

Kennedys

Everybody in Lightning Ridge knows and likes our Garbo, Brian Kennedy. Brian is like the sunshine on our streets. He keeps the town clean; he has a smile and a friendly word for everyone. He told me that he read the book Goodbye Riverbank where local Aboriginal people tell their stories. Brian said that his mum also remembers the olden days and would like to tell her story. That is how I met May Kennedy, a gentle, softly spoken lady with a ready friendly smile. Her home is spotless and decorated with souvenirs and pictures of the family. She tells me that her mother and grandmother also liked to keep their homes beautiful.

Cilka Zagar

May Kennedy

I was born on Christmas day in 1925 in Cobar hospital. At the time my family lived on Nacarbo station where my father George Frail worked as a station hand.

My father was an Englishman who came to Australia in 1900. He married my mum Jane Williams and they had five children. We lived in the shearer's quarters where Dad built a tin hut with four rooms for us. Mum and dad did not drink alcohol. Dad was a hard working man. He often took us shopping to Cobar in his truck. He used to break horses and when I was eight a horse kicked and killed him.

Mum was a full blood Aborigine from Ngaampaa people around Cobar. Granny talked in Aboriginal language but mum did not speak it much and I only learned a few words. Granny died at the age of 103. They took her in a dray to Brewarrina cemetery. Granny never smoked, drank alcohol or played cards. She looked after me and told me that I can not do what I like until I am eighteen. Mum was a very nice lady. I never had any problems with people either and everybody was always very nice to me. Mum was a cook on a station and her sister Polly was a housekeeper.

My parents were strict and mum smacked us if we did not do as we were told. Children in those days were not allowed to listen to grownups talking. The grownups would tell us children at the right time what we needed to know.

After dad died mum had to take care of her four children on her own. We cooked on the gridiron and in the camp oven. Mum was a great cook and she was the boss in our home. Mum also cooked for the manager's family. They were a nice family with three children and we played together like one family. In those days everybody white and Aboriginal kids played together not like these days when white children do not like to play with Aboriginal kids. We always had white and Aboriginal friends.

Mum used to go to Carrara Aboriginal Mission 30km from Cobar to get a pink slip so she could get money for groceries and clothes.

When my older two sisters had to start school Auntie Topsy Simpson took them to the Angledool Mission. Carrara Mission broke up when I was eight and the manager told mum that we will be taken to Ivanhoe, Wilcannia or Brewarrina. Mum told him that she wanted to go to the Angledool Mission because my sisters were already there. The manager asked mum how she was going to Angledool and she told him that Lenny would take us. Mum's sister Polly died and left a son Lenny. Mum took Lenny as her own and called him Lenny Frail. Lenny was a good shearer about ten years older than me.

When Carrara closed in 1932 Lenny bought six horses and two buggies. We loaded our belongings and left. On our way we stopped at Cobar and continued to Bourke and Brewarrina and then to Goodooga. We had our tent

to sleep in on the way. In Hebel mum asked the policeman where Angledool Mission was. The Mission manager gave us a house with two bedrooms. Lenny was shearing and mum started to work for the policeman Hammond's family. All of us kids played together and Mrs Hammond made us wash our hands before we went in to eat.

The Mission manager gave us rations of tea, flour, sugar, salt and some meat. He also gave mum a pink slip to get the money for other things. There was a general store, a baker and a butcher at Angledool. We bought vegies and fruit from the Chinaman's garden. We could not grow anything because there was not enough water. We picked bush fruits like condongs, guise, goodiger and mulga tree fruit... We caught rabbits and fish for food as well. For sores and colds mum boiled sandal wood which we called bathal. We drank it and bathed our sores in it.

About thirty of us Aboriginal kids went to school in Angledool and we loved it. We had slates and chalk to write on them. The manager's children came to school with us because the manager and his wife were our teachers as well. Other white children had a school in town.

We used to go fishing in Narran River. I remember an old blind lady holding the stick and walking behind us. She threw the line and then tied the line on her toe to feel the fish pulling.

I also remember an old dark fellow showed us a trick. He put a piece of paper on the stump and moved away. He told us children to close our eyes. He clicked his fingers and the paper was blazing. I don't know how he did it but I saw people make fire by rubbing two sticks together.

