

Yingu gajin ngajim gurruun - This is my grandad's story

Written by Lillian Caulfield-Anning using Yidinji language

The year was 1954, it is Sunday, the first day of August. It is yiwanyji – wintertime. In the hospital at Atherton in Far North Queensland a baby boy was born to two loving parents Myra Evelyn Anning (nee Ah Kee) and Victor Desmond Anning. Myra and Victor named him Samuel Victor Anning, he was their firstborn. Samuel would be the eldest of four, he would have two brothers Michael Richard and Graham Phillip and a baby sister Janice Faye. Samuel is known as “Sam” or “Sammy” to his family.



Baby Samuel



Grandad as a toddler

Yingu ngajin ngajim, “this is my grandad”. Ngajim’s parents were Bama of Far North Queensland. Victor his dad was descendant of Gambira Yidinji & Ngadjon Bama with Malaysian heritage, and his mother Myra was a descendant of Digarra Yidinji & Gugu Yimithirr Bama, South Sea Islander & Chinese heritage. Gambira is Tableland and Digarra is Coastal in Yidinji dialect.



Grandad & Grandma with their family



*Grandad's parents
Myra (nee Ah Kee) & Victor Anning*



Siblings: Janice, Graham, Michael & Samuel

Grandad tells me he was born in Atherton in Far North Queensland, part of the homelands of the Gambira Yidinji people. His hometown was Kairi, also Gambira Yidinji territory. He spent much time on his Gambira Yidinji homelands with his dad from a very young age of two. They would travel over to the hills of Tinaroo to camp, hunt and scratch tin in the gullies. My grandad’s great grandmother Lena Cowley was born at Tinaroo, she was a Yidinji Bama. My great great great granny Lena would marry a Malaysian man who was born in Singapore, Joseph Ning/Aneng. Great great great grandad Joseph’s surname would be changed by government authorities to the English surname of Anning even though he had no European heritage at all. Joseph and Lena together had eight children, the eldest Gerry. Great great grandad Gerry married Maggie Belsen and they had my great “Pop-pop” Victor Anning their eldest of seven children that they had together.



*Grandad Sam's great grandparents
Gerry and Maggie (nee Belsen) Anning*



Granddad Sam's grandmother Elizabeth Ah Kee later Satani (nee Mow)

Granddad's mum Myra was born to Elizabeth (nee Mow) and Charle's Ah Kee. I called Myra "Nanny Anning", and Nanny was born in Babinda, which is Digarra Yidinji Country, her traditional homelands. Nanny was a descendant of the Majanyji clan of Digarra Yidinji. Granddad says that he doesn't know what his Granddad Ah Kee looks like because the family have no photos of him. Ngajim's mum Myra was second eldest out of four children: three girls and one boy. She also had half siblings when her mother remarried after the death of her dad at the young age of 29.

My ngajim Sam looks back on the years of growing up on Country with happiness. Granddad Sam and his brother Granddad Mike went to Tolga State School where many of their Yidinji relatives and families also attended. Tolga too is Yidinji Country. When he was around six years old the family then moved down to the coast to his mother's Digarra Yidinji Country. One of the schools where granddad and his brother attended was McDonald's Creek State School. McDonalds Creek is between Fishery Falls and Deeral. My granddad grew up hunting and eating traditional minya (animal meat) and

mayi (vegetable/fruit food). Wherever my granddad's family lived he said the land provided just enough for the family of six to live as they were poor. Granddad Sam said even though "he grew up very poor he wouldn't swap it for anything else or go back and change anything." The minya that was mostly bought into the house was jaban (freshwater eel), gulun (jew fish), marrgu (grey possum), gurriliy (wallaby), and every now and again chooks would be brought home, be cleaned, cooked and eaten.



Ngajim Sam holding jaban minya on Country at Barron River, Tableland Yidinji

My granddad Sam told me that at times it was "hard growing up black" because of the racism that he and his brother endured from other children because of their dark skin color, he felt that the European people who were racist toward them saw them as not "up to their level". At times it would be very nasty things like not wanting him to touch their desk or hand. Granddad says that it wasn't all people that had these prejudices and that "there was many



The Anning family from left: Rachel, Sharon, Margaret, Caleb, Samuel Snr, Joshua & Samuel Jnr

good people". Ngajim is unashamed of his Bama heritage, or his Malayan, Chinese and South Sea Islander heritages. He and his brother Mick loved to learn about their Aboriginal heritage, the history and felt the connection to the land and their people. This year my granddad will be 69 years of age, he married ngajin gumbu, my grandmother Margaret when he was 21 years old. They have been married for 47 years and will celebrate 48 years in June 2023. Together Ngajim and Gumbu have five children: Sharon, Sam Jnr, Rachel, Joshua and Caleb. I am the daughter of Sharon. Granddad has worked hard all his life and to support his family. He is an artist. He does many things as an artist, he paints traditional rainforest art of his ancestral Bama, he paints and creates contemporary bama art, landscapes and animals and makes objects with wood. Ngajim makes Bama tools like gala (spear), biguun (rainforest shield), wangal (curved boomerang), gugal & nalan (firestick & base), milbirri (bull-roarer), bibara & gugulu (flat & round clapsticks) and yidi yidi (didgeridoo). Granddad enjoys walking over Country, and fishing. He still likes to eat his bush tucker that he was raised on. My granddad is a musician too, he plays the guitar acoustic & electric, the bass guitar and steel guitar. Another of granddad's interests is reading and researching Aboriginal history and searching YouTube for things of interest. Granddad was given his traditional Yidinji name of Bulbali by his granny Katie Mays. Bulbali was a great Yidinji warrior. Great great granny Katie was a history holder of language, bama family connections and Bama Country and granddad was privileged to have learned from her. Granddad Sam has learnt and continues to learn about his Bama heritage, language, history, country from many of his elders before him like his beloved parents, his grandparents, great grandparents, aunts and uncles. He not only likes to learn of Australian Indigenous history but also the Indigenous peoples throughout the world as he says "because there is always a connection with the Aboriginal people". My grandfather is a Christian man, who today continues to pass his knowledge to his children and grandchildren.

Yinggu ngajin ngajim gurruun – this is my granddad's story.