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### **Abstract**

Anyway, I was born in Wallaroo in 1934. Those years, on Point Pearce, for some reason they didn't take the women into Maitland Hospital to have their baby. They had to go to Wallaroo, being a government hospital, I suppose. I was born there in 1934 and brought up on Point Pearce. I remember going to school at Point Pearce. You had to do lower one, I think that started at age five, and then grade one. I was pretty bright, too. They used to bring the bigger kids into my class and give me sums. I'd add up sums for the bigger girls, who were a grade above me, or two grades. I used to work them out real quick though. They couldn't get over it.

CLEM O'LOUGHLIN

## Early Days on Point Pearce

Anyway, I was born in Wallaroo in 1934. Those years, on Point Pearce, for some reason they didn't take the women into Maitland Hospital to have their baby. They had to go to Wallaroo, being a government hospital, I suppose. I was born there in 1934 and brought up on Point Pearce. I remember going to school at Point Pearce. You had to do lower one, I think that started at age five, and then grade one. I was pretty bright, too. They used to bring the bigger kids into my class and give me sums. I'd add up sums for the bigger girls, who were a grade above me, or two grades. I used to work them out real quick though. They couldn't get over it.

I remember going to school on Wardang Island. That must have been in the late thirties. BHP ran half of the Island, the northern half, and Dad was sort of the overseer or leading hand on the bottom half of Wardang, you know? They had sheep there, about four thousand sheep, about four thousand. They used to shear them over at Wardang shearing shed. It's all knocked down now. All the Nunga villages. Nunga. When I say Nunga, I mean Aboriginal from Point Pearce.

Point Pearce had an old boat called the Narrunga, with no mast. They used to sail it before, you know. We were towed over to Wardang by launch. We put all our gear on to take over. We had a horse and cow, and all our stuff. We loaded it up at the jetty, on the Point, at Point Pearce. Horse walked on, but the cow wouldn't. We went over to Wardang, and the horse wouldn't get off, cow would not get off.

I was just a child. Yes. But I remember it too. Well that was Dad's job there. Ours was going to school. And on weekends we used to go rabbiting. Rabbits were lousy. No guns, just waddies, you know, on Point Pearce. We used to get so much a scalp — a penny, I think. We used to take the rabbit carcasses back to the piggery where they cooked them up for the pigs.

When I say we, most times it's me and Dad. I liked to be with him everywhere he went, in the school holidays. Rabbit trapping. After school. I remember on Wardang Island one time during the war they were offering a pound a dozen for the skins. They'd just throw the carcass away and keep the rabbit skins. Dad got seventy-five dozen the first week. That's seventy-five pounds. That's a lot of money in the early forties. And all the others were getting sixty and seventy dozen too.

I remember we had this old teacher, at Point Pearce, Mr Grewar his name was. He had a real soft spot for the kids. He used to blow one whistle to warn us

that it was time to go in, then another. We'd be playing marbles. He'd say, 'Did you boys hear the whistle?'

'Yeah Mr Grewar. Hang on, just gotta get my doogs back.' Then he'd want a shot. He'd have a go too.

Old grandfather, Jack Stuart, Mum's dad, used to work on the windmills down at the willows, down by the beach at Point Pearce. Only source of water they had, you know. Dug down among the rushes — beautiful clean water there. Old grandfather used to pump that water up to Point Pearce by windmill. He used to go past the school, going down to work, and on the way back he used to come past the school again. Mr Grewar used to say 'Dinnertime kids'. Every time grandfather went past it was a minute to twelve. We didn't need a clock.

Over that time, forty-one years, when he worked on the windmills, grandfather Stuart had three horses. I remember the last one, the white one, was called Jimmy Jacka. So each horse lasted over twelve or thirteen years. Grandfather also had a mate working with him for many years. His name was Tom Goldsmith.

Mum had brothers and sisters on Point Pearce. She had a brother and sister from Grandfather Stuart's first marriage called John and Hilda. I've still got a photograph. Grandfather married Mum's mother. Anyway, he worked hard and when his first wife died he married Mum's mum, Granny Rachel Disher.

Dad's father, from the west coast, was one of the town planners at Ceduna. That's where O'Loughlin Terrace came from. I think my brother Danny tried to get some information from the Town Council, but they wouldn't tell him too much. I don't know why.

