Remembering Territory families

‘A three-course meal…’

Dad did blacksmithing work then. Teamsters and that used to come into Emunga. Dad used to do their wheels and that and there were so many – those teamsters used to come into Emungalan, but there were so many used to come in there ahead of the line, to get the rations, you know, to take out. So then in 1927 we shifted over to – out to Katherine then when the line went though – when the bridge went over the river and the line went through. We shifted over there then. Dad built a hotel there and it was in – it was our home for 45 years, Katherine. Four of us were married then; met our husbands there and married.

[Northern Territory Archives Service NTRS 226, TS 333, [No Audio available], Eileen Stott]

Still, arriving in Emungalan was a shock. Sister Kath recalled:

Oh a couple of places, but not much at all when we first went to Emungalan. It was just going into the bush. It was all rocks, all limestone rocks, terrible...

There was a railway station, which was our school for a while, one room of that. And our two homes, must have been only about, I think we were the first people living privately there, you know, other than the couple of shops, the Chinaman’s shop and this other white person’s shop just across the road. We were the only people there. But of course when the construction the bridge started, course they brought people from down, oh, from the Eastern states; wherever they came from, to Emungalan, and we really had a good time in Emungalan; it turned into quite a nice place. Had lots of dances and parties and tennis parties and they eventually built the school. They only had one room at that school, wouldn’t be as long as this, just enough to put a bed, and the schoolteacher and his wife and six children had to live in that, that was their hot place in the sun. And at the back they had built a kitchen admittedly downstairs...

[Northern Territory Archives Service NTRS 226, TS 446 and NTRS 219 TP 549, Kath Mahony]
Kath described the kinds of meals the O'Shea's provided their guests:

Sweets. You always had fowls of course naturally. No they seemed to be quite all right. Soup, you'd generally have a three-course meal, and that's all that everyone wanted, that sort of fare those days... Oh yes sometimes. I remember being short of butter once. There was a strike on the wharf in Darwin and in those times the boat went up to Singapore and came back, of course it was tinned butter and we would be – the store was out of butter. I always thought it was the most dreadful thing, it was a wonder I didn't scrape the tin off the tins trying to get a bit, because you see it was a fortnight up and a fortnight back ...

[Northern Territory Archives Service NTRS 226, TS 446 and NTRS 219, TP 549, Kath Mahony]