Angledool Mission closed in 1936 because of bad management and we moved to Brewarrina. There were Brewarrina Aborigines, Tibooburra people and Angledool Aborigines. Tibooburra group soon moved back to their grounds at Broken Hill with their donkey teams.

I went to school in Brewarrina until I was fourteen. The Mission manager was also our teacher and I never learned much. We had inkwells and pens but no pencils... The manager's wife taught us sewing and I was good at it. I even won the first prize. I was good with my hands. The manager and his wife also gave out sugar, tea and flour every Thursday.

I had lots of fun with my friends at the Mission. Mavis was my best friend. We loved to make cubby houses. We looked for old crockery and cutlery for our cubby house. We made dolls from the wooden pegs and dressed them in fine pieces of material. We also made a cart for our dolls from a square fish tin. We made a hole and tied a string to pull our dolls for a ride.

It was really nice in Brewarrina. This man Johnson took us to town on his wagon pulled by donkeys so women could collect their endowments. It was good nine miles to town.

They closed Brewarrina Mission in 1966 but they made a new one on the river bank called a Silver city. I think they gave it a nickname Dodge City now.

The Aboriginal Protection Board apprenticed boys and girls on the properties at the age of fourteen. Girls learned the housework and boys learned the station work. I was sent to work as a domestic to Gundawiri station which was Jack Williamson's property six miles away on the Bourke road. Mr and Mrs Williamson treated me like I was their own daughter. I had a nice room next to the kitchen and I ate in the kitchen. I learned to clean, wash and cook. I set the table for the family really pretty. I stayed there four years and learned to become a good housekeeper. They took me with them whenever they went shopping or to the pictures but I never went home to Brewarrina to visit my family.

Mrs Williamson gave me clothes and food; she paid me one bob and sixpence a week the first year, three bob the second year and nine bob the third year. She put the rest of my pay in the bank for me. After four years I left with 45 quit which was big money in 1943.

I was eighteen when I finished my apprenticeship. I went to Walgett and bought myself good clothes, shoes and even a hat. I started work at the Imperial hotel as an assistant cook. I also served the tables. I earned a pound a week. The owner Mrs Blair also gave me coupons to buy shoes and clothes. I stayed for a year until Blairs departed. They wanted me to go with them to Sydney and work in their hotel there but I wanted to stay closer to home.

A friend told me about the job at Enmore near Colly 20 miles out of Walgett. I worked there for a year for Murphy family. I earned two pounds a week. Murphy family was nice to me. I only went shopping in Walgett once a month and I had 8 pounds to spend. I caught a train to Walgett to go shopping at Johnny Johnson's store and Murphy family came to pick me up from the train station. The mailman's truck came to pick me up when I went to visit my family in Brewarrina. The hawker also came around to sell everything from fruit to pencils and clothes.

Mr Murphy gave me lots of rabbit traps and I caught rabbits for their skins. Mum turned the skins inside out to let them dry before she bagged them in the chuff bags. The mail truck took them to Cobar and the mailman sold them and bought for them anything mum wanted. Mum also sold fox skins. She tied a branch to the buggy and dragged it in the bush. She smeared a bit of meat on it so foxes would follow the smell to where she laid the bait. Mum died in 1965 and is buried in Brewarrina.

While working at the imperial I met Kenneth Kennedy. I liked him and later we went together for a year before we got married in the Church of England in Walgett on the 4.4.1945. I wore white from the hat to my shoes. I had a bunch of flowers. We had a wedding cake with Kenneth's mum in Wee Waa lane in Walgett.

Kenneth's father was dark but his mum was pretty white with blue eyes. Kenneth trained in the army during the war but the war ended just as he was ready to go. He was in the army reserve.

Kenneth was working at the Dungalear station so I moved in with him and we lived in a little cottage there. Kenneth was a good worker; he drank a bit but he was a good man.

My first child only lived a few days and I was very unhappy losing him. Our other children May, Rhonda, Irene, Brian, Jane and Kenneth were born in Walgett while we lived at Dungalear station. Kenneth was my baby. He died of a stroke at the age of twenty five.

I taught my children by correspondence while we lived at Dungalear but when we moved to Lightning Ridge in 1959 they started public school there.

My husband bought a little tin house for forty pounds and we lived in it until Kenneth bought a block of land close to the school. He paid Alec Wood twenty pounds to bring up a house from Dungalear. They cut it in sections and loaded it on the truck for us. I moved in it with the children and we lived in this house for many years until we got a proper house in Matrix Street.

