

Frederick David McCarthy (1905–1997)

F.D. McCarthy was an outstanding pioneer of Australian archaeology, museology and Aboriginal rock art research. He joined Sydney's Australian Museum staff in 1920, a lad working as a library clerk. Eventually he moved departments, through Birds and Reptiles until, in 1932, he was promoted as Curator of Ethnology. He held this post, with increasing stature, until his appointment in 1964, as the first Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies.

McCarthy's museum career spanned those depressed decades when museums were the Cinderella of cultural institutions, neither commanding support from the public nor the private sector. Those lack-lustre decades of Depression, War and Reconstruction evidently affected administrators. For example, in 1932, when the Harvard University Museum offered to donate the museum a motor vehicle, the offer was rejected, even though the museum had no vehicles, because it could not afford the running costs. Consequently, although anxious to gain field experience, McCarthy could not leave base. As field recorders of Aboriginal rock engravings and paintings, therefore, McCarthy and his volunteer weekend team made day trips by train at their own expense. Numerous sites which they laboriously surveyed and sketched have since been destroyed by Sydney's urban sprawl, so these records are the sole testimony to many prehistoric art galleries.

Because McCarthy lacked any formal training in anthropology, he enrolled at the University of Sydney in 1933 for the diploma of anthropology. His future wife, Elsie Bramell, also took that diploma and assisted him to curate and catalogue museum collections which had been amassed under lax curators. When they married in 1940, however, Public Service regulations compelled Mrs McCarthy's resignation, so he spent the next two decades without staff assistance. Undeterred, Fred McCarthy published over 300 papers between 1931 and 1988, two thirds of them while at the Australian Museum.

McCarthy's most significant publication for archaeologists was written jointly with his wife. *The Stone Implements of Australia* (1946) was the most systematic study yet attempted to bring order into the classification and functional purpose of Aboriginal artefacts. For many years it was the basic reference for all archaeologists. Art researchers, however, may credit McCarthy's primacy in the serious evaluation of Aboriginal arts and crafts on a national scale. Published as attractive museum handbooks, his well illustrated *Australian Aboriginal Decorative Art* (1938) and *Australian Aboriginal Rock Art* (1958), sold more than 100,000 copies.

When the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land was formed in 1948, McCarthy was invited to join the team as archaeologist and anthropologist. This recognition provided opportunity to work amongst traditionally oriented people and proved a stimulating experience; a number of publications resulted. His collabora-

tion with Margaret McArthur while they were based at Oenpelli, provided them with an opportunity to study and quantify the role of women and the time they spent in the food quest. In later years this has gained recognition as a classic paper, anticipating the concerns of the 'Man the Hunter' conference of the late 1960s. Another field opportunity offered in 1961 when he studied clan dances at Aurukun, Cape York. He described forty-three dance events and collected the decorated materials used for the future National Museum.

McCarthy vainly attempted to interest people in the protection and conservation of Aboriginal art sites and other items of heritage. This was in 1938, when the citizenry of Sydney smugly celebrated the sesquicentennial year by ignoring the first Australians. McCarthy urged legislation to protect places and to prevent vandalism, one of the first to publish on such matters. Greatly daring for those insensitive times, he named several overseas scholars who had visited Australia and departed with archaeological collections which should have been housed in Australian museums, but no legislation existed to prevent their actions. Fred McCarthy was then decades ahead of public and government thinking. He must have sensed achievement, as Principal of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, however, when he convened a national conference in 1968, on the nature and protection of Aboriginal sites and antiquities. The battle for State legislation was almost won by the time of his retirement in 1971, but McCarthy soon realised that the next struggle was to ensure that State Acts were effectively implemented by the appointment of sufficient qualified staff.

Fred McCarthy was a very modest but sincere man, whose interests were diverse and his application total. Although he had little formal academic training, his publications covered broad fields of Melanesian, Polynesian and Indonesian ethnography in addition to his Australian mainstream work. In 1980 the Australian National University admitted him, *honoris causa*, to the degree of Honorary Doctor of Science. The Academy elected him to the Honorary Fellowship in 1990. He died in Sydney on 18 November 1997.

