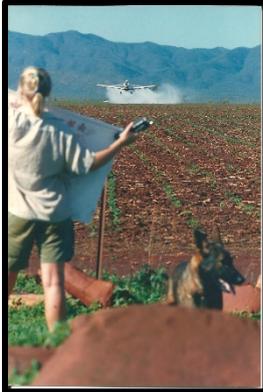


Lakeland Downs (Part 2) (David & Kathy Jensen)

During holidays, the girls would come north from Brisbane. The plane did all the spraying and the girls were talked into marking. Our dog 'Shadrach' was always nearby. He would stay with Kirsten and as the plane would come he would race home. Once the plane had gone by he would race back to Kirsten.



During one dry season an old male Kangaroo came and lived under our tank. We watered the lawn and it was the only green grass for miles. He would feed on the grass and watch 'Shadrach' through the screen door. When the wet season came the big old male just drifted off. We also had "Moses" whom we found in the grass. 'Moses' went by bus to a refuge in Mareeba.



Our neighbour "Bill" spoke very slowly and he would come over during the dry times and say: "Dave I have a cow bogged in one of my dams. Could help me, please?" As Bill owned a 100 square miles, it was a day long rescue. We would arrive at a dam with the cow stuck in the smelly water. As Bill could not swim I would try to get the cow moving. The tractor with the hoist would reverse down and I would place bags under stomach in the water so we could lift her on to the 4wheel drive.



The process was reversed when we got home to the shed.

In 1988 when my mother was 75, she decided to come to keep me company in the truck. We stopped about 8pm in Rocky and Mum crawled up behind me and I continued driving. We stopped at a service station in Townsville and then had to buy buns as we were visiting Mum's sister Ance. A bakery was open in shopping centre, so in we went with tractor on the semi-trailer. The car park was not the best for turning around and I glanced in the mirror and saw the "NO ENTRY" sign disappearing under the trailer wheels.



Snippets from Kathy

One day out of the blue, a call came for help to find a little boy lost in the Rossville area, south of Cooktown. Rossville was an interesting enclave of people who were running away from everything, and earning questionable income in addition to receiving social security support. Everyone had a nickname. One man was known as “Detour” because he commandeered a detour sign from the Council road works, and put it near his boundary, so that travellers would be diverted from his cannabis crop, or maybe it was carrots....

All able-bodied men were asked to go and help with the search. It was approximately 100kms from Lakeland. David and our near neighbour, Graham, jumped in the Toyota with some bottles of water and took off, returning late that night absolutely starving, as no provision had been made for food. They wouldn't wait for me to make sandwiches. Next morning, I made some more sandwiches with beautiful corned meat, on cob loaf, thinking they were jolly lucky to have them, and how wonderful they would taste. Additionally, as we were so far from shops, to have cob loaf AND corned beef at the same time was something to shout about, and I don't think anyone really cared. After their day of searching, the men returned – with the sandwiches still wrapped, because the Salvos arrived and provided everything, and the sandwiches had been in the Toyota all day in the sun. I was most upset, to say the least, and because I couldn't bear to waste anything, I ate them myself – and was quite ill for the next few days. No sympathy from the household.

The little boy lost was surrounded by mystery, and received nationwide media coverage, with everyone having their sixpence worth, and native trackers brought in from Laura, further north of Lakeland on the main road to Weipa. Apparently, the trackers decided that the little boy was not lost at all, and was being brought home every night. This wasn't received very well officially, and so the search sort of ended.

The going was rather tough for amateur bushwalkers more used to flat peanut paddocks, and one female searcher couldn't keep up in the rough terrain. All David remembers is hearing her shouting from the distance, “Wait up youse arseholes!” Looking after her took more time than searching for the little boy.

Our men returned to Lakeland, away from the tropical jungle and gullies of Rossville, feeling as though they had been “taken for a ride” in more ways than one.

Coffee anyone?

Our neighbour Bill called around one day to borrow some coffee (International Roast was the choice of the time.) I had one of those regular sized coffee tins – about 6” high, which lasted us ages. Bill explained that they drank a fair bit, and that would only last them a day. However, they were glad to receive it. Laura explained later that she had cut down from 45 cups to 14 a day, and thought she was feeling better. Their lives revolved around their cattle, and so, at times, there were plenty of opportunities to have another cup.

Sewing up a storm

Our neighbours, Graham and Colena, had twin daughters, Shayne and Renae, in primary school at Lakeland State School. They were due to go to a school camp with other Cape children, and one of the activities listed was square dancing. Colena, knowing I had a bedroom full of fabric and a sewing machine, asked me to make the girls skirts for the square dancing. The girls, at the time, were quite overweight. Miracle one – I found some blue check gingham in half inch squares, and some more in quarter inch squares, enough for the two skirts. One was made with the larger squares, trimmed with a ruffle of the smaller square fabric cut on the cross. The other was done in the alternative pattern. Quite brilliant I thought. Sewing started without urgency about three days before the girls were due to leave for camp. Then, out of the blue, I was asked to work at the Lakeland store, and this took up precious time. While I was serving at the shop, a husband and wife travellers arrived – all the way from Canberra. David met them and invited them home – then told me. I had a bit of a meltdown, knowing I had these skirts to finish, and poor David got the rounds of the kitchen. He just said, "It will be alright. Don't stress." He copped it all the way back to the Eight Mile. Our new found friends arrived, and were delightful guests. As we talked, Linda noticed that I was sewing. I told her the story. She said, "Perhaps I can help. I sew for a boutique in Canberra."

Wow! What a lovely surprise. We organised an assembly line, Linda at the machine, myself feeding the fabric to her. The frills, cut on the diagonal, were miles long, because the skirts were probably, about women's size 18. Colena came over to tell me that they needed the skirts 24 hours earlier than she had said. Without Linda, I would never have had them finished. The Lord knew what I needed, and provided.

All this took place just after the little boy lost incident. Linda's husband explained that Linda had a special gift of insight, which they didn't advertise – but Linda said that the little boy was never lost. Interesting.

How do you cater when people arrive unannounced? Potatoes. Every which way, but mainly in their jackets. I was quite happy with the limited resources, but could do anything with potatoes. Our processor friend in Kingaroy offered to send anything via the trucks. I asked for a bag of potatoes. They arrived eventually, but had been placed in the tool box of the truck, and arrived very smelly, and very bruised, and very past their use by date. We got the bill for them, too, but didn't order potatoes again.

