

# Information Sheet No. 36



## Heritage Services Geraldton Regional Library

### WARI (ALICE NANNUP) – Aboriginal Elder

1911, Oct 17	- Born at Abydos station, between Roebourne & Marble Bar, WA.
1932, Apr 27	- Married Will Nannup.
1995, Nov 7	- Died in Geraldton, WA.

*When the Pelican laughed,* Alice Nannup's detailed recounting of her life, came to prominence in 1988. Her book covers a tortuous period for Aborigines in Western Australia, and records the daily struggle against the prejudice and ignorance of some of the non-Aboriginal community.

Her first connection with Geraldton was in 1934 when she and husband Will Nannup moved to Quarry Street, home to a number of well-known Aboriginal families. She recalled, "Most of the white people in town pretty much kept their distance from Aborigines". During the war there were curfews after dark for Aborigines, and exclusion from licenced premises had been the law for some time. She also recounted aspects of Geraldton's past that will be more familiar to many - the wharf, tomato growers



Wari (Alice Nannup) with Aunty Jean Hill

Photograph courtesy of the Nannup family.

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and the big parade to mark the end of World War II.

The misguided A O Neville, for whom she had worked as servant in her younger days, appeared unannounced in her lounge room. He told Alice that Aborigines had to move to a Reserve on the edge of town, a segregation that lived on until 1964.

During this period several more children were born – Joan, Daphne (deceased) and Lewis. The challenges of Reserve life are described in detail as Alice once again succeeded against State-enforced inequality to give her children a good upbringing. Taking her young family on their regular Saturday cinema outing into central Geraldton in 1950, Alice responded to racial taunts directed at her children by lecturing the whole audience. Perhaps this event, or others like it, sowed the seeds of her lifelong courageous involvement in campaigning for Aboriginal rights, and challenged non-Aboriginal Geraldton to examine its behaviour and attitudes. The Nannup family later moved to Well Street when Veronica (Roni, now deceased), Noel and Beverley were born, followed by Lauraine born at Greenough.

Alice worked as a laundress at St Patrick's College on Bayly Street between 1957 and 1963, the year in which she and Will Nannup amicably parted company. Free to chart a new course, Alice went back to her country around Roebourne from 1965 to 1968. A heart attack brought her back to Geraldton for the remainder of her life. In retirement there was time for many things - an active member of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, member of the 'Mogumber Girls' arts group, and a respected Aboriginal elder. The building of the Bundiyarra Centre gave her great hope for the future.

## **References**

*Text taken from **Geraldton: 150 Years, 150 Lives**, Local Studies Department, Geraldton Regional Library, 2001, p. 175.*

*Copies are available from the Library, 37 Marine Terrace, Geraldton (PO Box 101, Geraldton, WA, 6531) for \$27.50 (plus \$6.50 postage and handling).*

