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Jane Elizabeth Harris *Editors*

Stephen Harris—Writer, Educator, Anthropologist

Kantriman Blanga Melabat (Our Countryman)

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Foreword

I first met Stephen by chance in Albuquerque in 1974 when he was planning on going to Maningrida to undertake the research for his Ph.D. I suggested Milingimbi as an alternative and promised that I would assist him to get the necessary approvals as well as providing accommodation through the school. That was the start of our 46-year friendship. During my own Ph.D. research years at Lajamanu, Stephen was a great support, writing a regular flow of encouraging letters with practical advice. During my years at Batchelor we saw each other quite often and I came to better appreciate Stephen's wide-ranging interests, particularly those focused on the rural life. Tamworth, therefore, seemed to me to be the ideal place for him to retire to. Retirement, however, proved not to be easy for Stephen but something closer to the trials of Job as he battled with various chronic illnesses. Undergirding everything in his life was his unshakeable faith and this never faltered. Stephen really was a remarkable person.

David McClay

Preface

Stephen Harris began his long association with Kriol speakers in Australia's Northern Territory as a child in Angurugu and Ngukurr. This continued at Gunbalanya when he was a young man, working as a cattle station manager and buffalo shooter alongside such remarkable stockmen as Tom Thompson. Later, as an adviser and scholar, he never forgot those links. So it is entirely fitting that Terry Ngarritjan Kessaris should refer to Stephen as *Katriman blanga melabat* ('our countryman'). In response, the other editors and I have used her inclusive Kriol phrase in the book's title to honor that connection.

From start to finish, this book has been a collaborative effort. Perhaps unusually for a scholarly work, it was conceived as a joint project involving Stephen Harris's family, friends, colleagues, and students. While the book begins with reminiscences, it builds to a more critical, analytical, and contextual perspective. It is, however, based on research throughout: whether formal postgraduate theses (such as Fry, Chap. 22) or family documents (as in the chapters by Harris family members). While the book is focused primarily on an Australian context, the global relevance of its main themes should also be apparent.

The book has been loosely organised into three parts. The first provides an overview of the life and work of Stephen Harris. The second documents the influence of his work, particularly with respect to bilingual-bicultural education. The third set of chapters touch on some related topics prompted by Stephen's written work or his other interests.

When particular Aboriginal languages have been mentioned, some care has been taken to include the most common spellings. The Ethnologue was used as a guide, on occasion; for example, when constructing the index entry for languages such as Murrinh-patha (Murrinhpatha, Murrinh-Patha).

Dr. Joy Kinslow-Harris recently asked me:

> Do you think it comes through—from my and Jonathan and Jane's writings—that Stephen's life was 'giving God the glory' and not seeking acclaim? I've been using his Bible for devotions and the underlining from his own use is over and over the majesty of God' and the wisdom of 'letting Him direct our path'. On the big and little scale, we saw over and over how God had the bilingual programme in mind for the Aboriginal communities and I hope that's coming through.

I leave it to the reader to judge whether this aspect of Stephen Harris's life does 'come though', as Joy wondered. I think it does.

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Acknowledgements

The font used in this book (Gentium, AuSIL) was specially developed by Professor Charles ('Chuck') Grimes at my request several years ago, and I am grateful to him for this assistance. I would also like to acknowledge the help that was received from many others as the text of this book was being prepared.

When preparing an honour roll there is always the fear that someone will be missed out, but I hope that this list covers those who helped with proof-reading and reviews of each chapter. I would like to thank all the anonymous reviewers as well as Dr. Rob Amery, Dr. Wendy Beresford-Manning, Prof. Steven Bird, Dr. Cathy Bow, Dr. Neil Chadwick, Dr. Karen Courtenay, Jennifer Devlin, Michael Devlin, Dr. Kevin Ford, Leonard Freeman, Dr. Mary-Anne Gale, Eric Lede, Dr. Patrick McConvell, Dr. David McClay, Dr. David Nash, Sue Reaburn, Prof. Nick Reid, Rev Dr. Helen Richmond, Dr. Nicoletta Romeo, Dr. Margaret Sharpe, Dr. Bea Staley, Dr. Bruce Waters, Leon White, Dr. Michele Willsher, Yalmay Yunupiŋu, Dr. R. David Zorc, as well as staff at Charles Darwin University library, the Northern Territory Archives, the Northern Territory Department of Education, and the Yirrkala School Action Committee. It has been a pleasure to work alongside all the chapter authors and co-editors in compiling this book, and I thank them for their many, varied contributions. Finally, I thank Grace Ma, and others in her team at Springer in Singapore, for making the publication of this book possible.

Regrettably, as this book was being compiled, and we were almost ready to send to Springer's production team, we received news of Cathy Bow's untimely death. Cathy was a wonderful colleague: gentle, honest, and highly competent. We will miss her. Vale Cathy!