Edward O'Loughlin was my great grandfather. He came out from Ireland. He was a share farmer. He married a full-blood woman from Ooldea, Eva Pompey, Wirangu tribe. She already had a child, Rosie Coleman, born at Bookabie in 1890. Edward was Eva's first de facto husband. Eva and Edward had two children, Alfred, born in 1893 at Denial Bay and Molly Alma, born in 1904. Alf was reared by his white father. Only Alf and Molly were known to be called O'Loughlin. Eva Mary later married a full-blood, Pompey. Their first child was Maude, born in 1900. Then Eva went back to Edward and Molly, Edward's daughter, was born in 1904. In 1905 Eva was with Pompey and they had Emma, at Koonibba, then Edmond Herbert in 1907, Martin Augusta in 1910 and Esther in 1914. I don't know much about their history. Dad never spoke of it much. I knew Dad had a sister over in Port Lincoln: Auntie Molly, married Uncle Edmond Bilney. When Dad died on the 12th of December, 1952, they all came over for the funeral. They never saw him for years. His sister Molly, you know, was only eighteen when she married and he was fifty-nine when he died. All that time they never saw each other.

My dad married twice too, on Point Pearce. He married Daisy Milera first. He had two kids from his first wife. The eldest was brother Edmond. The second child was a girl, Irene, who died just before she turned five.

We had a big family: fourteen, fifteen. Big family. A lot of them died young. There were twin girls. I remember Dad putting them in little boxes in the back of this old A-Model Ford to take them to hospital. But they died — together. I don't know where their graves are: in the West Terrace Cemetery, I think. Their names were Eilene and Alene.

We did all right on Point Pearce. Dad was sort of a handy man. He'd have a go at anything. I remember that during the war he had a free light. He cut a big propellor out of a piece of timber and put a generator on it. It was the first one on Point Pearce. He used to charge car batteries for people on Point Pearce.

On Point Pearce we had a six-roomed house. A big stone house, good house, one of the better ones. There were a lot of good homes there, built of stones from around the beach, and sand. Some of them were built without cement in those days — just mortar and stones. We had a free light that Dad made. I told you about that. And I told you about the twins, the sisters who died. And I remember breaking my leg, there, 'cause me and my sisters were playing in the bedroom. I was under the bed, on my back, pushing a spring up in the mattress, showing off. My sister was right up on top of the bedhead. She jumped off, right on top of me. I said, 'Aw my leg is broken'. It was too. I got it in plaster. They took me out to Ardrossan, to the doctor. A week after that I was hopping around on it. I wasn't supposed to. Every time mum or dad came around I'd get down.

I remember doing drill at school. The war was on then. They dug big trenches outside the school, for drills, just in case the bombs started to fall. Mr Grewar would blow the whistle and we'd all run and put our hands over our heads and go in the trenches, three-foot trenches. 'Cause there were planes flying all over the place there. At one stage they thought they were going to build the airstrip there, at Point Pearce — all that flat swamp land. But it never happened.

We had big trucks come in there, two or three big trucks, and just pick the men up. Whether they said yes or no they just herded them up and took them. I remember the old ladies there, crying for their sons. They were taking them away. Most of them only went to Springton or Mataranka, places like that. And Darwin. A lot of Aboriginal people were taken from Point Pearce during the War. Half-a-dozen never came back but most of them did, yeah, which was good. Lot of them went to the Pacific Islands and fought in the jungle and the Middle East. Some of those people lived in Hollywood — that's what we called the shacks outside Point Pearce. Three of the Smith brothers went. One never came back. Good fishing family — Smiths, from Moonta. He was a white man. He married a Nunga woman, Granny Alley.

During the war, in the school at Point Pearce, the bells would ring. When the whistle blew we had to run outside and do the drill, in case a bomb came. Oh it was scary. Then a fire started up north of us. I was scared of fires. I remember once I was standing behind Mum. She got up to light the metho burner — you know the little ones? I was standing behind her and looked around and when she

lit it it blew up and burnt all the hair off my face. She put it out with her apron. Since then I've been frightened of, well, thunder and fires, lightning and everything. Anyway this fire started north of Point Pearce. It was coming over the hill, straight for Point Pearce, you know. The old workman there, he was doing something on the school wall. He called out, 'Oh here comes the devil'. He was making it worse, and we were all crying. Anyway, I was happy when that night the fire went past Point Pearce. All these cars were out in the paddock dragging bags over the flames. Gawd I was scared when the fire was coming.

In our house we had three bedrooms. We had a wireless. Maybe at one stage we was the only family with a wireless. 'Cause everybody used to come and listen to the news — quarter-to-six news — and *Mrs Hobbs* and *Dad and Dave*, you know? They used to come and listen to the serials. 'Cause Dad had this big, what do you call it, big wireless, old one, with a dry battery and a wet battery. We used a car battery sometimes. We used to buy the dry batteries. And of course we had the free electric light — one in the kitchen run off the free light that Dad made up.

