

A woman with dark hair, wearing a white, long-sleeved dress, is seated on a wooden bench. She is looking down at a book resting on her lap. The background is a textured, light-colored wall. The text is overlaid on the image in white and purple.

KALAMUNDA & DISTRICTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORIES

A MEMOIR OF

PHYLLIS ALVES
(nee Jorgensen)

Phyllis May Elizabeth Alves nee Jorgensen

died at Kalamunda
Hospital on
31 October, 1990,
aged 85 years



Father: Hans Hansen Jorgensen, born 1874 Queensland, died 1954 Perth

Mother: Janet Lynn Templeton Frame, born 1881 Queensland, died 1965 Lesmurdie.

Siblings: Walter Jorgensen
Hedley Jorgensen
Lesley Jorgensen
Beatrice Jorgensen

Husband: Keith Alves

Children: Rosemary Alves
Jennifer Lewis (nee Alves)

An interview of Phyllis May Elizabeth Alves (nee Jorgensen) was conducted by
Jennifer Lewis (nee Alves), 1984

This summary of the original interview was prepared
on behalf of the Bill Shaw Oral History Group



Harry (Hans Hansen Jorgensen) & Jessie Jorgensen (Janet Lyn Templeton Jorgensen), Kalamunda. Circa 1920s



JORGENSEN CHILDREN

L-R (standing): Hedley, Walter, Phyllis, Lesley (sitting). Menzies, Western Australia
Circa 1913

Family background

Phyllis May Alves, nee Jorgensen born in Kookynie, Western Australia, was the daughter of Harry (Hans) Jorgensen and Jessie (Janet) Frame.

Phyllis' father's Danish parents migrated to Queensland, after the war in Schleswig Holstein in the 1870s. They had a small mixed farm in an isolated area but eventually moved closer to the coal mines for work.

Her mother's parents were Scottish migrants who arrived in Maryborough, Queensland after a three month voyage on the Scottish Hero. Phyllis' grandfather found work in the coal mines and her grandmother made extra money by running a boarding house for men.

Phyllis' parents met and married in Queensland but moved to Western Australia after the Goldrush. She was the second eldest child and had four siblings, Walter, Hedley, Lesley and Trixie.

Phyllis's father was injured while working underground in the mines. Tons of rocks crashed down close enough to him to break his pelvis. His fellow miners pulled him up in a bucket and transported him five miles by horse and dray to the Kookynie hospital where he was placed on a hard board and left to heal. Fortunately he healed well and managed to lead an active life but walked with a pronounced limp.

When Phyllis' grandmother returned to Queensland, around 1910, her father took over the lease of the hotel in Menzies. The family lived happily there for about five years. When the hotel owner decided to run the hotel himself he refused to renew the lease forcing her father to return to the mines to work.





L-R (standing/rear): Harry Jorgensen, Hedley Jorgensen, Jessi (Ross in front) Jorgensen, Alan Smailes, Phyllis Alves, Trixie Smailes, Langley Lloyd, Margery Jorgensen, May Lloyd, Graham Smailes L-R (kneeling/front): Brian Jorgensen, Henry Jorgensen, Rosemary Alves, Janet Smailes, Keith Alves (holding Jennifer Alves), Ted Smailes. Lyndhurst house, Kalamunda, Circa 1940s

Life in the bush

When Phyllis' brother Hedley was about three years old he became lost in the bush in Menzies. Their father followed his tracks until it got dark. About 200 townsmen rallied together to help search for Hedley. Two Aboriginal trackers, living in the town, searched throughout the night with strips of lit tree bark to guide them. When they found tracks, one would follow in a straight line whilst the other circled further out until he found the tracks again, then they would meet up and track again together. Early the next morning a bank teller, on his way to Kalgoorlie with the gold escort, found Hedley asleep and safe in the bush.

Phyllis attended school with a couple of hundred other children in Menzies. The school was run by a headmaster, three teachers and two assistants.

For entertainment the children often played in the bush. Behind the Jorgensen house were mounds of slimy green tailings from the mine. The children would sit on a piece of tin or flat board and toboggan down the slope.

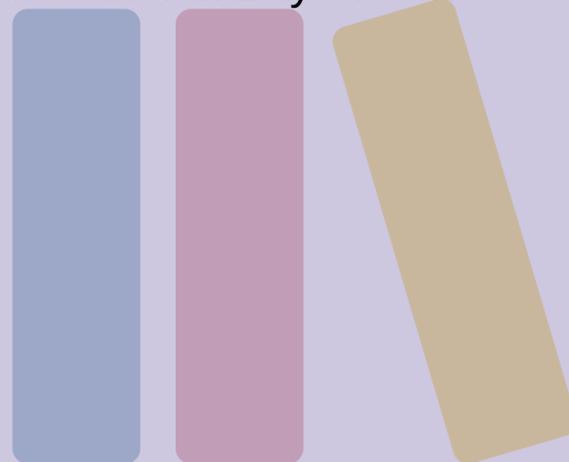
They also played rounders and singing games, such as "green gravel, green gravel, the grass is so green."