Kenneth was still working at Dungalear and only came home on a horseback on pay days. He worked for twenty five years at Dungalear.

We have always been Church of England. I don't know when we became Church of England but mum and granny were Church of England and all our children were baptised in the Church of England. My children never missed their Sunday school. . Their godmother was Mrs Allport. An Aboriginal preacher Bert Gordon used to preach in Lightning Ridge and we went to listen to him. He was a lovely man and he took care of many young people.

I always wanted to live in Lightning Ridge because you can go opal mining; it is also easy to find a job here.

I registered an opal mine at Canfells. Kenneth went down digging and I pulled out four gallon tins of dirt with a winch.

We had an old puddler which is a drum with the holes punched in. I filled it with dirt and wound it around so the dirt fell out through the holes and the nobbies stayed in.

We found lots of opal but we didn't know its value so we sold it for any money. Once a Canadian opal buyer came down the mine and picked some of our nobbies from the treacle tin. He paid us a few bob. He had the stones cut and polished. Maybe he got a lot of money for them but we will never know now.

My daughter Irene and I worked for the shopkeeper Pantelakos who had a Black Opal motel. We cleaned the rooms. Pantelakos family were very nice to us. When they were leaving they said that if we ever wanted a holiday to come to stay with them in Sydney. I always remembered that.

Kenneth became very sick and he died in 2000. We stayed in Walgett with Flossy Kennedy while he was in hospital. We were married for fifty five years.

I used to like playing cards; I remember playing with friends who would prepare dinner for everybody and we had a really good time. I was a good old gambler but I had to give it up because I was short of money.

Brian Kennedy

My father worked for us all his life. We lived at Dungalear which was a large sheep station. I remember dad working long hours; he spent most of his time on a horseback mustering sheep. Dungalear was a great place to grow up in; it had lots of things to see and do. Mum used bush medicine when we were sick and she also used plain baking flour to seal an open wound and stop it from bleeding. She showed us what bush tucker to eat. Back in those days bush tucker and medicine were plentiful.

I grew up to believe that everybody should work to earn their own living. I started working when I was fifteen. I have never received social security and I refuse to get it now.

I have no teaching qualifications. I have no children of my own and I am not an authority on how people should live so I never judge others. I try to lead a good life myself so I can be an example to others. I suppose I would like to be a kind of a Piped piper and have young ones follow me and lead healthy and respectful lives. I meet many people through my work and I think everybody trusts me and respects me.

In my time we respected our elders and the rules they made. We knew that they could make all the decisions about our lives and there was no conflict, fuss or arguments; we knew what was the right thing to do. Everybody felt safe. I have been happy following these rules and hope that others would be happy as well. We need rules to live by so we feel safe.

Government took away a lot of parental authority. Through government intervention Aboriginal parents lost authority over their children. Some parents don't dare discipline their children because they are afraid of what government is going to do to them if they do.

In my time we learned to take care of our belongings; kids played outside so they didn't muck up the house. They wouldn't want to destroy the place they lived in. When you work for something you respect it and look after it.

I came to Lightning Ridge School in 1959. I never missed school. There was just a handful of us Aboriginal children in a school of white kids who called us blacks. The way they said blacks made us angry; we waited at the school gate to get them. The beauty of it though was the fact that white parents never became involved in our fights.

My family never had any real conflict with other people. We never confronted people because we liked to live in peace.

My parents believed in working for and caring for our family.

I wrote this application for a job

I grew up in the days before technology became the way to the future. In the early part of my life I was a manual worker which kept me on my feet a lot; that meant no time for laziness; I was always a non-smoker, a non-drinker; I

never touched drugs so that means that there is no place in my body for any disability from drugs or work related mishaps. I always keep a clear head.

Later in my life I worked with machinery; I started with ploughing wheat fields with the latest models tractors; a multi tyre roller pulling a grid roller crusher with four wheel tractor.

During 1981 and 1982 I worked for the private contractor on the Moree Plains Shire. Since 1987 I worked for Walgett Shire Council where I had the opportunity to use modern technology such as hydraulic levers and electric control buttons which demands great responsibility and knowledge. I have always been a cautious person around machinery and moving parts.

I have done opal mining courses to learn about hidden dangers in the mining game. It is important to use a lot of common sense and awareness in mining and specially to take notice of your surroundings.