People would sit down by the table. Dad's half brother used to come down at night-time. He was a sort of a jack of all trades too. He'd come from Koonibba, same place as Dad. He used to come down at night, and sit down and yarn. He used to be great with leatherwork and he'd sew shoes, with a needle and twine. I remember sitting alongside him and when he'd pull the needle he'd hit me in the eye. Good job the needle wasn't pointing that way! His name was Uncle Albert Webb.

Mum had a child before she met Dad. His name was Ossie. He lived with us. Him and Locky were the two eldest ones. Locky used to walk in his sleep a lot. Locky used to get up and pick Jack up, in his sleep. Jack's my brother, older than me. Locky would walk up the street with him. Dad used to sing out 'Jack, Locky's taking you away, he's walking in his sleep'. Jack had to jump out of Locky's arms.

They had pictures Friday night. We all went to the pictures. A bloke from Minlaton, Mr Porter, come out. He had a big generator in the shed, you know, four cylinder engine, car engine, T-Model Ford. He ran this motor to show pictures. We used to go to the pictures. Coming out of the pictures one night, we met Locky half way. That's the one that walked in his sleep. He was walking up the street and we were coming home. He only had his shorty pyjamas on. We were told you couldn't touch anybody when they're walking in their sleep. You're supposed to talk or whisper to them. Anyway, he woke up with a jolt and he went back home. After a while he quietened down. He was the one who got married and took the grog back to Point Pearce to get rid of his exemption.

Mum was a housewife on Point Pearce, like many others. Dad was a shearer. I had another brother too, Teddy. He died when he was nine years of age. Pneumonia or something. Dad was shearing in the shearing shed on the bottom of

Point Pearce. He told Mum if anything happened there: 'Walk out on the middle of the road. I'll be keeping watch for you'. Teddy was very sick, and Mum came out on the road. Dad saw and dropped everything and went to see. I think Teddy died that day. He used to change tyres and all, on the old A-Model Ford, you know. Nine, ten year old he was, nine I think. Helping dad with everything.

Mum had a sister on Point Pearce — Phyllis, Phoebe. You know Auntie Pheobe Wanganeen? She was the youngest. She's the only one left now. Mum's mother and father, Granny Rachel and her husband Jack, lived in the house where we got the water from. Remember I was telling you about that?

Mum looked after us real well. She had a bottle of *Epsom Salts* on the shelf. We used to have a spoonful every morning. It was a terrible taste of course. Oh we had castor oil too, though. That was wicked that was. She always had a hot cup of tea waiting for us. We'd have the tea and we wouldn't notice. Plenty sugar, yeah, to get rid of the taste.

Mum used to take us out, down the beach. The women on Point Pearce was a great mob for mulleting off the shore. You'd see them lined up along the beach, you know, throwing lines out. They'd have a bag, old sugar bag, cut in half, with a string around, to put their fish in. They'd have a little can on the side, with their worms in. They'd go down the creek, along the shore, where there's seaweed, and get all the worms. They'd go early in the morning. By the time they'd get the worms, the tide would be coming in. They used to go in horse-and-carts, old cars, just for a feed of mullet, yeah. They'd catch them with handlines: big sinker and a couple of hooks. That's all.

The women fished for years. They're still doing it today — only one or two of them but, yeah, still doing it. That's where I drove the first time. I sat on Mum's lap. I was about eight or nine I think. It was an A-Model Ford. I steered it for her, sitting on her lap, yeah. It was the first time. Over the tussocks, bushes and reeds and things, you know. Rough road.

We used to have geese there on Point Pearce. Well, not us. Our neighbour used to. Her name was Granny Sarah. We used to get up early in the morning — go and take the eggs from round the side of the shed. We only took one or two.

On Point Pearce the old people used to eat swans, especially the old people from Point Macleay. They lived on them. They used to eat the swan eggs too. They're protected now, but years ago, they used to eat them. One of those swan eggs, or half, is all you need for breakfast. I never tasted them, but people there told me. And the Point MacLeay people caught pelican for feathers to make flowers. Course Point Pearce people don't touch them. Not the pelicans. One or two eat swans there, but it's only the people who moved from Point Macleay. Point Pearce people never used to eat swans. I always thought swans never had enough meat on them. They look big, but when you cook them up, there's nothing. A little layer of meat and that's it. You get a better feed out of a wombat or something.