Darwin, NT, Australia
October 2021

Brian Clive Devlin

Short Timeline

Stephen George Harris (7 March, 1942–10 August, 2020)

1942, March 7	Stephen was born in Coledale, New South Wales (NSW), to Dick and Nell Harris.
1944	In October he and his brother, Wilfred, were taken to Angurugu, Groote Eylandt when their parents transferred there (Harris and Kinslow-Harris, 1998, p. 53). He lived there until he was seven. When not doing his schooling by correspondence he 'played with Aboriginal children down the river' (Harris, 2003, p. 2).
1949	In June Stephen moved with his parents to the Roper River Mission at Ngukurr. His love of horses and cattle work dates from this early childhood period. 'As soon as they could hold the reins, their dad had the Harris children on horseback. The mustering crew at Roper would ask if 6 year old Stephen could join them, and much to his glee his dad said yes' (Joy Kinslow-Harris, Chap. 2). As leprosy and hook worm were prevalent there, Stephen was kept apart from the community (Harris and Kinslow-Harris, 1998, p. 66). He continued his schooling by correspondence at Ngukurr.
1950–53	After being taken south by his parents on a two-month road trip in a three-ton Canadian Chevrolet Blitz, he stayed with his Aunt Helen and Uncle Geoff at Weerona, Wee Waa in north-west NSW. Stephen loved his time there and regarded it as his second home (Harris and Kinslow-Harris, 1998, p. 68; Harris, 2003, p. 7).
1952	Stephen attended Wee Waa Central School.
1953	Stephen and his brother Wilfred left Wee Waa and moved back in with their parents at Gerringong (Harris and Kinslow-Harris, 1998, p. 71).

1954–1955	Stephen's father was assigned to the parish of Pitt Town, on the Hawkesbury River, north-west of Sydney, so the family lived there.
1955–60	Stephen attended Trinity Grammar, Sydney. Christmas 1959 was spent with his parents at Angurugu. On 18 August 1960 his parents were sent by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) back to Oenpelli.
1961–3	B.A., University of Sydney.
1964, February	Stephen went to Oenpelli on a short-term assignment, while his parents completed their last years of service for the CMS. Stephen was assigned to do stockwork (Harris and Kinslow-Harris, 1998, p. 80; Harris, 2003, p.18). It was there, at Oenpelli, that he met Joy Kinslow (see Chap. 2). Stephen recalled later that 'unlike me, Joy saw a crucial future in Aboriginal languages' (Harris, 2003, p. 23).
1966	Stephen and Joy were married at Wiseman's Ferry by Stephen's father.
1966–1969	After teaching at The King's School, Sydney, until October 1966, Stephen worked as a Research Officer in the Aboriginal Welfare Section, Department of the Interior.
1969–1970	Stephen was employed in the buffalo meat industry at Oenpelli and, partnering with Gulbirrbirr Djorlom, who acted as spotter, would regularly shoot 15 buffalo bulls a day for that enterprise (Harris, 2003, p. 27).
1970–1971	Short-term assignment, Village Literacy project, Wycliffe Bible Translators/SIL, PNG.
1972–1974	Ph.D. studies, University of New Mexico (UNM), Albuquerque, USA.
1975–1976	In March 1975, after a delay of two months because of a cyclone which had demolished most of Darwin, Stephen began his Ph.D. research at Milingimbi.
1977	Ph.D. dissertation submission, UNM, Albuquerque.
1978–1981	Senior Education Adviser—Anthropology, Northern Territory Division of the Commonwealth Department of Education. In 1980 an abridged version of Stephen's Ph.D. thesis was published as *Culture and learning*. This proved to be a very influential publication.
1982–1985	Principal Education Officer Bilingual, NT Department of Education. In Easter 1985 Stephen's father died at the age of 84.
1987	Research Fellow in Education, Flinders University, South Australia.
1988	Senior Lecturer, Aboriginal Teacher Education, Batchelor College.

1989–91	Senior Lecturer in Aboriginal Education and Applied Linguistics, Faculty of Education, Northern Territory University.
1992, 2nd semester	Study leave in Canada and the United States.
1992–1997	Reader, Faculty of Education, Northern Territory University
1997	Stephen retired and moved with Joy to Tamworth, NSW, close to the family farm at Barraba. Stephen relished the countryside in northern inland NSW, as it was familiar to him from his Wee Waa childhood. He also wanted to be near his mother in her old age. At 'Wongala' he happily joined his brothers in cattle and sheep work and spent plenty of time with his nieces and nephews. He was able to pursue his passion for acquiring and breeding Australian Stock Horses.
2000	Stephen's mother died in April at the age of 96.
2020, August 10	Stephen passed away in Tamworth, NSW, after a long illness.