As time passes, his name will be remembered for his unselfish and lonely role in championing research into, and the preservation of, the Aboriginal past. During his retirement years he lodged his diaries and field manuscripts in the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, including a massive compilation on the art of the Sydney region. He generously donated his library to the National Museum of Australia.

In 1993 Fred McCarthy's colleagues and friends met at the Australian Museum. A special volume of the *Records of the Australian Museum* (Supplement 17), a festschrift edited by Jim Specht, was presented to him on that occasion. The volume includes an invaluable bibliography compiled by Kate Khan. For further details of Fred McCarthy's career, refer to Kate Khan's article (pp. 1-15), and see also my 'Sesqui-centenary to Bicentenary: reflections on a museologist' (pp. 17-24).

D.J. Mulvaney

Mick Miller

Mr Michael (Mick) Miller, a great Aboriginal and Australian leader, died on 5 April 1998 in Cairns, Queensland. I attended the funeral at Saint Monica's Cathedral on 11 April 1998. Mick, as everyone knew him, was buried at the Beam Section Martyn Street Cemetery, Cairns. The gathering both at the Cathedral and the graveside drew the largest crowd of people ever witnessed. The Cathedral was filled to standing room only and spilled out on the surrounding gardens and road.

Mick was married twice: to Patricia O'Shane with whom he had two children (Lydia and Marilyn), and to Barbara Russell: they had one son (Michael). Mick was the son of Michael and Cissie Miller of Palm Island, and the eldest of seven children (seven girls and two boys). Mick was educated at Mt Carmel College, Charters Towers. He excelled at sport. His greatest accomplishments, however, were first as a qualified school teacher and secondly as a political leader and ideologue. He graduated from Kelvin Grove Teacher's College in Brisbane in 1959 and from there took up a teaching post at the Cairns North State Primary in the same year.

Mick's political career began when he joined the Advancement League and the Federal Council for the Advancement of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders (FCAATSI). With his first wife Pat O'Shane, he travelled to Sydney to campaign for Aboriginal civil rights in 1969, which was where I first met them. Aboriginal rights to citizenship had not been gained in Queensland. They came to explain what life was like living under the oppressive and infamous Queensland race legislation.

Mick took an active role in FCAATSI and in 1971-2 he became Vice-President. At the same time he started the Aboriginal Legal Service and was instrumental in fostering the growth and development of the Aboriginal Medical Services in the 1980s. Prior to that, however, Mick and his close friend Clary Grogan, were employed by the national trachoma and eye health program with Fred Hollows. He was equally responsible for another famous struggle for land by the Koowatta family against the Queensland Government.

Mick spearheaded the struggle between the Federal and Queensland governments in their dispute over the creation of local governments for Aborigines. Here, the Fraser Government created the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Self-Management Act, a legislative instrument that went some way to moderating the conflict between Aborigines and the state's oppressive stand against Aborigines in Queensland.

Similarly, the struggle with Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ) in 1989, and other foreign mining companies saw Mick lead his people once more. Mick travelled the world supporting such struggles and did so while jeopardising his own personal and economic security. After the election of the Hawke Labour Government in 1983, that Government asked

him to inquire into education, training and employment and the 'Miller' report still stands as the basis of government programs in this area. Following this success he involved himself in local development, helping to establish Aboriginal housing and health worker training bodies.

Mick modelled himself on people like Paul Robeson and Martin Luther King and he passed away on the 30th anniversary of King's death. Like the black American response to King, Aboriginal people saw in Mick much of what they liked and admired. So too, like black Americans, Aborigines have lost a great leader.

Gordon Briscoe

A Tribute to Isobel Mary White

Isobel White, or Sally, as we have all known her with such deep affection and respect, was for long a much valued member of the Aboriginal History Editorial Board. It was with deep sadness that we learnt of her death in August 1998.