My twilight years are fast approaching and if you give me this job I want it to see me to my retirement age so I can say to myself: my life in the workforce from day one to my retirement age was a good one and I have been one of those people who never collected social security from the government.

Jacqui Frail

My name is Jacqui Frail. My grandmother Dulcie was May Kennedy's oldest sister. My people descend from the Ngaampaa people around Cobar.

Grandmother Dulcie worked at the Hebel police station before she got married and had her eleven children. Her husband Jack Norman was an Aboriginal man from Queensland. My grandmother died when I was a baby.

My mother May was Dulcie's eldest daughter. They lived in Brewarrina Dodge city mission. Mum was seventeen when I was born on 16th April 1960 at Brewarrina Hospital. I did believe I was actually born under the Barwon Bridge, but found different later on.

Mum had another thirteen children after me. We lived in Dodge City mission in Brewarrina. Mum did not drink alcohol until after she had her children. She suffered a lot of domestic violence and abuse; she was black and blue a lot. There was a lot of violence in those days; I am happy that things seem to be improving.

I was almost ten when I was fostered out. Mum's sister was looking after us children because mum was visiting someone in Lightning Ridge at the time. Welfare woman came with the policeman and she told us that we were going with her. Ten of us children, all of us under ten years old, were put at the back of police paddy wagon. The welfare woman and the policeman sat at the front and we, the children, were at the back. Mum's sister did not know what was going on and we were all in a blur. We were taken to the local police station in Brewarrina where the judge gave welfare the permission to take us away. We went on a train, which we called the iron horse, to Sydney. We were taken to Bidura Children's home at Glebe which is now called the Bidura Children's court. We got checked over by a doctor and then we were given new clothes. We slept in a large dormitory. I could see the harbour bridge from my dormitory and it meant a lot to me. We were there for a couple of months.

The older children, including my two sisters and myself, were taken to Mittagong Linden Cottage where we attended school. My younger siblings stayed behind until they were fostered out.

I stayed in Linden Cottage for over a year until I was sent for a two weeks holiday in Parramatta with Dixon family. They decided to keep me. I became Jacque Dixon until 1978 when I rejoined my mother.

While I was in Sydney I wanted to be white as the rest of my school friends were white. I did stick out badly everywhere I went because I was the only black person. I can not really say that I ever felt discriminated against because of my aboriginality but I knew that I was different.

Dixons had three older children of their own who no longer lived at home; they also had three other fostered children around my age. They must have liked children or they wanted to help because I see no other reason why they would take us in. I stayed with them until I was eighteen. In all those eight years I only saw one Aboriginal person; this Aboriginal employment officer came to

see if I wanted to train at Metropolitan Business College in Parramatta. I went to collage for twelve months while living with Dixons. I learned basic office skills like typing, book-keeping and shorthand. I took various temporary office jobs after I finished school and while still living with Dixons.

We used to get a two dollar chocolate cheque a fortnight from the government. I don't remember getting any other pocket money from Dixons. They had been short of money with so many children but we never really went without. Mum and dad Dixon died now but we were always on good terms and I went to visit them when in Sydney.

Dixon family were nice enough people; they weren't abusive but very religious, church three times on Sunday, and bible study three times per week. For me it was a bit too much, I didn't like it. They were Baptists and we had to say grace before we started eating. We prayed in the evening from the beginning but later I stopped praying. I have not been a religious person for a long time now. I became more connected to Aboriginal spirituality.

I shared the room with the other foster children. I still have contact with one of the girls but she does not even know who her parents were.

I called Dixons mum and dad. Dad was a bus driver and mum looked after us. We used to go for holidays on the beach where they rented a house for two weeks every year. I felt that they loved me and they treated us nicely and all the same.

I was a part of what is now called the Stolen Generation. We were sent to different families (all white people) all over NSW so we found it difficult later on in life to cope because we were separated from our people and culture. I feel like I am an outsider when I visit family gatherings like funerals; I don't have the same family bond with other family members as my other relatives d

I started going to watch the Parramatta Eels play rugby league at Cumberland Oval (now it is called Parramatta Stadium). My love affair with the Eels started at the age of ten when I first went to Parramatta because they wore the same coloured jerseys as the Brewarrina rugby league team (I'm still an Eels fan). It was something that reminded me of home.

