

Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week



Community and conservation

ENCOURAGING, supporting and amplifying positive community action.

Name: Bruce Simmons

Who long have you lived in Alice Springs?
In January 1974 (exactly 50 years ago) my wife Meg and I came to work as dentists in Alice Springs for the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Favourite sports teams, band or movie and why...

Having grown up in Adelaide I'm a mad AFL Crows fan and supporter of Woodville West Torrens in the SANFL. I played 49 games of League football with West Torrens. In town I've followed Feds footy club. In 1974 we won the flag and I was fortunate enough to win the Minahan Medal. I enjoy watching The Castle. It appeals to my sense of fair play and social justice.

What role do you play in your community group/activity/action?

Like my footy, I enjoyed playing in many positions in many organisations over the years. My father who was a strongly left leaning politician in South Australia often quoted 'if you aren't a part of the solution, then you are a part of the problem'. I believed it and have been a happy volunteer all my adult life often accepting leadership roles. As an example, I was Convenor of the Alice Springs Community Garden from its inception in 2012 to 2022. My motivation has always been the common good and to create opportunities for others.

Why is your community group/activity/action important?

Many years ago I concluded that my big three themes in life were relationships, community and conservation. My commitment in recent years to buffel busting, to Eastside and West-

side Community Gardens, to Landcare and to the Arid Lands Environment Centre reflect a deeply felt concern for our environment and our capacity to live safely and grow together.

Why do you volunteer? (or why did you initiate the activity/response)?

I envisage that we pass through an archway in life and as we go we're expected to lift a rock aside on the path so that others can follow. It's wonderful to be able to volunteer.

People are appreciative and they often see their opportunity to join in and be a part of something hopeful and fun.

What achievements are you most proud of?

If I can say this, being empathetic, kind and thoughtful. Leading by example. It's wonderful to share successful outcomes but little things like growing confidences, smiles and aha moments along the way mean a lot too.

Anything else you would like to say?

I've always received wonderful support from my Alice family and close friends. There's been a lot of teamwork! From a global perspective we are well into the gravely concerning Anthropogenic Age.

If ever there was a time when we are all needed to "think global and act local", to carry a rock for peace and sustainability it's now. Besides it's physical and that suits me! If you would like to nominate someone to be the Mparntwe Alice Springs Community Foundation Community Builder of the Week, email editorial@centraliantoday.com.au and let us know who, why you think it would be great for the community to know about what they are doing and how to contact them.

COMMUNITY: Bruce Simmons is a dedicated community worker in Alice Springs.

Picture: SUPPLIED



Faces of Australia Ted Egan



Sayonara Nakamura

AS you will have spotted, dear Readers, I am fascinated by people; almost compulsorily, I compose songs about people whom I find admirable.

Somewhat strangely, I don't have to be in a place connected to the person under consideration. Often quite the contrary.

I composed The Girls from Meekatharra in Spain.

The reason is that my deepest thoughts about Australia often occur in places nothing like my homeland. Perhaps the greatest single paradox in the 350 plus songs I have registered with APRA/AMCOS is that I composed

Sayonara Nakamura in North Wales, UK in winter 1982/83.

I now realise that I was returning to Australia soon, specifically with the mandate to organise the forthcoming music festival Lagu Lagu in May 1983, to celebrate the Centenary Year of Broome, WA.

In cold Anglesey, North Wales, my thoughts pondered themes for songs relating to Broome, centre of the world's pearling industry.

I knew a lot about Broome in general terms and sought to compose some songs that would

withstand the scrutiny of Broome locals. I was aware of the famous Broome cemetery, where there are 1000 graves of Japanese divers, mostly young men who died from Diver's Paralysis; "The Bends" as it was known locally, death as a consequence of diving too deep to collect pearlshell, or not being "staged" adequately as the divers surfaced from 40-50 fathoms. Nitrogen in the blood stream was the basic cause of so many deaths.

I knew that if I produced a work about a specific death or tragedy I was bound to make some regrettable error, so I concentrated on some irrefutable facts: (1) Broome luggers were all listed as B, so I chose B19: it scanned well (2) Japanese did not like to be buried at sea (3) a very common Japanese surname was Nakamura. So my song is fictional, based on historic fact. I hope you like it

Sayonara Nakamura

When the luggers all sailed away, from Roebuck Bay on that fateful day

The diver on the B 19 was Nakamura

Not yet twenty-one, from the Land of the Rising Sun

His homeland was the island Okinawa

In the deepest holes of the Lacedpede Shoals, to fulfil the pearling master's goals

Went the diver on the B 19, Nakamura

His quest for the lustrous pearl as strong as his love for the beautiful girl

He'd wed when he returned to Okinawa.

From the west came a tropical squall and the mercury began to fall

Forty fathoms deep was Nakamura

"Set sail: no time to stage!" - the storm began to rage

So they dragged to the surface the boy from Okinawa.

The agony's in his eyes; an old Malayman cries

He knows that The Bends have got young Nakamura

Helplessly they cursed, as the diver's lungs near burst

He died on the deck, the boy from Okinawa.

CHORUS
Goodbye now, farewell, say "goodbye" to Okinawa

Today, we'll bury you, in West Australia
You will never be as one, with the Land of the

Rising Sun
Sayonara, sayonara Nakamura.

To the Divers Cemetery at Broome, bearing gifts, filled with gloom

They walked with the body of the diver, Nakamura

Headstones face the west, a thousand divers lie at rest

And they're joined today by the boy from Okinawa

CHORUS
Goodbye now, farewell, say "goodbye" to Okinawa

Today, we'll bury you, in West Australia

You will never be as one, with the Land of the Rising Sun

Sayonara, sayonara Nakamura.

Goodbye now, farewell, Sayonara Okinawa

Kimi ga, nemuru si, nishi Australia

Mo kairenu sokoku ni, itoshiki furusato

Sayonara, sayonara, Nakamura

Sayonara, sayonara.....Nakamura.
Happy New Year, dear Readers. You can hear my songs on iTunes/Spotify. Aritjinanga. TE.