Sally was a very special person within her family, 'an important person' to Charlotte, Nicholas and Jonathon and their families. The family was at the core of her life, throughout all its changes. Whether based in London, Texas, Missouri, Melbourne or Canberra, the love that sustained this core was unchanged.

Sally was important to all of us—in so many different ways. She had a remarkable breadth of understanding of, and sensitivity to, others, responding to our diverse lives and concerns. In these concerns she so often sustained us. Caring for people, she never drew back from that sustaining role, however demanding. Luise Hercus tells me that Sally once said to her: 'I feel like a wailing wall'. That can perhaps raise a flash of guilt. How often did we impose on the kindness so freely offered?

Sally was a remarkable person; it is appropriate to begin with her human qualities. We will all long remember her courage, her determination, above all her integrity and directness in relations with others. She cared intensely for people, concerned that justice and honesty should prevail in human dealings, both personal and collective. Social justice and equity were important principles that informed her decisions in relation to wider society and political action.

Born and brought up in England, Sally's youth was spent first in Harrow, then later in Birmingham when her father took up an appointment as Headmaster there. Brilliant at mathematics, Sally went straight on from school to read Economics at Cambridge. This was in Milton Keynes' department. She completed the course in 1933, one of those women students accepted by the Cambridge academic establishment, though not to the extent of being actually awarded a degree. At the completion of her studies at Girton she was awarded a Travelling Scholarship for 1934/1935 to undertake research in Canada on migrants and outworkers. At this time her concerns for society also prompted her to be politically active, both in England and in Canada. On her return from Canada she became an energetic member of the Fabian Society. Her professional work in these pre-war years was with both private firms and Government, as a factory inspector and personal assistant to senior management. In 1938 she married Michael White, brilliant young scientist. During the war both were engaged in government service and spending much time in London experienced the years of intense bombing. At the end of the war she was also caring for two small sons.

After the war Michael moved to appointments in the United States, where the family spent in all ten years before he took up the chair of Zoology in Melbourne. In

Melbourne Sally met with grace the demands on her time and energies as a professorial wife, caring mother and grandmother. However, she also began a new career in Anthropology. It has brought her international renown. How did this transformation of Cambridge-trained economist, then wife and mother, to anthropologist occur?

While in Missouri and when the children had grown to school age, Sally took up academic study again. Building on her concerns with social questions and society, she chose Anthropology. In Melbourne she maintained this interest, first through the museum and the Victorian Anthropological Society then from 1964 as a member of the staff of the new Department of Anthropology at Monash University. Her students there remember her as a dedicated, inspiring teacher. Rigorous and incisive in her own work, she encouraged them to achieve the same standards. As adviser, supervisor and examiner she soon earned Australia-wide recognition.

For her own research she chose to consider the roles of women in Aboriginal society. This focussed on Desert groups, with major field work in the late 1960s and 1970s often in collaboration with linguist Luise Hercus and musicologists Catherine Ellis and Helen Payne; (see White 1970; Hercus and White 1973; White 1973; White 1977; White 1979; White and Payne 1992).

She brought fresh insights to research from the breadth of her own intellectual background and personal experience, as well as an independent creative stance. Her work was innovative, exploring hitherto neglected areas that are now regarded as central to the discipline. It resulted in a number of important published articles, and the research papers on Central Desert Women lodged with Monash University.

Field work was a major part of her life in those two decades, often combined with Michael's field work on the Nullarbor and in Western Australia. At Yalata on the Nullarbor she worked over many years from 1969 with the women of that community, especially Alice Mangkatina (Alice Cox) and her family (see White 1985a).

Of this she wrote:

What I looked forward to most as I approached Yalata on each of my visits was Alice's beautiful welcoming smile. (*Fighters and Singers* 1985b, p. 214).