Over the years I received letters from my relations but I never met any of them during that time. I still have some of these letters sent in the 1970's, and I treasure them. She wrote in her first letter in November 76:

I still love you and miss you; you are growing a big girl now. I always think about you and your brothers and sisters. I hope to see you soon and I hope that you will not turn away from me.

In 1978 I was reunited with my mum May at Lightning Ridge after not seeing her for almost ten years. It was a very traumatic time for me because being the eldest I was more aware of what was happening when we were taken away; also when I returned I found that a lot of my relatives who I loved and cherished had already passed on; I still didn't understand what and why it all

happened. I had a lot of questions to which I wanted answers and mum was the only one who could provide them. Often it became too hard to talk about it all. In a part of me I blamed mum for letting us being taken away. It took me a long time to understand how difficult situation she was in and that she was a young single mother of ten children at the time without a help and support of a partner. I don't know what I would have done if I was in her shoes. Mum started drinking after the children were taken away. She became a heavy drinker towards the end of her life. She was 59 when she died. Most of us children came to her funeral. I wish we could have spoken more about our lives but neither of us was ready to go into those traumatic events while she was alive.

The reunion with my mum was supposed to last two weeks (holiday) but it ended up lasting 25 years until my beautiful mother passed away in 2003.

I feel sympathy for those members of the Stolen Generation who didn't get to meet their parents or get to know their own people or culture; it's very sad to go through life not knowing who you belong to or where you come from.

I also feel sorry for those Aboriginal people (and white people) who don't understand and don't want to understand the full story behind why and how Aboriginal children were taken away. Some say and believe it was because of neglect and abuse, but this is not entirely true. Sure the abuse and neglect have happened to some but the majority (especially in the early years) were taken because of the assimilation policy at the time where the government tried to breed their black skin out. Aboriginal people are a resilient and strong race and this is why we are still around to this day.

I don't know what else could have been done to help the Aboriginal children in those days. Perhaps relatives should be asked to take the children that needed care before they took them to strangers and so cut them away from their blood relations and cultural background. These days Aboriginal people foster Aboriginal children.

The policies have changed over the years for everybody and I believe that every policy however well meaning had its failures. Times were hard for new settlers and the government in the olden days but Aboriginal people probably suffered the most because they became dispossessed. Their way of life became devalued, the government told their children not to speak the language of their parents and not to abide by their rules. Parents gradually lost respect and authority so they lost control of their children and of their own lives.

The assimilation is an ongoing process. My children have Aboriginal mother and Italian father; they are growing up to be Australians; we are all building this new nation that will hopefully accept and recognise the contributions of every person from whatever culture they come. Although we come from different backgrounds I hope we will become a nation where people will respect and accept each other for who they are.

Aboriginal culture is gradually gaining the recognition it deserves as being the

way of life of the original inhabitants of this country.

The only time all my brothers and sisters met was in 1973 at the Head office for Children's welfare in Sydney. We had a meal together in a restaurant and went in the Hyde park afterwards to play. I was thirteen and my youngest brother was four years old. I was excited and looking forward to seeing them but we never met all together privately since. I don't feel particularly close to any of them because we hardly know each other.

I am the only one of my family still living in Lightning Ridge; others are scattered all over the place. I wish we could meet and talk to come to terms with our lives and get to really know each other.

In 1978 the government flew me to Walgett to meet my mum. Val Boardman picked me up in a big black limousine (that's what it seemed to me at the time) to bring me to Lightning Ridge. Val asked me where my mum lived and I said that she must live somewhere at Canfells opal field. He knew her and took me to her home. Mum knew that I was coming but she was on the opal fields when I arrived. She lived with Joe and their two children. She was crying, we were both crying when we met. I first lived on Canfells with mum and her partner Joe and with their two boys my brothers Chasie and Uey. These two brothers live in Orange and I keep in touch with them.

I was supposed to come for two weeks but I stayed with mum until she moved to Orange in 1981. I bought her camp and stayed in it with my kids Michael, Nicholas and Christopher until in 1986 I moved into a house in Morilla Street and lived there for 10 years. I moved to Orange in 1996 but couldn't stay away from the Ridge; I moved back in 1998 and have lived here since. Lightning Ridge is that type of place you don't like to leave and when you do all you tend to think about is what is happening there. It has a special magnetic pull for me, I don't know why.