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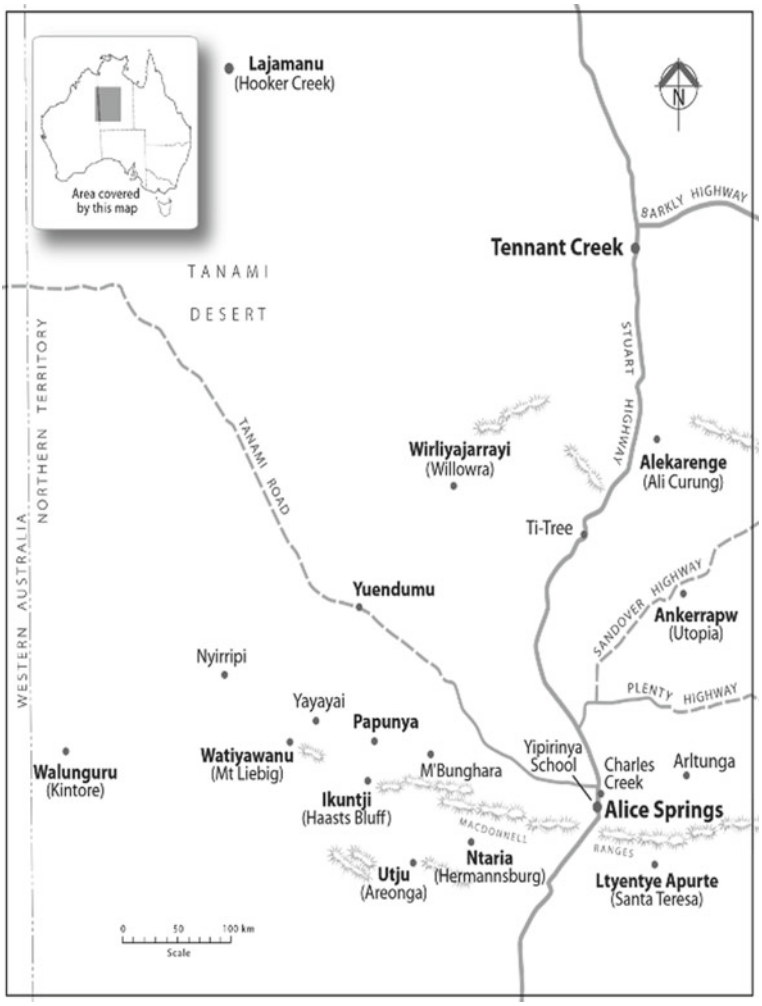
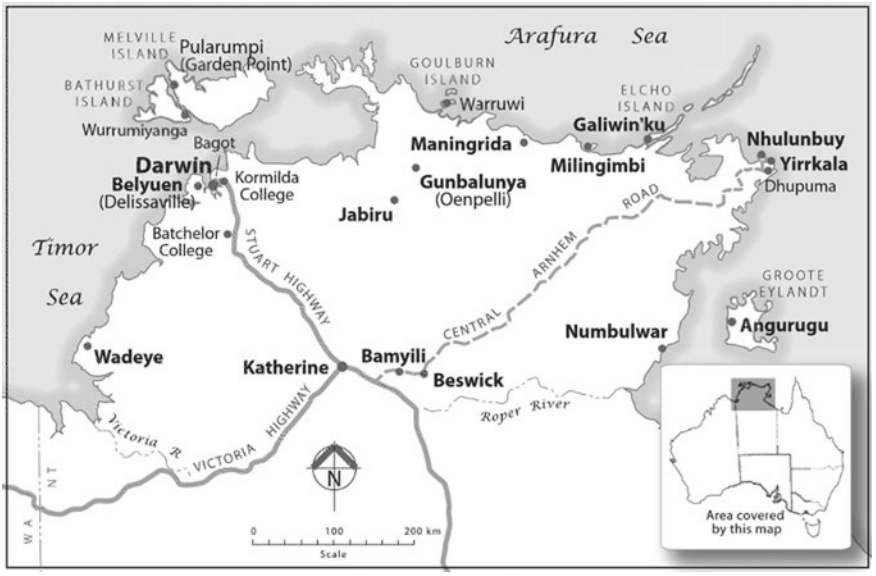


Map 1 Central Australian Region



Map 2 Northern NT region (or 'Top End'), Australia

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Part A

Chapter 1
Introduction: An Overview of the Life of Stephen Harris

Jane Harris

Abstract This chapter is an overview of Stephen Harris's life from his early years in Angurugu and Ngukurr, Northern Territory (NT), and Wee Waa, New South Wales (NSW), to retirement in the Tamworth area, NSW. Primarily, it is about Stephen's early influences, both the places and people, written from the perspective of his niece. Stephen's parents, Dick and Nell, were large figures in Stephen's life, as were his paternal uncle, Geoff Harris, and Geoff's wife, Helen. Dick, a farmer, and Nell, a teacher, were missionaries in the Northern Territory. The communities they lived and worked in were integral parts of Stephen's life. Arnhem Land had huge personal significance for Stephen as did the NSW northern inland, particularly Wee Waa, Barraba and Tamworth. Farming, cattle work, and horses remained an enduring passion for Stephen for the duration of his life. These were part of his growing up years in the NT, and at the family farm in Wee Waa, and always remained important to him. Harris family stories of adventurousness, loyalty, hard physical work, and strong mindedness influenced Stephen's character. Stephen was also influenced by his mother, whose attributes as an educator, story-teller, and natural historian he shared. In 1969 Stephen deliberately chose a life of work in Aboriginal education, as working with Aboriginal people was one of his greatest interests.

Keywords Stephen Harris · Arnhem land · North-west New South Wales · Dick Harris · Nell Harris · Joy Harris · Aboriginal education

Stephen Harris was two years old before he could be hoisted up on his father's shoulder to view the world. His world at that time was Angurugu on Groote Eylandt on Australia's northern coast, his parents, Dick and Nell, and his older brother, Wilfred. His older brothers, David and Jim, had been sent to boarding school in Sydney, and his younger sister Barbara had not yet been born. Angurugu was the place of Stephen's earliest awareness. Stephen often talked about the Aboriginal memories from his first eight years of life being powerfully embedded in his consciousness (Harris, 2003, p. 56) (Fig. 1.1).

