

Arnhem Land's Children

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✓ Verified Book of Arnhem Land's Children

## Summary:

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It was hot. A sudden stillness was in the late afternoon air. The waterhole's surface shone with unnatural smoothness. Fresh pig tracks at it's edge told of pigs just gone. Two bubbles popped up, their spreading ripples fracturing the tree and sky reflections; just decaying vegetation, said my mind. I should have known better, I should have smelt crocodile!! What is it about the Northern Territory that fascinates? I have only to mention it's name in conversation and people stop and turn to listen. Why, for 190 years, has it drawn people from all over to come, stay longer than they imagined and, often, never leave? This book is a memoir of a family's life in a remote aboriginal community, in Australia's Northern Territory, something the equivalent of remote Canada or Alaska, where few people go. For half a century it was our home - this place called Oenpelli, (now Gunbalanya) at the very top of Australia, place of dark skinned people, crocodiles, buffalo and much more, a place where we built our lives. It tells of changing world as a missionary family and an aboriginal community become part of modern Australia This our family's story, growing amongst the people, animals and places and colours of this this strange land, alongside an aboriginal community going through its own changes; citizenship, alcohol, uranium mining, land rights, outstation development, and community self management. It is a memoir of living in one of the most isolated parts of Australia - a small aboriginal missionary community in the Northern Territory, something the equivalent of the remote Canada or Alaska. It is the landscape featured in the tourist brochures for Kakadu and the movie Crocodile Dundee. It is a chronicle of change in the last half century with land rights and aboriginal self determination at the centre of which are my mother and father with Christian beliefs which motivated their contribution to this change. It is a story of memories and love for this remote and beautiful place, in which I lived as a child then worked as an adult. It also a story of many NT people who gave me my memories and of many other parts of the NT each with their distinctive character and their hardy, outlandish characters who stories live on in my mind and words. It also tells of my own experience of surviving attack by a large crocodile in a remote swamp This memoir provides the foundation for my novels in the Crocodile Spirit Dreaming Series. The places in these books are the places in which I lived and worked and many of the stories came little changed from people I knew. In particular my experience in surviving a crocodile attack of a large saltwater crocodile, which mauled my leg as told in this book forms part of the central role of the crocodile as a predator in this novel series. The role of my father in opening road transport including building a crossing of the East Alligator River, developing outstations for aboriginal communities, learning to fly on missionary wages and establishing an aviation service along with assisting the aboriginal peoples of this land to gain royalties from mining is a story that deserves to be told as a major part of NT history. Along with his tireless work the contribution of many others is also an essential part of the story.

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