## EARLY WORKING DAYS

My dream was to go rabbit trapping. Every weekend I wanted to be with Dad. He used to go out during the week — every day during the week — used to camp out. He'd be at Alford near Kadina, maybe Port Clinton. He used to trap along the coast from Port Broughton, right down to Brentwood.

Lots of people did that. They all had their own areas. There'd be a camp there, another one over there. But they'd set their traps in different directions. Rabbit buyers used to come from Adelaide, every morning. They'd cross to Moonta, go down the coast, picking up rabbits. They'd have a truckload by the time they got back to Adelaide. Rabbit was what we ate most times, especially during the War. There was rations, but always plenty of rabbits. Money was short, you know. Mum cooked stew. We had roast and curry. Lot of curried rabbits.

When Dad set traps closer to home, he just put the rabbits in a bag, an ordinary wheat bag, and sent them to Adelaide. You could put twenty-one pairs of rabbits in a bag, and then you'd sew up the bag. After a week or so we would secure a cheque in the mail from the Rabbit Buyer.

I remember old Mr Alec McLeay from McLeay's Farm at Clinton Centre. He reminded me of Colonel Sanders, looking down, with his walking stick, looking at the bags. 'Don't forget now, three bushels to the bag.' He was tight. Didn't want to spend a penny. It was his brother who started McLeay's Carpets, I was told.

So that's what I done during the holidays. I was the only one of the kids who went with Dad. The others were younger than me.

We shored sheep too at times, you know. I did my first crutching during the holidays. I must have been twelve — nearly ready to leave school. I left halfway through grade six in 1948, when I thought I was a man. I wanted to go rabbiting. Trapping rabbits: skin them, clean them. Sell them. That's all we done.

Sometimes we brought rabbits to Adelaide in the car. We went to the pictures, to the Bugs. Is that what they called it? They called it the Bug Theatre. I saw lots of Westerns. I liked the serial. Yeah. I enjoyed it in there.

I was so much involved in rabbit trapping. I went everywhere. Beltana. Moonta. I spent my money on the pictures — going to the pictures in Moonta, buying lollies and stuff. I gave some money to Mum. I remember buying two pound of sugar for her. Jam. Tinned jam. When the War was on. Butter. Other things. Power Kerosene that we used when we couldn't get petrol.

In the time we were still going to school we got the exemptions. A lady come from Adelaide. She was Sister Mackenzie, from the Aboriginal Protection Board. She came out to Moonta to see us when we all lived there. I was standing beside Dad when she asked Dad if he wanted exemptions, you know. And Dad said, 'No, gee, we don't want exemption'. We wanted to go back to Point Pearce, you know,

to see the people. Mum's mother and father lived there, and sisters too. Sister Mackenzie said 'All right. That's all we wanted to know'. She went back to Adelaide. Next thing you know we got the exemptions. We'd said no, we didn't want them. Dad didn't want them. But we got them anyway. I was only ten or eleven or twelve, you know.

So that was the exemption. They used to call it dog license. The only thing it was good for was going to the pub. But Dad didn't drink. They'd give you limited exemption, then they'd give you unconditional. Expulsion was the worst thing. That was different. You weren't allowed to go back to the reserve. For three years you weren't allowed to go within a radius — thirty miles I think it was — of the reserve. You also weren't allowed to go into the pub. If you did you were automatically gaoled. My brother, Locky, had the limited exemption. Within three years he got a load of grog and took it back to Point Pearce. He got caught deliberately and had the exemption taken away.

I went peapicking. Then I got a job at Moonta, on a chicken farm. Yeah, there were 1500 chooks or something and I was cleaning out the coops, feeding chooks — all that. I was getting two-pound-five a week. I was about fourteen.

I always had work, until later years. Then I started bludging a little bit. I was getting two pound five plus dinner every day. 'Cause I used to walk from Moonta Mines over to Moonta and then go back. The boss made me eat out on the verandah. He didn't want me in the kitchen with him and his wife. I mean, I didn't mind being on me own. I was a bit shy then anyway.

His wife brought a meal out for me and I ate it on the verandah, beside his wooden leg. He used to be in the army and he lost a leg. I used to talk to his leg. I don't know if it was those days that he didn't like Nungas sitting with them or what.

I didn't have bad meals. 'Cause at that time I was getting two-pound-five a week and my brothers were working on the pipeline between Moonta and Kadina. They were digging the trenches. That was before the Murray water ever went that way. But they was getting seven pound a fortnight. That was big money, you see. So I thought, 'Oh, I'm not too bad, I'm getting two-pound-five a week, that's five-pound a fortnight'. That was for shovelling chook poo and feeding the chooks and stuff. I mixed the bran and pollard up. The chooks were in cages, in a big long shed.

