

July 7th , This was to be our last day in the outback of Australia, I was beginning to feel as though I didn't want to go back to the states, this felt like home to me.

Our final stop of the day before traveling to the Alligator River Campground to camp for the night was to be at Jabiru, a new uranium mining town in Kakadu National Park.

The Australian government is trying to correct some of the mistakes that we Americans created in dealing with our American Indians, having ruled that when any minerals are found on [Aboriginal Land](#), the wealth is shared with the native peoples. The city of Jabiru is one such instance of this policy being put into effect. It is a very modern city with beautiful parks and lakes. After dining at one of the many outdoor restaurants, we were looking forward with great anticipation of having the afternoon off and spend it swimming in a large lake nearby. It would have been a welcome relief after spending 6 grueling days traveling the Outback of Australia, sleeping in Swags (canvas sleeping bags) stretched out on the ground.

It was about this time that Mark, our driver suggested that if we wanted to see one more Aboriginal Site, he would be willing to drive us.

Many things began racing through my mind, we had visited many ancient sites in the last week and I really didn't want to see any more, the swimming sounded really refreshing, but what the heck, I could go swimming in Batesville next week if I wanted, this was my last day in The Land of Oz, I wanted to enjoy it to the max. I knew deep down that this was going to be a very special afternoon, being in the Outback for almost a month, I was unaware of the date, July 7<sup>th</sup>, as I found out later it would be a highlight in my search for truth.

Besides that , everyone knows that all the rivers in Australia are filled with crocodiles and after swimming in those uranium infested waters I would probably glow like a porch light all night.

With that, nine of us boarded the bus for a bumpy dusty 40 miles of dirt road that lay ahead. Sitting near the back of the bus I had plenty of time to contemplate what lay ahead and what it would all mean to me. As we bounced along the dusty road occasionally crossing crocodile infested creeks and rivers it seemed as though I was going back in time, to a time long forgotten, a time remembered only in the [Aboriginal Dreamtime](#). I was a little awed at what was going on around me, I could sense and see the other people on the bus, but it was as though I wasn't really a part of their reality and they perhaps weren't part of mine.

As the dust from the road filtered into the bus and a red layer settled on everyone and everything. At times when passing another vehicle, yes there

were others out here; it became so dusty in the bus that we could barely see the driver. At these times it seemed as though we were passing into another dimension.

It was at this time that I felt as if I was actually alone with no one else sharing my experience. I could actually feeling my body becoming lighter and lighter, at the same time becoming less aware of the surroundings around me, while at the same time becoming aware of the sacred lands we were passing through, the warning not to enter without permission of the tribal elders.

My thoughts were interrupted by a sudden jerk and a screeching of brakes, the bus was coming to a stop; we had reached our destination, Ubirr Rock, the home of [Lightning Man](#), a very powerful figure from the Aboriginal Dreamtime.

Namarrgon is a fascinating, lanky, horseshoe-shaped character painted on the rock. His colors are fairly simple; he was probably painted with some sort of makeshift paintbrush, possibly a crushed stick dipped in some iron-based paint most likely made from the crushed ochre rock. He is mostly white with the exception of some reds on the right side of his thunder. We could not tell, however, if the red coloration was rock bleed or intentional coloring. This piece of rock art was painted by Nayombolmi (Barramundi Charlie).

### **LIGHTNING DREAMING:**

Namarrgon, commonly known as the "lightning man," is responsible for the violent electrical storms which occur on the Arnhem plateau. According to Aboriginal Dreamtime explanation of this work, Namarrgon and his family came from the sea and traveled Australia for many years. He uses the stone axes that are mounted on his head, [elbows and knees](#) to split the dark clouds and strike the ground, creating lightning and thunder. In addition to his axes, he also has a band wrapped around his body. This band belongs to thunder and works side by side with the axes to shake the earth and the heaven

### **NAMARRGON'S FAMILY:**

Barrinj, his wife, is also mother to the grasshoppers.

His children are the bright orange and blue grasshoppers, *Petasida Ephihipigera*. They come out early in the storm or wet season to look for their father.

### **DREAMTIME:**

[The Dreamtime](#)

Is the period of creation in Aboriginal culture. It is the beginning of

knowledge and it is when the laws which guide Aboriginal life today were created. The natural elements, the landscape, the plants, and the animals were also created by the first ancestors. It is the basis of Aboriginal religion and culture.

### ***Dreaming***

is the term used for an Aboriginal group's beliefs. Different groups have different animals that figure prominently in the stories and serve to explain their beliefs. One area of land might have "Long Necked Turtle Dreaming" while another section belongs to "Caterpillar Dreaming." The area around Nourlangie Rock is "Lightning Dreaming."

Mabuyu is located at Ubirr Rock. A trail winds up, around, and through giant boulders that are decorated with [Aboriginal rock art](#). Some of the paintings at Ubirr are believed to have been painted by the first people of the Dreamtime or creation era and the Mimis, Others, such as Mabuyu, are more recent. The red spindly figure juggles his possessions: spears, a fan, and a dilly bag. Next to him are the Long Necked Turtles, the Dreamtime symbol of the local Aboriginal people.

