

*The First Aboriginal Progressive Association*

**Ruby Langford Ginibi**

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In the '60s for our Human Rights campaigns run by Charles Perkins while he was at university in Sydney there was Bert Groves, Isobel McCallum, Joyce Mercy, Auntie Edie Bostock and her son Lester, and my friend Marie Johnston from Tamworth, cause we were given the Greek club rooms in George Street City for our meetings cause Charlie Perkins played soccer with the Greek Club Socceroos.

We held meetings in this club rooms every month or quarter, and the Greek Club was the only place that would give us permission, cause no one else would help us with rooms for these meetings.

So, we gathered all the elders we could round up, and we planned our program with meetings with Government Ministers for Housing and Education, and all other services we could get to promote our needs, such as housing, medical, and others. Some we got help with. Some we didn't. But we tried.

There was one elder, old Bert Groves; I can remember him climbing the hill to my place in Ann Street, Surry Hills, with a big box of toys and goodies for my children when they were little, at Christmas time. He was such a good man and he was also related to my first three children's grandmother and her name was Ruby Pearl Leslie of Gunnedah Hill, Coonabarabran. They were cousins.

He was born in 1908 of Wailwan descent. Boodjree-be-angar Bert Groves spent his boyhood around Gulargambone, New South Wales. After leaving school in fifth grade he learnt the plumbing trade, and in 1924 he joined William Ferguson's Aborigines Progressive Association along with Charlie Perkins (much later on) and was involved in 1938 Day of Mourning organized to counter the season centenary celebration and he served in the army during World War Two and in 1950 succeeded Ferguson in New South Wales Aboriginal Welfare Board.

He revived the dormant Aboriginal Progressive Association and remained its president until his death in 1970, the year that Rotary named him Citizen of the Year.

A tree grows in the grounds of Kinnari Hostel for students, mostly girls, in Box Road, Sylvania. It was not a magnificent specimen – but to Bert Groves it meant so much.

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Bert named this tree the JEFA Tree. From this base stock there were many branches.  
He subscribed to the idea that we are all equal, no matter to which branch of humanity  
we all belong, end of story aye!

**Dr. Ruby Langford Ginibi**

*Written in July, 2011.*

*My Mixed up Life*  
*or*  
*'Screw Up'*

**Ruby Langford Ginibi**

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In 2011 I started to feel my age. I'm 77 now. I'd been living at 7 Beryl Close, Eagle Vale, since 3rd September 2003. Well, there ya go. My son Jeffery had been my carer since Allawah Hostel, our first aged care Hostel which opened in 1989, and was ideal because I had major surgery on my stomach at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and I sure needed a place like that, cause Allawah means 'stop and sit down a while' in our Aboriginal dialect.

At first it was a boys hostel called Mark Ella after that famous football family and I lived there for eleven and a half years writing my books. And Jeffery's 15 year marriage broke up so I had to get accommodation for myself aye. So I've been at Beryl Close Eagle Vale for 7 years now, and Nobby, my son was my carer.

Then we had a visit from Patrick Cheshire, one of my adopted sons, of which I had many. He'd come down from the Gold Coast to try and find his son Jeffery David who he hadn't seen since 1985. But he wasn't able to trace him, so he stayed with me and Nobby. It was good to have family around. Much laughter then I started to feel sick and I had a few falls so I went to Campbelltown Hospital for one month, then on to Camden Hospital for two months.

I'd lost weight as I was 125 kg before I came to hospital and now I'm 100 kg. Wow! And I'm riddled with osteoarthritis. Seems I had a bad fall when I was a child on Box Ridge Mission, Coraki, when I was little, but no one took me to see a doctor. Besides Coraki was only a little village and besides our Aboriginal People were not allowed in the wards, cause there was a tin shed in back of the hospital with **Abos Only** painted on it. This was our ward!

So, back to my story. I came here to Fairfield Nursing Home at 125 The Crest Fairfield on Black Friday, 13<sup>th</sup> May, and because they had me on a vegetable and optifast diet, the staff did not know of my diet, so I had the best fish and chips and salad and scrambled eggs. It was deadly aye. Until they found the diet I was on. End of story.

**Dr. Ruby Langford Ginibi**  
*Written on 24<sup>th</sup> June, 2011.*

**Postscript by Pam Dahl-Helm Johnston:** Towards the end Ruby had a lot of memories crowding her mind; I suppose she always had a lot of memories crowding her mind. However her energy was waning and it was somewhat difficult for her to write everything down. Not that she was aware that this was her last few weeks, and days on this earth. However, she was writing and writing. She'd read the writings out to me, as she always did, and I would respond. That would lead into endless yarns about people and places; memories. On one of my last times with her she gave me these writings and told me to make sure that they got out there. This was everything she had written in the last few months of her life. Over the previous few years she had become wheelchair dependent and now she was totally bedridden. A big irritation let me tell you. Was she aware then, that this is almost her last day with us?

I don't think so. She so often gave me her writings. I think she trusted that I would make sure that not only would they be put out there, but they would be put out there respectfully. Of the many writings I have, I chose these writings, and have insisted that her 'voice' be clear. I could have chosen any one of over 50 writings. These ones were about, firstly, involvement, and people, in 'the day' when Indigenous people were holding each other together and working on a 'voice' when no-one was listening. It was a time of both horror and hope. People were so good to each other; so supportive as each was in the same private and political hell hole. The second story about the reflections of an old woman as she looks back on her life, something it seems we all do when we reach a certain age. It's almost as though there is a biological imperative to package things and pass them on. EVERYTHING that Ruby Langford Ginibi did was about passing knowledge and love on and these two stories are a small part of that totality. Humbly I beg; please don't forget Ruby. Please make sure that her voice and wisdom, through her writings, lives on. Please don't let her writings be put at the very back of the cupboard of history. It's up to each one of us now and this is my little attempt to make sure that she is part of the future as well.