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Barraba, NSW, Australia

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Fig. 1.1 Stephen with big brother Wilfred taking their toy boat down to the river at Groote Eylandt

Also ingrained in Stephen's consciousness was a passion for cattle, horses, and farming. He loved soil and trees and country. He loved saddles and bridles. These lifelong passions arose in the two different contexts of Arnhem Land, Northern Territory (NT), and Wee Waa, New South Wales (NSW). Stephen said of himself, 'Aboriginal education has been a motivating cause and a highly fulfilling career which I'm relieved that I took, but it never surpassed the dream of being a breeder of cattle and horses, or more accurately, of being a steward of a farming environment' (Harris, 2003, p. 34).

This chapter, while an overview, is primarily about Stephen's early influences, both the places and people. Parents Dick and Nell were large figures in Stephen's life, as were his paternal uncle, Geoff Harris, and Geoff's wife, Helen. The two areas of Australia with huge personal significance to Stephen were the New South Wales northern inland and Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

Stephen Harris was born in 1942 to parents who worked as missionaries with the Church Missionary Society in Arnhem Land. Stephen's life-work was education and anthropology across cultures, particularly in Australian indigenous communities. He

worked in the Northern Territory Education Department, Batchelor College, and later at the NT University, preparing teachers to work with Aboriginal children. Stephen was my uncle, the younger brother of my father, Jim.

Stephen's father, Dick, was a dairy farmer at Wee Waa before he became a missionary. Stephen's mother, Nell, was a primary school teacher, whose ambitions to be a single headmistress altered when she married Dick at the age of 29. Nell's missionary life started at Oenpelli with her husband. Her work included spontaneously beginning the work of translating English into Kunwinjku there in 1937.

Stephen got on very well with his mother and also admired her deeply. She was an unusual person. Ellen Tansley, called Nell, was born in 1904 in Sydney. When she was 10, Nell came home from school to find her mother had died in childbirth. She and her elder sister, Anne, then largely took care of the household of six children, including the newborn. Nell describes their home in the southern Sydney suburb of Carlton as being boisterous and easy-going. She was always aware that she was different from her family. Nell was a highly energetic and academic person. She did very well at school, and later university, and set her sights on spinsterhood and being a school headmistress. Nell was ambitious for herself. I believe her main motivation was to be able to support her family, rather than holding a prestigious position. There was an authentic humility about her. She said of herself, 'I think because of my home background—we didn't have a book in the house, and no one ever read—I never had tickets on myself' (Harris and Harris, 1998, p. 3). Later her husband received several significant recognitions of his life's achievements (including an MBE), and she received none. It did not seem to even cross her mind that this was an oversight.

Nell met Dick Harris during her first teaching stint in Wee Waa in 1926. She occasionally told me, over making scones or fruitcake or other sorts of household chores, that she had never had any intention to marry. She said the Holy Spirit caused her to marry Dick. But she believed she and Dick were well-matched and she had not regretted marriage. After they married in 1933, she accompanied Dick to Oenpelli. Nell's working life was mostly on the mission. A lot of her work involved feeding people and managing the workings of a household. She 'taught primary-aged Kunwinjku children in the mornings, taught some teenagers and women's sewing groups in the afternoons, provided meals for any single staff members, looked after the clothes, [and] entertained any visitors' (Harris, 2003, p. 45). Nell remained a teacher throughout her working life, before and after marriage. Teaching was her vocation.

Nell had become a Christian at Teachers College and she had a deep and enduring faith, including a belief in the miraculous and that God answers prayer. To her, Jesus was a real, living person, part of her every day. She would say earnestly, 'Jesus is alive you know'. I'd reply, 'I know'. But, of course, some she told would be a bit startled and embarrassed. She did not care. Stephen had the same deep faith that his mother and father had, throughout his whole life.

Stephen said his memories of his mother from his childhood were of warmth, acceptance, patience and unselfish love, sometimes resignation, often reading books

together, occasional hysteria from exhaustion, and always working (Harris, 2003, p. 43).

Stephen's father, George Richmond Harris, called Dick, was born in 1901. He grew up on dairy farms in Casino, the family later expanding to growing sheep, wheat, and beef. His middle name was for the Richmond River that flows through the Casino district. When he was 10, Dick's family moved to Wee Waa and Narrabri, where they raised sheep. All six children worked in the family enterprise, and they worked hard. Stephen described his father as 'capable, hard-working and ambitious' (Harris, 2003, p. 45). Dick did not finish primary school because of the demands of the family farm. But Nell described the Harrises as a family of readers, noting that they would read the Bible and the Oxford Dictionary if there was nothing else.

In his mid-twenties, Dick became a Christian. He went to Croydon Bible College in Sydney and planned to do overseas missionary work in Borneo. The Church Missionary Society thought his farming experience made him a good fit for Oenpelli, an Aboriginal mission which was also a cattle station, and where most of the food had to be grown on site.

Dick began his first term in Oenpelli in 1929 as a single man, returning down south in 1933 for a break and to marry Nell. They married in the evening so Dick's relations would be less self-conscious, because of their poor garments. Nell observed, when he returned from Oenpelli prior to the wedding, that he was so tired that he could barely talk. She said, 'After you've lived in Oenpelli yourself under those conditions, you realise why' (Harris and Harris, 1998, p. 9).

