

AN ABORIGINAL LEGEND FROM THE  
DYRAABA TRIBE OF ABORIGINAL PEOPLE,  
as told to MILDRED NORLEDGE by MR. JAMES  
MORGAN, Box Ridge Aborigines Reserve, Coraki . . .

# ***The Old Women who turned into Birds***

LONG, long ago in the Dreamtime of a very young world there once lived near a mountain that is called "Nooloigah" a young man who was very good at hunting. Now one day it so happened that when this young man was out hunting, and his wife was out digging for yams, that the young man returned from his hunting to the camp he found that the camp fires were out, for there had been much rain and the young man was cold and wet.

Now, when the weather had cleared he looked from the mountain towards the East. First, he beheld a little hill, and nearby to the hill he could see much smoke. He knew that there, there was a fire. So he came from the mountain to where the fire was.

But when the young man reached the place where the fire was, he saw that there were only old women sitting around the camp fire, for the men were away hunting, and only the old women had been left in the camp. So the young man stood for a while waiting and thinking that one of the women would come to him and ask him what he had come to the camp for. But not any of the old women paid any heed to the young man. Now, the young man held in his hand a piece of bark, and he went and spoke to the old women who were sitting around the fire, and asked them if they would give to him some of the fire sticks, that he might return to his camp to light a fire. But the old women said: "We cannot give you any of the sticks from our fire, we have not enough fire for ourselves".

So the young man pleaded with the old women that they would give to him some sticks from their fire. But they would not, and all the old women would say to the young man's pleading was: "We cannot give you any of the sticks from our fire. We have not enough fire for ourselves".

The old women did not pay heed to the young man anymore, but turned instead to their fire and began again to talk amongst themselves.

Now so busy were they talking that when they stirred up their fire they did not see that a spark had flown from off their fire to where the young man was standing, and that the young man had caught the spark from the fire on the piece of bark that he held in his hand.

So the young man thought he would like to punish the old women because they had made him stand

so long, for they had not given any heed to his pleading, they had not given to him any of the sticks from the fire, how selfish the old women had been. And so the young man began to puff at the spark that he had caught on the piece of bark, and so greatly did he puff that the piece of bark burst into flames.

And the young man lit a circle of fire around the camp. Now so busy were the old women talking, that they did not see the fire that the young man had lit around the camp. So busy were they talking they did not even hear the noise that the crackling of the fire

made. Great was this fire, for the young man had called to his people in the Spirit World to help him to make the flames of the fire leap high. And his people from the Spirit World helped the young man, for the flames of this fire were of great height.

When the old women beheld the fire that was around them, they cried for mercy. But the young man heeded them not. He took with him some sticks from the fire, and returned to his own camp to light the fires that the rain had put out.

Now the old women that had not given heed to the young man, nor given to him any sticks from their fire were turned into birds. And the name of the birds that they were turned into is Jaberoo and Haberoos they are to this day. For if you look at the legs of these birds you will see where the knee joint is the skin is old and wrinkled as the skin of the old women who would not give any sticks from their fire to the young man, was old and wrinkled.

This is the story of the old women who were turned into birds. And the name of the place where the birds may be seen is "Gahwoolgul".



**Charlotte Irving,  
of Asquith, near  
Sydney, is all  
ready for a game  
of tennis.  
Any challengers ?**