### **THE STORY:**

According to local lore, Mabuyu was a fisherman. One day, he caught a lot of fish, but some other Aborigines cut his line and stole the fish from Mabuyu. Mabuyu found out who the thieves were and went to their cave. He rolled a rock in front of the opening, trapping them in the cave. The men who stole the fish and their wives died because they could not escape from the cave. This story is used in Aboriginal lore to demonstrate morality and the consequences of stealing

### **SYMBOLS:**

spear in his right hand

dillybag for collecting food (over right shoulder)

Two barbed spears in his left hand.

goosewing fan for fanning a fire (in left hand).

pubic tassel signifies that he is a male.

### **MIMI PAINTINGS IN AREA:**

A Mimi painting is above Mabuyu. Mimis are shy spirits who live in caves and paint pictures where no Aborigine could reach. They pull the rocks down to paint on them and then lift them back up when they are finished. The Mimis were the ones who taught the other Aborigines how to paint, and even though they no longer exist as a people, they remain as spirits

As the bus came to a stop, I anxiously made my way to Ubirr Rock, completely oblivious to my surroundings. In my reality no one else existed, only me and the sacred land. I began walking down a trail that was so familiar to me, even though in this life I had never been to this world. I stopped for a moment to view the rock art, the most ancient in Australia, believed to be at least 20,000 years old.

As I walk up the trail leading to Nourlangie Rock, an enormous boulder rising from the dry earth becomes visible. Our first lesson of the day will come from this rock we see before us. To those uneducated in Aboriginal culture, the rock does not appear to be anything particularly special, however, its importance in Aboriginal culture, from the perspective of the Aboriginals, the rock is not just any ordinary rock, and rather it is a sacred site depicting their history and culture. The rock, named Dove Rock, or Feather Rock, represents the story of a man named Namanjolg

### **THE STORY:**

The story of Namanjolg is one of incest. It is said that Namanjolg and his sister had sex and later eloped. Ashamed of what they did, Namanjolg's sister told their family. Upon hearing of their sin, Namanjolg's family sought him out to punish him. When they found him, he was on top of what is now known as Feather Rock, dancing around a fire. A member of his family then pushed him into the fire. Namanjolg, covered in ash, dove into a nearby billabong and became a crocodile. Namanjolg's sister took a feather from his headdress and placed it at the site to remind others of the Aboriginal laws regarding incest which she had broken with her brother. Namanjolg's sister later becomes [the Rainbow Serpent](#), Ngalyod, the subject of many Aboriginal stories from the Dreaming lore. That rock now contains her eternal spirit which is why the native aborigines come here to tune into these sacred powers.

### **COMMUNICATION:**

As with many other [Aboriginal stories or rock](#) art sites, the site of Feather Rock serves to educate and remind people of Aboriginal laws:

Namanjolg teaches that incest is wrong

The Corroborree teaches the importance of ceremonial law

Mabuya teaches not to steal

Namanjolg is a perfect example of how Aboriginal people use rock art to inform and instruct. When laws are broken, there are always consequences. The Aboriginal people never developed a written language and spoken languages between different Aboriginal clans vary greatly. They see the rock art as the most effective and universal form of communication between groups. It is also the most effective way to instruct successive generations on their law, culture, and history.

At this point I left the main trail and began walking around the back of the rock and began climbing the 100 ft. vertical wall, at the time carrying 40 lbs. of camera gear on my back. As I began my ascent my reality began to change, I was no longer as American photographer visiting Australia, I was transformed into a native carefully climbing a vertical wall, placing each hand and foot in a strategic place, never pausing, but slowly climbing upward as I had done many times before. Always finding a tree, root or rock ledge enabling me to continue my climb, never pausing but slowly climbing upward in my search for truth.

Reaching the top of this sacred Shrine in the middle of some of the most isolated land in the world I began to feel overwhelming love and peace and a sense of being home, I had returned to The Land of Oz.

I felt my consciousness leave my body and rise high above the earth, looking down I could sense two realities, I had a sense of being high above the earth and looking down upon my lifeless body lying on the rocky cliff, I could observe a bird walking on my right arm, at the same time I was the lifeless body on the cliff, feeling and sensing that same bird walking across my arm.

As I lay on this sacred monument my mind began to pass through the veil of time, into a place from whence all things are seen, back in time, back to a previous millennium, back to the birth of Australia. .

As the land rose from the sea, the mountains began to form high above the plains; the Rainbow Serpent began to transform the land into a new world called Australius. I suddenly re-entered my body and came back to the present reality, slightly dazed about what had just taken place.

Upon my return to the bus, Mark, our Aborigine driver informed me that I had been on sacred ground, where no one is allowed without permission. There is a \$5000 fine for that. He then looked at me, winked and said” But you had permission!”