Dick had grown up in a strict home. He was taught not to question authority. Throughout his life Dick was a highly disciplined person who ran on a strict schedule, right until the end. Stephen said, 'If Mum was a talker, Dad was not…his language was action. He was physically powerful, tough and courageous…indifferent to money and materialism' (Harris, 2003, p. 5).

Dick and Nell's life involved considerable hardships. At Oenpelli, their first home was a bark hut, the last shack from Paddy Cahill's time, standing next to a mango tree. Paddy Cahill, his wife Maria, and his business partner William Johnston had settled in that spot in 1906 and established a farm to grow cotton, fruit, vegetables, and other products. Dick and Nell's worldly goods were not much more than a pair of stretcher beds, mosquito gauze, and two cane chairs. The cane chairs, wedding presents, were allowed by the shipping company to be used during the voyage up north. Later they lived in a 60-by-30-foot, unlined, corrugated iron, Sydney Williams house. Throughout their career, their homes were basic and sometimes unfinished.

There was no sense from Dick and Nell that their lifestyle was one of self-sacrifice. Nell said she felt she always just fitted in at Oenpelli. There were two supply deliveries a year, everything else had to be grown locally. The nearest hospital was 300 km away on an impassable route. The mission needed to grow its own food and mill its own timber.

Health was precious. Antibiotics were not available until the 1940s. Nell talks about the sense of relief when sulphur drugs arrived. Nell provided medical treatment when needed, in the absence of anyone else to do it. This included nursing the community through a measles epidemic at Roper River just before Christmas 1949,

with the help of two Aboriginal boys who had had the disease before. Nell was in Arnhem Land for 22 years over a 32-year period (1933–41, 1944–50, 1958–65). Dick was in Arnhem Land for 30 years over a 36-year period (1929–52, 1958–65).

Stephen's paternal uncle, Geoff, and his wife Helen at Wee Waa were also an integral part of Stephen's growing up. Dick and Nell both had supportive brothers and sisters who did a lot for them and their children. The relationships were reciprocal, if occasionally uncomfortable. The siblings provided practical support to each other, including sharing savings when they were poor themselves. There was family connectedness and deep loyalty between them. Stephen spent much of his first 20 years living with Uncle Geoff and Aunty Helen and their two daughters at Wee Waa in New South Wales. Stephen felt this was his childhood home, attributing some of that feeling to the fact that his family had been farming there since 1910.

Uncle Geoff and Aunty Helen made a scant living at Wee Waa from two small farms, *Runnymede* and *Weerona*. *Weerona*, which has the deep black soil the area is known for, is bound by the Namoi River on two sides. It is dotted with old River Red Gums and Coolibah trees. *Runnymede,* on the edge of the Pilliga, has deep red soil, box trees, and Cyprus pine and looks out at the Nandewar Ranges including Mt Kaputar. I mention the soil, trees, and shape of the landscape because these were all important to Stephen.

The properties where Stephen's parents and brothers, Jim and Wilfred, lived later on, from the 1970s, looked at Mt Kaputar from the other (eastern) side. The Wee Waa and Barraba farms were important to Uncle Stephen, not just as the places where his family lived, but also for the country. This part of New South Wales around Kaputar, Gomeroi country, also called the North West Slopes and Plains, remained important to Stephen the whole of his life.

Stephen was born in Coledale, south of Wollongong, just a month after the Japanese bombing of Darwin in 1942. His mother Nell had been required to evacuate from the Territory ahead of the anticipated Japanese invasion. Dick returned to the Territory when Stephen was six weeks old. Nell took Stephen and her three older boys, David, Jim, and Wilfred, to live at Wee Waa with her Harris relatives. Her husband Dick remained at Groote Eylandt for the remainder of the war. Nell and the children lived with both Dick's sister, Mary, and husband Charl Collett at *Weerona*, and at *Runnymede* with Geoff and Helen for a lot of this period.

Collective living and mutual support were conspicuous for his parents' generation. My father, Stephen's brother Jim, told me that the Harris family got through the depression and its aftermath by pulling together and sharing resources, and also through having the Wee Waa farms, where they could live almost self-sufficiently.

Picking up the timeline in October 1944, when Stephen was two, Nell was able to return to the Territory to join her husband at Angurugu on the west coast of Groote Eylandt. She took Stephen with her and his brother, Wilfred. Stephen was two and a half by then, and his father had last seen him as a six-week-old infant. The older brothers, David and Jim, had been sent to board at Trinity Grammar School in Sydney.

Stephen had many powerful recollections of life at Angurugu. Some were about playing in the crystal-clear Angurugu River above the crossing with his brother Wilfred in a small dugout canoe given to them by an old Anindilyakawa man. This

river features in both the private memoirs of Stephen and his mother as being a place of great happiness. Their home had no bathroom, so every evening Dick and Nell took the children to bathe in the river with them. 'That walk to the river in the cool of the evening remains one of the happiest experiences of my life', Stephen's mother recalled (Harris and Harris, 1998, p. 56).