The women at Yalata shared their lives with her in ways very important to her, taking her on bush trips and introducing her to significant places such as Pidinga. They often called her kapali (grandmother).

This made her think of Daisy Bates (she says 'uncomfortably' *Fighters and Singers*, 1985a, p. 215). The comment brings to my mind her major work of the 1970s and 1980s, the editing of Daisy Bates' *Native Tribes of Western Australia*. This book was the product of meticulous historical and anthropological research. It brought to scholarly readership Mrs Bates' serious anthropological recording of the societies of Western Australia. It is a significant contribution to Australian anthropology, and to the history of anthropology in Australia. Its editing, and analysis of the complexities of Daisy Bates' life and work with Aboriginal groups engaged all those intellectual qualities we associate with Sally's research. It shows so clearly her incisive, yet objective, non-judgemental and sensitive command of analysis. It is a magnificent achievement. Appropriately it was launched in December 1985 by her friend Ken Colbung, himself a Nyungar of south-western Western Australia. He then chaired the Council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, a body of which Sally was long an active Member.

From the early 1980s Sally was an active member of the Editorial Board of *Aboriginal History*. She was review editor for many years, and co-editor with Judith Wilson and Isabel McBryde of the two special volumes honouring Diane Barwick (vols 11 and 12). Her wide intellectual interests, acumen and extensive international experience and contacts made her a magnificent editor and Board Member. We all benefitted from her wisdom and her counsel offered in friendship. Her special expertise in ethnohistory, melding history and anthropology, is shown in the beautiful paper 'The birth and death of a ceremony', published in *Aboriginal History* 4(1) (White 1980).

Sally's commitment to Aboriginal anthropology has continued in recent years. When direct research was no longer possible she remained involved through the Editorial board of *Aboriginal History*. She still examined theses, and was always there in an advisory role for friends and colleagues.

Her research and writing from the 1960s are major contributions to Aboriginal studies, both empirically and theoretically. We think of significant books such as:

- the Daisy Bates volume (*The native tribes of Western Australia* 1985c)
- *Fighters and Singers* edited with Diane Barwick (and Betty Meehan)
- the school text book *Before The Invasion*, co-authored with Colin Bourke and Colin Johnson;
- the volumes of *Aboriginal History* for which she was co-editor and review editor.

There are also important articles, such as that on dogs (their roles in hunting and social relation with Aboriginal people) at Yalata (1972) and chapters in books edited by others such as Fay Gale's *Women in Aboriginal Society* (1970); R.M. Berndt's *Aborigines and Change: Australia in the 70s* (White 1977); Caroline Larrington's *Feminist Companion to Mythology* (with Helen Payne 1992); and Julie Marcus' *First in their Field* (1993). There is also her major research report on desert women lodged with Monash University.

For Sally her intellectual interests were matters of exploration, of ever seeking new understanding. They were driven by that perception and wisdom she brought to all her living, and was so generous in sharing. We have so much to thank her for, and to celebrate in her memory.

To her family, especially Charlotte, Nicholas and Jonathan we extend our deepest sympathy in their personal loss.

May I end by adapting the wording Sally, Diane and Betty chose in their dedication of *Fighters and Singers*, to Shirley Andrew.

To Sally,

Who knows about scholarship and learning and cares about people.

Isabel McBryde

Australian National University

and

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies
Canberra

Note

This tribute builds upon the eulogy I was honoured to be invited to present at the funeral service in Canberra on 28th August 1998. A similar tribute, but focussing on Sally's contribution to Australian Anthropology will be included in a forthcoming issue of *Canberra Anthropology*, with the agreement of both Dr Peter Read, Chairman, *Aboriginal History* editorial board, and Dr Patrick Guinness, editor *Canberra Anthropology*.

