

ALBERT QUE NOY, Top End pioneer, born 1911 in Pine Creek;

Interviewed by Diana Giese and Daryl Chin, 31 December 1996, in Darwin

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Pioneering days and childhood: Mr Que Noy's family came to Australia in the 1880s, and he spent his first eleven years in Pine Creek; his father was one of the first to operate a battery to crush ore to extract gold on the gold-fields, and he describes how it worked; the family also had a team of horses which used to cart goods; there were eight children in the family and they all went up to live in Darwin so they could continue their schooling; he was at the Darwin Public School for four years; they rented a house there at three pounds a month, 'an ordinary corrugated house, old Chinatown'; he speaks of other families in the Chinatown of the time; he played football and marbles with other children; left school at 13 to make a living to help the family, and worked in his father's tailor's shop; the family also owned a bakery in Pine Creek; Mr Que Noy helped in the general store and cooked; he acquired a truck and worked in a timber mill, supplying timber to various Darwin businesses, including crates for pearl-shell; he remembers small-town life and the life of early Chinatown, where Aboriginal people did the heavy work, cutting firewood and carrying water

Wartime experiences: Mr Que Noy joined the Army in 1941 in Darwin, as a driver taking supplies from Adelaide River to the camp at Mataranka, where he was in charge of the vehicle park; he was sent to Broadmeadows outside Melbourne to repair trucks in a workshop; then he was transferred to Borneo and helped build a wharf there in three weeks; he met a lot of local Chinese who worked on coconut plantations or in their own businesses, such as goldsmiths; they spoke his dialect, and he shared their food, including fresh eggs and bananas; when the War ended, he wanted to stay in Borneo to work as a builder, but eventually returned to Darwin via Melbourne and Sydney, to his family, who had started a market garden at Darwin River, growing vegetables and trying to grow rice; in Melbourne, he met and married Ivy

After the War: After the Wartime bombing and looting, their Chinatown property was 'just the bare ground'; Mr Que Noy also lost a freehold block he owned outside Alice Springs: 'I was nearly five years in the Army, come back, my house gone, nothing left—and I have no help. Nothing from the Army, and nothing from the government at all'; he joined a truck owner carrying goods from the Darwin Wharf, including building materials; he was involved with the Darwin Truck Owners' Association; he left after 15 years to join the Department of Works, maintaining the Territory's roads

Chinese life in the early Territory: Mr Que Noy describes Chinese New Year, Qingming, visiting the Joss House, gambling, his small non-traditional wedding, and how the old Chinese men told 'hard stories' about their lives; he and Ivy, when in their 70s, drove all the way from Darwin to Melbourne

The next generation of his family has settled in southern Australia