Stephen also spoke and wrote about the people he knew at Angurugu. He wrote about a man called Old Charlie, who was a woodcutter for the mission house. 'He let me spend hours watching him cut wood or make spears. He never rushed. One day I was playing with one of Charlie's very sharp shovel-nosed spears, the large knife-like head…and cut myself badly across the ankle. Charlie fitted a blade of grass into the cut to stop the bleeding and calmly carried me home to Mum. All my life I've looked at that scar with affection as I put on my socks' (Harris, 2003, p. 3).

When Stephen was seven, the family moved to Roper River (Ngukurr), a very different landscape and community. The family now included a baby sister, Barbara. At Ngukurr, Stephen had two horses to keep him occupied in the absence of anyone to play with, as Wilfred had been sent to school in Sydney. He said, 'My head is full of childhood horses' names and that began at Roper: Jimmie, Kitty, Roadman, Stormbird, Splinter, Murderer and so on' (Harris, 2003, p. 6). Later, in his youth, Stephen had a horse named Bet Bet in Wee Waa, and there were also many horses significant to him at Wee Waa and later at Oenpelli. I remember that Stephen could always enjoy a conversation with his father, brothers, and sister about horses they had known.

Stockmen he had observed and admired were an important part of Stephen's memories; for example, Sam Thompson, who was head stockman at Ngukurr. Stephen also remembered Tom Thompson, Douglas Daniels, and Roger Rogers. They were each highly esteemed by Stephen. Skilled stock handling was high in his value system. Jonathan Harris talks more about Tom Thompson in Chapter 5 of this book.

When Stephen was nine, he and his family traveled back to Wee Waa in a three-ton Chevrolet Blitz truck, a journey of around two months. Stephen then lived with Geoff and Helen Harris at Wee Waa, where he finished his primary schooling and later joined his older brothers at Trinity Grammar School. Stephen was not to live in the Territory again, except for summer holidays, until 1963–1964, when he returned to work at Oenpelli, principally to spend time with his parents.

Geoff Harris was Dick's older brother. Geoff was a political type of man, interested in news and world affairs. He was actually a reluctant farmer who had wanted to be a mechanical engineer. He had a lanky frame and a laconic type of personality. His easy-going nature was a strong contrast to that of Dick, Stephen's father. Stephen recalled that he often had 'meaningful but one-sided conversations in which Uncle would express a sense of helpless rage. What upset him more than anything else was a lack of integrity' (Harris, 2003, p. 14). Two other things that could enrage him were Bob Menzies and a milk jug that would not pour cleanly.

Geoff's philosophies about the world and machinery became part of Stephen's. Stephen always drove around corners in an idiosyncratic way (when there was no

Fig. 1.2 Trinity College, Sydney, 1960. Stephen Harris is sitting in the front row, holding the ball

traffic about) because Uncle Geoff had said it gave you more wear on the tires. It was pretty annoying as a passenger.

Helen Harris had been a nursing sister who had trained with Stephen's aunt, Agnes Harris. Helen lived a simple life of work and of prayer on the farm. Stephen said he never had a tense moment with Aunty Helen and described the level of peace and harmony in their household as remarkable. Stephen said her main vocation seemed to be loving people. I remember an elegant, willowy woman in her eighties making us feel at home during a family visit.

Stephen learned a great deal about farming, housework, and sheer hard work at Wee Waa. He also said he learnt 'that if you roll up a double page of the *Queensland Country Life* and tease a huntsman spider with it he will jump on you from two yards away and scare you witless' (Harris, 2003, p. 9).

Stephen wept uncontrollably when he was told at the age of ten that he was leaving Geoff and Helen's. He went on to board at Trinity Grammar School in Sydney for his high school education with his older brothers. He enjoyed a lot about school there, benefiting from the protection and sporting prowess of his brothers. He followed his brother Jim on to the University of Sydney, where he studied Arts. His career intention after graduating was to teach at a high school, which he did do for a year at The King's School in Parramatta, Sydney (Fig. 1.2).

Later Stephen studied anthropology at the University of New Mexico in the USA. This is detailed by Aunty Joy in the following chapter.

Stephen was very like his mother Nell, particularly in his ability to talk and tell stories, and he was also very close to her. But the family stories and mythologies were largely from the Harris side, in my observation. Stephen recorded an important family story in a private memoir about his father Dick droving cattle a long distance as a boy.

> By the age of fifteen dad [Dick] and his mate Wilf Collett, in the middle of a severe drought at Wee Waa/Narrabri, drove a mob of twenty-five cows and calves from there to Ellangowan, just south of Casino on the north coast, 300 miles (500km) away, where an uncle was able to offer grazing. They were on their own for over a month, one boy on a horse and the other driving the sulky with swags and food. (Harris, 2003, p. 44)

When I was telling this story to my own teenage sons recently, one asked me if I told it to shame them. I had to think about it, and replied, honestly, that I re-told the story partly to shame them (for some flagrant laziness and low-goal setting), but mostly it was to inspire them, and also to remember my grandfather, who was remarkable. I suspect these family stories have been told for similar reasons for generations, and I believe they had a strong effect on Stephen, as well as my own father.

Other identity-forming stories were about John Joseph Harris, the first Harris man to arrive in Australia in 1827. Joseph was a Welshman who served the Australian explorer Charles Sturt as a Batman in the Peninsular Wars and in Canada and was part of Sturt's explorations of the Murrumbidgee and the Macquarie Marshes.