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Colleen Shirley Smith, MBE, AM, 1928-98

Colleen Shirley Smith, or 'Mum Shirl' as she was known across Australia, died on 28 April 1998 in Sydney. Born on Erambie government reserve, New South Wales on 25 November 1928, she was one of nine children born to Isabelle and Joseph Perry. She attended the reserve school conducted by Roman Catholic sisters.¹ It was this Catholic school which shaped her life, allowing her to exercise her maternal instincts in a powerful way on behalf of her immediate, extended and institutional community, which she assumed was her family. But Shirley was a woman of her time in that she came from a government institution with large permanent populations of women and children: reserves were largely creches where Aboriginal men came and went as a surplus rural workforce. Shirley's early pattern of life reflected both the growth of the Catholic church as a rural institution caring for Aborigines, and that of Aboriginal women following their casual-working male partners around NSW. Then she became liberated from government legislative subjugation in 1968, commencing a new phase of life coping with urban culture.²

In caring for Aborigines in NSW, the Catholic church was a newcomer. Its colonial role focused attention on Irish migrants or their offspring.³ Aborigines featured on a small scale in the church's drive to religious pastoral work. In the larger towns, Catholic establishments emerged after World War I and it was during this time that they began taking Aboriginal orphans, fringe-camp and reserve children into their schools. In some places where Aborigines lived in numbers, and were prevented from attending town schools, the church contracted with the Aboriginal Welfare Board (AWB) to operate schools. Cowra and Erambie government reserve was such a place and Mum Shirl emerged out of these circumstances.

In the 1930s a gradual migration of people of Aboriginal descent reflected concerted attempts to escape legislative subjugation from the then infamous *Aborigines Pro-*

1. Hereafter referred to as Catholic rather than Roman Catholic.

2. The *Aborigines Protection Act*, administered by the Aborigines Welfare Board, was repealed in 1968, but as race law control loosened so other child welfare laws tightened. This meant almost no change as Shirley now attended the Children's Courts at YASMA and Darlinghurst and the Central and Darlinghurst Courts when her friends and relatives were in conflict with general laws. The urban culture crashed in on all new Aboriginal migrant families perplexed about their new social circumstances and puzzled about matters as simple as where to go, what to do and how to do it.

3. See C.M.H. Clark, *A History Of Australia*, vol. I, pp. 93-4, but see also, vols. II to V, Melbourne University Press, 1962-1981.

tection Act⁴ by gaining 'exemptions' from the Act, or exempting themselves by moving to Sydney from the Riverina region.⁵ The latter area had been settled by white, mostly Scottish and English, sheep and wheat farmers, in the 1830s. By the 1850s they had well-established Aboriginal labour forces. Aborigines from this area were the first to move to urban areas after WWII. In 1930 Shirley's parents moved from Erambie closer to Cowra; Erambie was a reserve 'too far from town'. She moved to Sydney in the 1950s and had a family of her own. In the same decade she moved back to Erambie to care for her sisters' families while they took on casual work around NSW during the post-war boom. In the early 1960s Shirley returned to Sydney to help care for the family of her nephew, Patrick Wedge, who had been shot by police at the Petersham Railway Station. Meanwhile, Shirley's own children were removed to AWB custody—the girls to Cootamundra; the boys to Kinchela.⁶ Through her own efforts she eventually regained the custody of her children. Soon after, Shirl's brother, Laurie (the Bat) Perry, was gaoled for a series of offences and she acted as a carer of his children. Following her own contact with the AWB, she arranged for her brother's family to be allocated an AWB house near Newcastle. All the while, Shirley gained valuable skills attending to her own affairs and dealing with the government. She put these skills to good use in visiting children and adults of her own volition, or on behalf of other acquaintances and relatives.

