography' for the *Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, and working closely with the assistant editor historian Dr Ian Howie-Willis. Ian sensed my distress and offered to look the manuscript over on the coming weekend, and I agreed. Thanks to his help I was able to ensure that the thesis was better written and more strongly argued. Ian allayed my mental distress but then I had to deal with my more serious physical issues.

The preliminary medical exploration proved to be more painful and uncomfortable than the illness; but I persisted. And just as well that I did because a growth was located that turned out to be cancerous. The surgeon confirmed that the cancer had not spread to any other organ, and told me that if I had to have a cancer then it was the best place to have one! My stay in hospital was comfortable and made bearable by my many visitors. Norma and the children were regular visitors of course. Others such as my supervisor Peter Read, Charlie Perkins and John Moriarty, Fred Hollows and fellow ophthalmologist Hugh Taylor all came to wish me well and a speedy recovery. Peter Read and his wife Jay brought the good news to me that all my thorough research had paid dividends and the History Program had accepted my thesis and all that was now needed was to for the degree be conferred.

It was about this time that I began to re-think the role the Anglican Church had played in pre-and postwar assimilation programs. The more I thought about it the clearer it was becoming to me that their actions were really in bad rather than good faith. Father Smith, to my mind, had promised our mothers that if he took us away he, and the Church, would care for us and give us a better education than we could possibly have had in the Native Institutions! But both he and the Church reneged on their promise when they failed to review in the years ahead what was happening to the children in their care. And by the 1960s, many of these children's lives had turned into calamities. Neither as children nor later in our lives were we able to collectively nor individually articulate our despair. A number of the boys had committed suicide and many had failed marriages behind them. They failed in the pursuits that the Church served up to them and ended up drunkards and misfits of one sort or another. Yet, the

paradox is that some of us did achieve success. I was still trying to imagine what my life during this 50-year odyssey would have been and what I might well have achieved in other people's hands.

This was also the time that other family matters were occupying my thoughts. Sam, my youngest brother, had lived with us on and off for a number of years since his early teens. On this occasion when he came to live with us he was particularly low and despondent about his future. He and I spent a lot of time talking about his options one of which was to enrol in a university entrance course at the Australian National University. I knew that Sam had the capacity to do well at university; while living in Sydney with us, as a teenager, he went to the Strathfield South High School and did very well. All he needed was some direction in his life. He gained entrance to the Australian National University and over the period of the next four years completed an Arts degree with honours. Since then he has used his archaeology background as a professional consultant in archaeological finds and native title claims. As a follow on from this work he went back to his mother's Mardu country and began taking an interest in traditional Arrernte art. He now works Aboriginal stories and designs into his glass making, painting and fabric design business. Sam and his partner Nicky have two young boys, Leeroy and Sam who love to come and spend time at the beach with us at Lilli Pilli.

Australia Day 1988 saw the end of a great political struggle between Charlie Perkins, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gerry Hand and Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Gerry Hand had tried unsuccessfully to control his Department head, Charlie Perkins and there was an underlying tension between them. One of the final spats between them centred on travel arrangements for Aborigines participating in the upcoming 1988 Bicentenary protests against Captain Cook's landing in Botany Bay, or Gwea as the Gweagang and Carrahdigang people called it, Phillip's landing at Sydney Cove and colonial expansion across the continent.<sup>1</sup> It was a dispute settled by Prime Minister Hawke who adopted the 'protest policy' allowing Aborigines to come to the mass demonstration.

In the last couple of years of the 1980s decade I tried to adjust to life once more as a bureaucrat in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, but it had even less appeal than it had ten years earlier. I submitted my Master of Arts thesis to the History Program, and then waited to hear if I had been accepted as a doctoral candidate by the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University. I decided at this point that if I was accepted I would leave the Commonwealth Public Service. Dr John Eddy was given the task of assessing my capacity to complete a doctoral thesis; John was a Jesuit who had been an Ambassador to the Vatican as well as head of the Australian Centre for

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1 Collins 1798: vol 1; 452-453.

Australian Studies in America. John taught subjects such as 'Peopling Australia' at the undergraduate level, dealing mostly with European migration. John gave me a glowing report on my capacity to conduct and complete a PhD in a subject of my and the history program's choosing. After receiving a letter of invitation from the late Professor Allan Martin, I accepted the offer around April of 1992. Circumstances came together for me to join the history program at the Research School of Social Studies at the Australian National University. When I joined the department there was a full complement of students and scholars, including Professor Ken Inglis and Dr Barrymore Smith, to welcome me. I was given a shared room with Frank Bongiorno, now a leading Australian historian. I could not have been happier!