The stories of Joseph's adventurousness, loyalty, hard physical work, and strong mindedness formed part of the family folklore that influenced Stephen and his siblings. Joseph Harris's story is referred to in more detail in a later chapter by Jonathan Harris, his great-great-great grandson, and nephew of Stephen. Joseph was rewarded by the British Crown with a land grant in Australia in West Dapto, near Wollongong. He and his wife Anastasia, who had come with him to Australia, settled there to farm *Stream Hill* following Joseph's last tour of duty with Sturt at the Norfolk Island garrison in 1832. Stephen and his brothers saw themselves as farmers and descendants of farmers, but also descendants of someone who was capable of heroic endeavor.

Since 1977, the extended Harris family has spent a lot of time together on the farming properties belonging to Stephen's brothers Jim and Wilfred near Barraba, in north-west New South Wales. Stephen's parents, Dick and Nell Harris, lived there along with their sons, Jim and Wilfred, and their families. Stephen and Joy made a long visit from their Darwin home over the summer most years, and Stephen's brother David and his family, and sister, Barbara, and her family would travel there too.

Jonathan Harris, my cousin, writes about Stephen's presence lightening the mood in our family at the farm in Chap. 5. A lot of this was through conversation. The Harrises were a family of very serious people. Work and duty were foremost. Stephen too was serious and could be consumed by projects, responsibility, and worry. But at *Wongala,* Stephen was the younger brother assisting with other people's responsibilities and he was freer. It was also clear that just being with his parents and siblings

gave him joy. His willingness to talk about a wide range of subjects was anomalous in our family context and a really marvelous thing for his 14 Harris family nieces and nephews. Stephen was curious about the world and also about us, even though we were children. After he returned from studying in the USA around 1972, when I was five years old, I asked him very shyly why he did not now speak with an American accent. He gave me a detailed reply. Stephen crossed over a line that existed in our family, where there was women and children's business, and the actually important business of men. Talking seriously to nieces was an aspect of his disregard for that world view.

Stephen and his wife Joy are why we have a record of my grandmother's Nell's life and in her own voice. The family folklore going back to Joseph Harris in 1827 included nothing about his wife Anastasia Carroll. She remains an enigma, much as Stephen's paternal grandmother Florence Rippingale does. By contrast we have a great treasure in the record made of Grandma's stories, even though we all heard them many times. Nell had a phenomenal memory for history, as did Stephen. When Stephen could not speak at the end of his life, there would be family conversations in my generation that he was part of, where we speakers could not remember details of dates and names. We would acknowledge, to him, that he knew the details but could no longer remind us. We hoped he did not despair of us; we feared he did. He told me once that he accepted that the rest of us could not recall details from the past, but he could not understand it. It came very naturally to him.

Sometime around 2000, Stephen recounted to me something that had upset him and left him with a sense of failure. He and Joy were by now living at *Wongala* before retiring to Tamworth. Stephen had been invited to address a men's bible study in the region about his work in Aboriginal education. He prepared at length, and earnestly, in a typical fashion. He told me that the group was made up of people he regarded as good Christian men, who had met together faithfully with prayer and studying the bible for a very long period. Stephen told me while the men treated him with respect, he encountered their deeply entrenched racism against Aboriginal people. He felt he had not been able to shift them from their viewpoint at all. He said he asked them to imagine how they as Australians might feel if they had lived under Japanese occupation for the last fifty years. Stephen recounted with disappointment that it seemed the men could not, or would not, imagine this scenario at all. Terry Ngarritjan Kessaris, Ngukurr woman and student, colleague, and friend of Stephen's, says in Chap. 3 of this book that she saw him as 'declining to be white the way white was expected to be'. It reminds me of this story.

There is a little leavening in this story about the bible study visit. Vic Turner was a local horse trainer of considerable reputation and ability with whom Stephen had become friendly. Vic came along to this bible study meeting out of friendliness to Stephen. Afterwards Vic asked him if he wanted him to take those men out the back and sort them out. Vic saw beneath the surface respect those men had shown Stephen to what lay beneath. Stephen was cheered by Vic's offer and ever afterward would offer to punch someone for me if I had a grievance. Something about my peaceable Uncle's gesture would cheer me up too.

In 1969 when he and Joy were at Oenpelli, Stephen said he knew he was at a career cross-roads. He was choosing between 'an academic life with Joy in Aboriginal education or a farming partnership with two of my elder brothers' (Harris, 2003, p. 24). Stephen recounts a few reasons for his choosing Aboriginal education, which included that working with Aboriginal people had always been one of his strongest interests and wanting to see Joy use her talents in linguistics. Joy was the person Stephen shared everything with since they met in 1965 at Oenpelli. He said, 'Joy saw a crucial future in Aboriginal languages. My conversion to that perspective charted my working life for most of the next thirty years' (Harris, 2003, p. 23).

Stephen and Joy retired in the late 1990s to the Tamworth region. He loved the country in northern inland NSW, so familiar from his Wee Waa childhood, and he also wanted to be near his mother, Nell. He died in 2020 in Tamworth.

