

Author's Note to the 2021 Edition

This book is a minimally amended, reprinted version of *Sing me that lovely song again* (Pandanus Press, 2006). The title was chosen by Ian Templeman, the publisher, because he was more interested in its literary merits than in academic history. For that reason, many of my dates were removed from the original manuscript during editing.

My original intention was to get my parents and the elder of my two brothers to write their own memories of how they experienced their internment in Persia and five years behind barbed wire in Australia during World War II, focusing on individual memory by gender and age. It seemed a remarkable opportunity to make this anecdotal and analytical contribution to social science: they had each lived in the same space with the same people for the same period. It was to be an experiment made in heaven, that is, within an impeccable laboratory. But my parents had been too distressed by their loss of freedom and the congested and pressured atmosphere of life in camp to collaborate.

Because I wanted to keep the focus on my own memories, and the tone of voice my own, I wrote my own book with only minimal research in various archives in Australia and abroad. I did some research as a check on some important facts.

Asked to speak about my book at an academic conference at the University of Queensland in 2006, I did some further research to validate my contribution. My speech was then published in *National Socialism in Oceania* (edited by Emily Turner-Graham and Christine Winter, Peter Lang, 2010) with the title I had originally suggested to Pandanus Press, 'At Home in Exile: Ambiguities of wartime patriotism'. When in 2015 I was asked by Japanese scholars to speak at Cowra, NSW, at a conference on internment, I suggested that my younger brother, Peter, also be invited

to speak, using half my allocated 20 minutes because he had a different memory of our internment. As a young boy he had a wonderful time in camp, getting up to mischief, playing games, feeling adventurous. Girls are more vulnerable. Puberty can be a greater problem for them.

Another interesting matter associated with this book is that the Iranian-born anthropologist Dr Pedram Khosronejad contacted me in 2019 after reading my book in the house of a friend. Pandanus Press having ceased to exist, Pedram took considerable trouble to locate and invite me to join a small group for a project he was devising. Their parents had also been interned from Persia during the period covered by my book. The group is now aged between 64 and 85 years of age – the ‘children of internees from Persia’. The group works collectively and individually in association with Dr Khosronejad’s experiment of a reciprocal anthropology of the aged. Outcomes of their work will include a publication as well as documentary film. This book remains one of several unique contributions within the development of the project.

With the literary title used in its initial hard copy, this book has not been part of bibliographies on civilian or refugee internment in Australia, although it is unusual as an account of a female’s personal experiences.

This text is taken from *At Home in Exile: A Memoir*, by Helga M. Griffin,
published 2021 by ANU Press, The Australian National University,
Canberra, Australia.