I met Aunty May again in 1978, I remembered coming to Lightning Ridge as a youngster before being sent away. I remember thinking after seeing her again that she looked more like a Native American Indian woman than Australian Aboriginal; she just had that look about her. She is the one I turned to when I needed help with my little family; she also had a big family who helped out a lot. They babysat my kids when I was working or going out, she let me hold big birthday parties at her place for my kids and was there when I needed her and the family.

Aunty May is 80 years old now but still remembers the olden days when she was young; she was married to Uncle Kenny who was a Kennedy from Walgett. She would sit down sometimes to talk about the old times but didn't give too much away. She told me about Granny Dulcie how she worked at the Hebel Police Station just over the border from Lightning Ridge. Granny worked there for years and years as a house maid in the old days.

From the stories I have been told and the ones I have read about, times were hard for our people but they got by and became stronger people for it.

1978 was the year I experienced love at first sight when I saw Tilio Scopel sitting against the butcher's wall at the BP servo. His parents and family owned the Marina Drive-In on the corner of Gem Street and Matrix Street. I actually lived behind the drive in. Tilio and I had five children in the next ten years. We are still good friends and he helps me out with the kids. We never had any other partners but we live separate lives. He has a camp not far from where we lived and I am renting a house in town with a view to buying it in a few years. I am also best friends with Tilio's sister and she is a big help to me; she helps with the children and even takes them on holidays.

My first job in Lightning Ridge was a night shift at the local telephone exchange; I earned \$11 a shift (7pm-7am). Apart from looking after my family I worked in the youth centre and as a teacher's aide at school. I have also trained with TAFE to improve my general education and to do clerical work. I am doing a bachelor of education course majoring in Aboriginal studies to become an Aboriginal studies teacher for the mainstream. I have one more year to go; it is block release correspondence course.

Lightning Ridge in 1978 was very much different from what it is now; it was something like the Wild West. When I went to the Diggers Rest Hotel one of the first people I met was Grasshopper (Kevin Kelly), he is here at the Ridge now and I believe he hasn't changed one bit unlike the town itself. I was used to city people so the people here seemed wild but I liked their relaxed lifestyle and stayed here.

I met a lot of colourful people both black and white. The Diggers was a drunk's paradise, plenty of alcohol, plenty of drinking friends and plenty of colourful yarns about opal and the one that got away. Some opals I have seen at the Diggers were beautiful and worth thousands of dollars. The Diggers was home to the Potch Queen until it burnt to the ground in 2006 with all those good memories; it was a sad day for all in town. The Potch Queen was held every year for the past 15 years, it is an event when men dress up as women and parade themselves on the catwalk and everyone has a good laugh.

The bowling club used to be just a small little place with a handful of poker machines; now I believe it is the biggest and richest club this side of Dubbo. I've been a member since 1979. The people employed there seem to stay forever. I don't know when old Arthur or Gidge started there but they seem to be a permanent part of the club, I've had blues and arguments with Arthur, but I still think of him as a good person.

Lightning Ridge miners hate ratters who go down other people's mines at night and steal their opal. When the ratters got caught some claim holders threw dynamite down and blew them up, I know of one man who went grey overnight because he got caught in a blow up.

Owning a claim has changed a lot too, lots of rules and regulations, I used to own one but gave up because of the new laws and the cost. The town itself has almost overrun itself with rules and regulations to keep up with the rest of

the world.

We have a beautiful big supermarket with just about everything in it. When I first came here we had the Co-op which was run by Julia Schellnegger.

There was another shop where Food works is now, I'm not sure what it was called then, but it was run by a Greek couple called Jenny and Louie.

Dawson's store was on the corner opposite the Diggers where I first thought they only sold lollies but they sold a variety of things.

The town has grown and is still growing.

There's a beautiful new school with between 400 and 500 students, the kids have everything they need there.

Barriekneal Housing and Community are building and buying more housing for the local Aboriginal people, they are a great advocate for the town.

Lightning Ridge is a very generous town overall, an Olympic pool and theme park was constructed just on donations from the townspeople which goes to show what the people of this town are made of.

I haven't experienced any serious racial discrimination since coming here to live, it's a fairly laid back town still and I feel comfortable living here. Most of my kids don't like it because they reckon it is too boring, nothing for them to do, but when I first came here there was no swimming pool only the little one at the school and the bore baths, now they have this great theme park and pool and the kids still aren't happy.