Shirley was a member of a small number of disparate Aborigines who moved, after WWII, from camp conditions in the La Perouse sand-hills (known as 'Frogs Hollow') into temporary government accommodation at the abandoned military barracks of both Kensington and Kingswood. In 1968 this group numbered no more than 1,000 people, but increased following Aboriginal people's emancipation from the infamous AP Act by the Askin Government in 1968, triggering a huge rural exodus across NSW.⁷ There followed a period of urban cultural adaptation to police, the law, housing, child care, education, health and housing. Aborigines experienced confusion both in Blacktown and the slums of Sydney. These people were migrant Aboriginal families and individuals seeking a better life in the city. Such circumstances suited Shirley's skills. She involved herself in the activities of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs (FAA)—a welfare centre in Sydney Haymarket. She learned to use other charities such as Matthew Talbot's and St Vincent De Paul's for clothing and food. Shirley thereby became well known to Aborigines and to whites as someone to be contacted when either charity was needed or disaster emerged; whether in the city or rural towns of NSW.

I was a student at the Sydney Technical College when I first met Mum Shirl in 1966. Shirl participated in the FAA auxiliary with Flo Grant, Ruth and Herb Simms and others who helped at the FAA fetes. In 1970 I was a member of the Aboriginal Legal Service Council. This council, formed through pushing by young Aboriginal migrants to Sydney, was supported by lawyers such as Hal Wootton, Bob Debus, Gordon Samu-

4. See Jack Horner, *Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom: A Biography*, ANZ Book Co., NSW, 1974.

5. See C.D. Rowley, *Outcasts In White Australia: Aboriginal Policy and Practice*, vol. II, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1971, pp. 41–61, 107–30, 232–4, 383–5, 390–401.

6. Ian Howie-Willis, 'Kinchela Home', in D. Horton, *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, 1994, pp. 548–51.

7. Rowley, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–85; see also, W.D. Scott and Company, *The Problems and needs of the Aboriginal of Sydney, a report to the Minister for Youth and Community Affairs*, NSW Government Printer, Sydney, 1973.

els, David Isaacs, the late Paul Landa and Garth Nettheim. Its radicals were people such as the Jewish lawyers, intellectuals and students, among whom were Bob Debus, Peter Tobin, Eddy Newman, Paul Torsillo, Ross McKenna and Peter Thompson, and Aborigines such as Paul Coe (Mum Shirl's nephew), Garry Foley and Garry Williams. Aborigines who migrated to Sydney in the late-1960s and early 70s brought with them a rural reserve and fringe-camp culture. Having only just been shaken free of government control as a rural population, this brought them face-to-face with city police. Determined to oppose police control, they imagined that a legal defence was possible against 'white colonial oppression'. When the ALS commenced I was appointed field officer and David Collins the first solicitor.

Mum Shirl's relationship with me developed quickly. She gave the Redfern ALS an authenticity among local Aborigines that the FAA lacked, and so the service widened in popularity in NSW and beyond. Other community needs emerged and Mum Shirl supported me in my efforts to develop a 'free' Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS). On this matter I called a public meeting at the South Sydney Community Aid Office. Those who attended were myself, Mum Shirl, John Russell, Ross McKenna, Dulcy Flowers, Leonard Smith, Fred Hollows.⁸ Shirl was instrumental in raising funds and interest among the Catholic population for support. Fathers Ted Kennedy and Frank Brennan were later to link that support to the AMS. I left Redfern to return to my home in Alice Springs in late-1972 but my friendship with Mum Shirl continued. Soon after I was one of the demonstrators who saw her become a national icon by standing with Stuart Harris (the journalist) between the demonstrators and the police at the Canberra tent embassy. They formed a human barricade endeavouring to stop Commonwealth police from demolishing the embassy on the orders of William McMahon's coalition government. In later years she was also instrumental in planning Pope John Paul's two visits. By then she had gained official recognition, her honours and awards including an MBE, an AM and appointment as a special commissioner for NSW Corrective Services. With Mum Shirl's passing, Aboriginal Australians have lost a wonderful leader and the Catholic Church a gracious ambassador.

Gordon Briscoe

8. G. Briscoe, 'An Aboriginal Model', in B. Hetzel, M. Dobbin, L. Lipmann and E. Eggleston (eds.), *Better Health for Aborigines?*, University of Queensland Press, 1974.