Course Moonta, they had a flour mill in Moonta where they made their own bran and pollard. I used to go there and pick the bran and pollard up. I worked there for a while too, in the flour mill. I was getting three-pound there. But that didn't last long. I think it's closed now. Yeah, I always wanted a bike, see. I couldn't save up to get a bike to ride around so me and my cousin Buddy used to steal his brother's bike. His brother was Sandy. He used to chase us. Buddy and me used to donkey each other. We run into a berry bush and had about nine punctures to fix after Sandy caught up with us.

Yeah, after that work, that second year, I went back to Tasman Hobart. That was the name of the man who owned the block where I picked peas before. I worked a couple of weeks. Course I was on my own then. Mum and Dad wasn't there. I was about fifteen I suppose. And there were other men there working with us. I left before the picking finished and went on to Port Augusta. My sister was there living on Stokes Terrace with the Stewart family. Course our grandfather's name was Stuart too, but he was a different Stuart. S-t-e-w I think that was, a-r-t. And my sister worked there. Next door to the Stewarts was Mrs Starkey, married a white man. He had a brother in Wilmington, just through Horrocks Pass. It was a dairy farm. He got me a job there.

Oh it was that cold, getting up at four o'clock in the morning in winter. He had milking machines, which was good. I mean, I didn't have to milk them by hand. But talk about cold. He bought me a pair of boots. When I first started off I had no *boogedies*, that's what we called boots. Only stopped there for a week or two and I took off. I didn't like it. So one morning I got up and walked away without telling him. I was going back to Port Augusta. I'd started to fret for home, and all that, you know. So I walked from there nearly into Port Augusta. I went through Horrocks Pass. Saw a car coming and walked up into the hills and walked along the hills path. It was getting on, the sun was going down behind the hills. I was getting a bit scared on my own. These cars were going past. Then I laid right alongside the road with my little case. This old Chev came — 1928, 29 model — with this old couple in it. They give me a ride to Port Augusta, just on sundown. Oh I was glad, too. Didn't want to camp out on the road by myself.

I went back to Mrs Stewart's there. I slept in their house and I got up early. They didn't know I was there. I sneaked in after dark. Early in the morning I got up and took off. 'Cause I was scared they'd say something about me running away from work, or leaving work without telling anybody. That was when my sister saw me, anyway. I went back to Moonta. When I got back she started telling dad. 'This fella has left his work up there.' I didn't like it, see.

My dad never said nothing. He was just — easy-going, you know. 'Cause since I left school I worked all the time. I never had any time, you know, except when we couldn't get work.

In Barmera I worked for Harold Anthony. And then the next year I worked for Don Bonner. Lot of whitefellas up there too. I had a job with three or four other boys. No women in the gang at all. We used to cook for ourselves. So I got a job as a day pay worker, hot-dipping the fruit and spreading it on racks. All those that were on piece work got so much a bucket, so much a hundred buckets. I think it was twenty seven bob a hundred for sultana grapes. They was fairly big buckets, took a lot to fill them. But currants, you pick them first before you pick any grapes. We used to cut them first. We only had little small bunches — they were only little small grapes. Five-pound a hundred for those — a hundred buckets. If

you'd pick three hundred buckets a day you'd be lucky. On piece work you could pick an extra thirty buckets before eight-o'clock and other thirty after five.

Because I was on day pay I used to get up early in the morning and go and pick nearly a hundred buckets, or close to a hundred, before eight o'clock. Then I'd go back again with the tractor, see. The other blokes would be just starting at eight to pick. They gotta pick for their piece work. So they'd work all day, spreading grapes and dipping them — hot dipping them in Emu's oil or whatever they used to dip it in: boiling point for the Gordos, cold water dip for the sultanas. You had to get the hot dip up to boiling point for those Gordos. I think it's healthy, to protect the skin from cracking, you know, the raisins.

Well I'd do all that, and after five-o'clock, when everyone knocked off, I stayed behind and picked another fifty or sixty buckets, 'cause I used to need to have money on the weekend. When it rained the piece workers didn't get paid, see. But I did, because I was on day pay. Don used to wake me up when a bit of rain come. We had the grapes spread out on the ground on sisal stuff, you know — hessian. I'm the only one he could call, 'cause I was on day pay, and I'd get up and do a couple of buckets. The others didn't have to go, the piece workers. Anyway, I used to do it because he was such a good boss.