
Girl averts Double-drowning Tragedy

Courageous action by a 13-year-old Aboriginal girl at Hay in October last year saved the lives of two younger children out of their depth in the Murrumbidgee River.

The heroine is Heather Murray, eldest of six children of Mrs Beatrice Murray. Heather lives on the banks of the Murrumbidgee, at Soapworks Bend, and is in second form at Hay War Memorial High School.

On the day of the rescue, Heather and the two sisters she saved were part of a group of children at a Salvation Army Sunday School picnic, upstream from Hay.

Envoy Pontifex and his wife had gone to prepare lunch when the incident occurred.

Mr R. Snook, area welfare officer at Deniliquin, asked Heather about the rescue. She told him: "I went with about 30 other children on a Sunday Picnic to a spot on the bank of the Murrumbidgee near Jacka's Farm, at Hay.

"Most of the children were in the river—swimming in a shallow part, and some of their play-balls floated out. Glenys and Josie Golding waded further out to get theirs, and went into a deep hole.

"I swam out to bring back some of the balls when I saw Glenys bobbing up and down, and going under.

"Some of the children started to scream that she was drowning. So I swam out, got hold of her round the chest with one arm, and side-stroked back to the bank with her.

"She had big costumes on, and they were full of water. I was very tired by the time I got her in.



Heather Murray (back) with the two children she rescued from drowning—Glenys Golding, aged 9 (left), and her five-year-old sister Josie

"Just as I got her to the bank she told me that Josie was drowning out there, too, so I looked around and saw Josie out in the river, with her arms up and her head going under water.

"So I swam back out, and brought her in the same way. When I got her to the bank her brother Tony pulled her out.

"All the time I had been frightened that they might drown. After I brought them back to the bank I had to lie down for a few minutes to get over it."

Mr Snook asked Heather where she learned to swim, and what she knew about life saving. "I have two Swimming Proficiency Certificates," Heather said, "which I got at school. But I've only had a couple of life-saving lessons—at school swimming lessons."

Envoy Pontifex told the *Riverina Gazette* that Glenys and Josie, who couldn't swim, would have drowned but for Heather's quick and courageous action.

The *Gazette* said that Heather dived in and brought the children to the bank with no more consequence than that they "bawled their heads off".