

My life has been rich with adventure. It was this adventurous spirit that brought me to Australia at forty-seven. The change of surroundings could not have been more different; from a bustling city in the Philippines to Alice Springs, stopping only in Darwin. My two young sons and I had a vision of somewhere like Sydney. Imagine our shock when we landed in Darwin. The one thing that stood out in our minds however was how beautiful everyone was.

Our next flight was to take us to Alice Springs. The plane looked so small. Looking at each other we wondered what would be greeting us at the other end. As we flew over the landscape we saw no high-rise buildings, crowded streets and sprawling buildings of concrete and brick. "Where are we going to live" was our only thought!

It seems so long ago when I look back on my early years. I come from a family of travellers, rich in an eclectic mix of heritage and culture. My great grandmother was deemed an 'alien' – she had travelled to an island off the mainland. Spanish/Dutch and Indonesian heritage she had married my Spanish/Mexican great grandfather, a journalist, and travelled to this new land. Life was at times fraught with danger and the constant worry of deportation. My grandmother, the youngest child, became the eighth wife of the governor. He had travelled from the mainland and secured her hand in marriage. She was to have seven children, my mother one of them.

She was to play a big influence on my life. A sharp shooter, feisty, a leader within the community she was a strong and determined woman. The image I have in my head is of a woman who had a deep inner strength; I saw her as a protector and decision maker.

My father wanted me to receive a good education. This saw me attend a convent that took days to travel to. Here I stayed for the year, the youngest there. It wouldn't be until the end of the year that I would be picked up by my parents to make the long and arduous journey home by road and small boat. Sardines are something I find hard to eat now. It brings home the feelings of seasickness on the boat and the staple diet of sardines we had to endure.

A move to the mainland saw my education continue. Stories I have gathered after schooling have included many exploits, one being singing for troops during the war. Terrifying yet inspiring. I went on to work in different fields; Commodities Future trading as a manager, the Foreign Exchange and various other government jobs. The situation in the Philippines was difficult; political unrest and conflict with opposing factions. It was the catalyst for a move from one area to another. By this time I was married with five children. I was to become a widow raising children on my own whilst working.

This was to change when I met a Filipino man who was visiting family – he had travelled from Australia. I have been married now for thirteen years. My story goes back to landing in Alice Springs; a new adventure in a foreign land. I see myself as being blessed. It has provided a safe environment and many opportunities for my family. My career changed. I originally worked in disability as a manager and now as a Life Skills coordinator. I have and continue to love working in this field, to support and assist others develop new skills and live fulfilling lives. Although far from family back home I have become part of Alice's wonderful multicultural community. There are still many things I want to accomplish – life does not finish as you get older but rather makes you more determined to fill it with more.