

REMEMBERING

A tribute from François Giner to Old Man, August 2011

Always the “Old Man” repeating the message, we are the same black and white, the same blood. I do not understand what is the problem.... why can't we share our culture?

To all the family, especially, his wife Magie, brother, son, daughters and grand children. To all the skin name family, to all friends'...black and white.

Today I need to say these words...

All my family and friends know the Old Man personally as we sometimes travelled together to France and many have come to meet him. His reputation is known across my country France and further into Europe.

They know him as the Old Man who was born, like the root of the good and strong tree, deep on the mother Land. With wisdom and pride in his cultural and traditional knowledge.

I met the Old Man a long time ago, when both our hair was very black and we were young. I remember the late afternoon in the dry season at Weemol, Arnhem Land. The Old Man and Magi, his wife, sat around the campfire, cracking the shell of long Neck turtle. This is more than 21 years ago. I will never, never forget this moment of my life, when the deep eyes of the “old Man” met mine. The message was so clear for me...”We have so many things to share”

The Old Man, opened my heart and my mind and helped, no made, me understand his Australian Aboriginal people. He has taught me of their past stories, the significance of the Nayungí people and the deepness of their roots to the land.

The Old Man took me many times to a ceremony ground. He also took me far away to Ramingining where we met his own family. It was at this time that he extended my name from Balang to Balang Raraming. It was also at this time that he asked me to take him to my land and to meet my family.

In 1996 we went to Paris, along with Balang Ashley (Phillip) and Old Man Mollo from Beswick and had a very good time exploring France and meeting my family and friends. Again in 2003 he joined me, my Brother, Old Man, at my 60th birthday in Paris.

At the end of this trip, he told me that in his heart he felt that my family was also his family.

He also said he felt a spiritual connection with the French rock art in which he saw so many similarities with his own.

The Old Man

- ✚ He was so respectful of his cultural traditions
- ✚ He was so talented;
a great artist, a great mollo player, a great storyteller,
a great singer and dancer, so many skills in one person.
- ✚ He had a wonderful sense of humor, a magic laugh, an ability to see the funny side of adversity
- ✚ He was so proud; of himself, his family, his country and its people.
- ✚ He was an Aboriginal Man and a Leader.

I feel so privileged and honored to have been a part of the Old Man's life. He taught me a lot. The seed the Old Man put on my heart and my mind has enabled me to grow into the person I am. The Old Man changed my whole way of thinking. Many times I fell like the little kangaroo at his foot.

I Francois want people to understand and appreciate his knowledge and integrity and its relevance today. I want people to realize the difficulty of survival on the land and the struggle that still occurs. Through my stories I have told of the long-term confrontation, the problems and the friendships.

I am now an old man myself, and we old men are allowed to dream and to cry.

I dream of the time we are together again;

To go fishing, hunting, walking

To be dancing and singing

To tell stories to each other.

To laugh together

To smell the fire, the smoke and the turtle cooking

To fish on the Milky Way, our shining river.

Here in this world, we can't see and we can't understand where you are.

But what I know, Old Man, is that soon you will join and be peaceful with your Mimi. I ask you to take my smoke as a present and please wait for me Old Man....

I know this is only my way to share my loss and sadness, your family and other people will share your memory in a different way...

I Love you Old Man!

Balang Raraming as Francois Giner