The most conspicuous thing about Stephen's personality was his intense interest in people. One of his quips, used humorously to concede he did not have the upper hand in an argument, was 'I'm a trained observer of human nature, you know'. We did in fact know this about Uncle Stephen. Not about his training so much, but as his family we each experienced Stephen's genuine, deep interest in us. We knew he noticed and valued us. He would punch someone for us.

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Jane Harris is a writer and journalist. One area of strong professional interest is re-interpreting technical and bureaucratic language to make it more accessible. She has been engaged by organisations in a range of sectors, including agriculture, pharmaceuticals, banking and finance, to write plain English versions of their materials to communicate more effectively to different groups, especially employees, an oft-forgotten audience. Jane also has a background in the visual arts and convenes an annual regional arts festival in the northern inland area of New South Wales (NSW). With her family she runs a cattle and sheep property near Mt Kaputar, NSW. Jane is Stephen Harris's niece.

Chapter 2
From Start to Finish: A Man of Many Parts

Joy Kinslow-Harris

Abstract This chapter is an exploration of Stephen Harris's journey from his graduation from university to his death in August 2020 in Tamworth, NSW, from complications of Parkinson's disease. After graduation he took a short-term appointment as cattle work manager at Oenpelli, NT, where he met Joy Kinslow, a missionary linguist with Wycliffe Bible Translators/Summer Institute of Linguistics (WBT/SIL). Adventures began there as they married and became short-term missionaries with WBT/SIL and started learning about cross-cultural education first in Papua New Guinea villages, then in his PhD studies at the University of New Mexico in First Nations country in the US, and on to PhD research on Aboriginal learning styles at Milingimbi, NT. Responding to a Christian call to work in Aboriginal bilingual education, they resigned from WBT/SIL and Stephen was first with the NT Department of Education then a lecturer at the Northern Territory University, now Charles Darwin University. Interspersed among those years he wrote extensively on cross-cultural education issues, on Australian Stock Horse personalities, and on family histories. During various breaks in this journey Stephen did a term as buffalo shooter when setting up an economic enterprise for the community at Oenpelli, did stints as horse breaker at the family property in NSW, and established an Australian Stock Horse stud at that same property in his retirement. His deep Christian faith led to his being ordained and pastoring a Home Church and refuge centre while studying in the US during the 'Jesus Movement' in the 1970s. Truly a man of many parts.

Keywords Bilingual education · Oenpelli · Papua New Guinea · Buffalo shooting · Australian Stock Horse

Background

As a 27-year-old linguist from Texas, I was given my first assignment as a member of Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT/SIL). It was to Papua New Guinea (PNG). I had studied linguistics and anthropology at Wheaton College in Illinois, then trained in

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linguistic field research and translation methodology with the then Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) based at the University of Oklahoma. These included stints in Haiti and Mexico.

When I disembarked at Sydney Harbour in February 1964 en route to PNG, SIL's summer school in Brisbane was just finishing. I was asked to delay going on to PNG so I could help the Australian Aborigines Branch members by typing their Workshop papers so that they could be printed as part of a casual series. Once that project was finished, I was asked to stay a bit longer and help in other secretarial jobs as new candidates for membership in SIL were interviewed. The Directors of the Australian and Papua New Guinea Branches as well as the Southeast Asia Director were there for these meetings. When they had wound up, we all got ready to 'return to base', but I got the impression in my spirit that I wasn't to leave Australia. (I thought, 'What?!').

I recalled the Bible verse where Paul and Barnabas were told in their spirit not to go on into Asia Minor. So I said to the Lord, 'Well, I can't just say to the New Guinea director, "I've changed my mind". I've got three questions. If I have to stay in Australia, the answers will have to be good enough to convince the directors of the validity of my decision'. The three directors who would have to agree to my re-assignment were only going to be together for 40 minutes before flying out (to Vietnam and Papua New Guinea, then driving to the Australian bases there). I had to have this prayer guidance nailed and concise. I said to the Lord, 'I'm just going to open my Bible …', and there it was: a passage in the New Testament with the answer to all three of my questions. I don't remember now which text I read from the Bible then, but it seemed to confirm to me that God was leading me in a different direction.

I took it to the directors, who were winding up their meeting and preparing to leave. They listened graciously as I told them that I felt the Lord required me to stay in Australia. (I told them my questions and the answers I had received.) Being spiritual men, all three accepted my guidance—a miracle in itself. Thankfully, the Papua New Guinea director then released me, so the Southeast Asia director was free to reassign me to the Australian Aboriginal branch of SIL.

Just in those 30 minutes my destiny changed. The Australian director, who was about to drive back to SIL's Australian Aboriginal Base, said, 'You can just come back with me if you like'. In the car on the way he asked, 'Do you know what I was telling them? When you knocked on the door, I was opening my mouth to tell them I was resigning. We hadn't had a person offer to work with the Aborigines branch for three years and I had said to the Lord, on my drive up, if we don't have a candidate, then obviously I'm not the appropriate director. I'll resign. Then you pop in, 30 minutes before I can resign'. It turns out that I was the first candidate they had had in three years.

Even more providentially, it turned out that there was a linguist waiting for a new work partner, and the Lord brought me. The trick though was that we would have to drive ourselves to our allocated site, although I hadn't learned to drive. I had to learn to do that, get my licence and be ready to go, in a week. Our director had been assigned a Land Cruiser from a government survey unit for us to use. I learned to