Once a month a travelling picture show would come to the town. The film would often break down so took a long time to view.

Every year they would go to the 'Railway Picnic'. They would catch the train to the Kookynie picnic grounds and join in with various activities on offer.

The family moved to Capel Vale where the children spent the weekends exploring the bush with their neighbours. They sucked on plant roots for water and ate witchetty grubs that had been cooked over a fire.

In 1918 the family moved from the bush to the city and lived for a time in Bayswater.





Phyllis Jorgensen, School Monitor, kneeling far left middle row. Kalamunda School. Circa 1922



Phyllis Jorgensen: Circa 1920s

Kalamunda in the 1920s

Phyllis' family moved to Kalamunda in 1920 to be closer to relatives and work in the timber trade in the hills.

They lived in a house in Canning Road where the high school now stands. Phyllis' aunt and uncle lived just down the track. Kalamunda was very small then and everybody knew each other.

Phyllis caught the train to school in Perth each day leaving home at half-past seven in the morning and returning home at a quarter-to-seven in the evening. The train left Perth at five o'clock so Phyllis would either stay at school or go to Boans until it was time to leave. She recalls that it was most unpleasant in the winter walking home along the dark, rough, muddy roads in the rain.

After Phyllis finished school she attended the Perth technical school where she learned shorthand and typing. About three months later she successfully gained a job as *Monitor* at the Kalamunda School where she listened to the children's reading and took their spelling.

She decided to become a teacher and successfully applied for a one year course at the Teachers Training College in Claremont.

With her newly acquired qualifications she accepted her first appointment to a small country school in Noonebin, just outside of Pingelly.



**CLAREMONT
TEACHERS
COLLEGE**

Students, friends of Phyllis
Jorgensen
Circa 1924





L-R: Phyllis, Jessie and
Trixie: Circa 1930s



Lesley Jorgensen.
Circa 1930s

PHYLLIS' BROTHER

JORGENSEN SISTERS

Country teaching and living

Leaving her family in Kalamunda Phyllis caught the train to Pingelly arriving at midnight. Carrying her two suitcases she walked across the road to her hotel where the porter showed her to her room. The next day she boarded the mail coach and was dropped off at Noonebin.

Phyllis' accommodation was in a large house where she shared a room with the niece of the people who owned it.

The small school catered for around 12 children. It was equipped with a potbelly stove for heating but no verandah or shelter shed and nowhere for the children to leave their hats and coats.

Phyllis' next assignment was at the Hillside school in Corrigin. The new school was fairly primitive. Her living conditions were very poor with chickens laying eggs in her room and flies everywhere. She found life very different in the Wheatbelt. She was fortunate enough to find better lodgings although it meant that she had to drive herself to school by horse and sulky.

Phyllis' friends found her a horse but it often reared up, went too fast and was difficult to stop.

She persevered for three days with this horse until she decided she couldn't cope with it so a more docile horse was found that suited her better.

One day Phyllis saw a cock-eyed bob (small cyclone) coming. After sending the children home she set off herself in her sulky. The clouds grew darker and darker and before long the storm was upon her. The dust was so thick that she couldn't see her hands in front of her and she could hear the trees crashing around her. The dust storm lasted around 10 minutes and was followed by rain. Phyllis led her horse along the road through the thick mud and eventually reached home safely.

The following day she saw the extent of the storm damage. The hall in the settlement had collapsed like a pack of cards. Trees were lying all around with branches stripped off. Phyllis realised how lucky she had been to get through the storm without injury.





NEWLYWEDS KEITH & PHYLLIS ALVES

ST ANDREWS CATHEDRAL,
ST GEORGES TERRACE PERTH,
CIRCA 1935



JESSIE & HARRY JORGENSEN WITH PHYLLIS ALVES

KOJONUP. CIRCA 1940

Love and new beginnings

Remaining in the Wheatbelt area, Phyllis was appointed to a school in Korrelocking. She wasn't very happy with the school, people or accommodation but stayed for a couple of years.

In 1935 she moved to Lumeah, situated about 17 miles south of Kojonup. She found a very nice place to stay for only one pound a week. The house was on a farm owned by a very nice lady who became her mother-in-law when she later married her son Keith Alves.

Married women were not allowed to hold any position in the Education Department so the couple went to live in a small house owned by one of Keith's relatives for a while. Life was difficult with limited income so they returned to the farm to live and help Keith's parents.

They eventually bought their own farm quite close to the family homestead. There was a drought during the first year which caused them considerable concern. There was no feed for the sheep, the ewes left their lambs to die because they had no milk and the cows contracted botulism and died.

Phyllis and Keith responded to an advertisement in the newspaper. The Department of Native Affairs was looking for a couple to work at a Native Settlement in Carrolup.

The husband was required to run the stores and the wife to teach indigenous students. They were successful in their application and moved to Carrolup in 1940.

