



Mrs Patsy Kruger

Grandpa was a slave

"My grandparents were slaves. They were black-birded from the New Hebrides and brought to Queensland to work in the canefields.

"But my father was a free man. He worked as a farm hand, a cane-cutter, a deep-sea fisherman, a meat worker and a wharf laborer in northern NSW and Queensland."

The words of attractive, articulate Mrs Patsy Kruger, 28.

Her voice shows neither anger nor regret; it is just a matter of fact.

Mrs Kruger, a Melanesian, smiles at her own good fortune. She's happily married to German-born Hans-Lothar, 40, and has a mischievous four-year-old daughter, Virginia.

They live in Mimosa Rd., Carnegie.

Mrs Kruger is an active housewife. She's secretary of the mothers' committee on the local kindergarten, a member of the aboriginal branch of the Aborigines' Advancement League and a member of Kylie Enterprises.

Mrs Kruger was brought up in Bowen, Queensland. She left school after Intermediate because "that's as far as the school went in our town," then worked as a law clerk for the local solicitor for six years.

In 1963, she came to Melbourne to work as a secretary to aboriginal leader Pastor Doug Nicholls. That's when she began working actively for aboriginals.

"In Bowen the townspeople — European and Melanesian alike — tended to look down on aboriginals.

"If I wanted to go out with an aboriginal or part-aboriginal boy, my father was always dead set against it — just because he was aboriginal.

"I think I was a little guilty of this too."

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MRS Kruger wants to see aboriginals integrated into the community, still retaining their aboriginal identity.

"I've been assimilated into the community and I haven't retained any identity with the South Seas culture; and I deeply regret it," she said.

"The legends, customs, dancing and festivals of the South Seas are all lost to me.

"I don't want to see this happen to aboriginals."

That's why Kylie Enterprises (Kylie is the aboriginal word for boomerang) is setting out to promote aboriginal talent and culture to the community.

"We tend to sing pop songs," said Mrs Kruger, "but we also sing traditional aboriginal songs as well.

"We are trying to hold our Kylie Kabaret once a month."

Elisabeth Hooper