Phyllis thought Carrolup was a very pretty place situated half-way between Kojonup and Katanning. The settlement was a peninsular, built in between the bends of the river with an abundance of surrounding bush. The children were housed in dormitories and staff were provided with houses. The settlement included a hall and a small hospital.

When they first moved to Carrolup, at the beginning of the year, there were around 30 children but by the time they left in September there were 60.



The Department of Native Affairs operated from 1936 and was responsible for Aboriginal matters in Western Australia. The Commissioner for Native Affairs, was the legal guardian of all Aboriginal children, as stipulated by the Aborigines Act 1905. (FindandConnect.com)

Carrolup Settlement

The Department of Native Affairs ruled the lives of the indigenous people and children were brought into the settlement from the bush.

The Commissioner of Native Affairs had the power over the people. Some parents lived in tents down by the river and came up each day to get their food. The evening meal consisted of bread and dripping spread with jam. Lunch was usually rabbit or lamb stew and breakfast was a plate of porridge and a piece of toast. Whilst Phyllis didn't think it was a very satisfying life they appeared to be a happy mob.

Phyllis said they could find humour in all sorts of situations and were not hostile or angry. They loved to gamble and once a visitor to the settlement lost all of his clothes to them in a card game.

The Aboriginal people worked around the settlement and learned how to bake bread and do a variety of work on the farm. However they were not free and once they were brought into the settlement they couldn't leave. When two teenage girls went missing they were spotted on the way to Williams and were brought back.

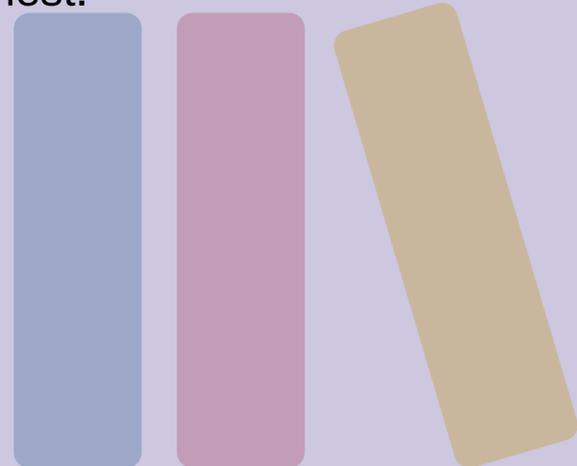
A nearby settlement in Gnowangerup was run by a Clergyman who encouraged the Aborigines to gather wool or grow vegetables. He would then sell the products and give the money back to them. There were no such opportunities for the people at Carrolup.

Phyllis recalls Mippy, an Aboriginal man who was quite religious. On Sundays he sat on the steps of the hall with his bible and would ring the bell to call people to church. He was very smartly dressed in a long coat, bowler hat and a pair of glasses. He was often disappointed by the poor attendance at the church.

The Aboriginal children, aged from 6 to 14 years were very good and gave few problems. They generally did what they were told and learnt well. By the time Phyllis left, practically every child had learned the art of reading and writing. They drew extremely well with a wonderful sense of observation as might be expected from children who were descended from the original people of the country.

When Phyllis arrived at the settlement in February there were around 30 children at the school but there were 60 children being taught in the one small crowded hall by the time she left in September.

At the end of 1940 Phyllis returned home to Kalamunda and Keith joined the Army Reserves being stationed at Swanbourne and then at Rottnest.





ALVES' HOME

Canning Road, Kalamunda
(became Senior Citizen's
Centre).



CARMEL POST OFFICE

House and P.O on the end of
the verandah. Circa 1960s

Local business owners

Phyllis and Keith bought a house in Canning Road, Kalamunda and a business in Hay Street, Perth. Whilst the business was a very good one it was too far away from Kalamunda and they had to employ someone to help. This diminished their profits considerably.

In 1953 they bought the Carmel Post Office, Exchange and orchard. Now with two young daughters they moved to Carmel. They made a good profit from growing tomatoes, the orchard and the Post Office. It was considered a really good move.

With the sudden expansion of Kalamunda land owners could sub-divide their land into quarter acre blocks however the boundaries only allowed the Alves to subdivide into five acre blocks. They subsequently sold off most of their 60 acres.

After living in Carmel for twelve years they moved to Lesmurdie in 1965.

They belonged to the Kalamunda Golf Club, now Jorgensen Park, which was named after Phyllis' brother, Hedley who was the club President for many years.

Carmel Post Office

**HOUSE AND PROPERTY
CARMEL ROAD**

CIRCA 1960S



Cover: Phyllis Jorgensen, newly qualified teacher at her first teaching post.
Pingelly, WA. Circa 1925

The Kalamunda Oral History Series
is proudly presented by the
Bill Shaw Oral History Group

Readers of this memoir should bear in mind
that the information provided is summarised
from a verbatim transcript of the spoken word.

The Shire of Kalamunda is not responsible for
the factual accuracy of the memoirs or any
views expressed therein.

Copyright ©, 2018

You may save or print text and images in this collection for research and study. If you wish to
use it for any other purpose, please contact the Kalamunda and Districts Historical Society.