

**Community history, Chinese,  
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**Pioneers**

**1. Eddie Quong (1925-2006)**

(From interview with Diana Giese, 1992, used in 1993 ABC Radio program *Top End Chinese (Wild country—but hope for the future and We had homes and we had stories)*; available from ABC Program Sales; email [progsales@your.abc.net.au](mailto:progsales@your.abc.net.au) or phone 1300 650 587; see also interview with Diana Giese ORAL TRC 3005, 1993, *Post-War Chinese Australians* project, National Library of Australia:)

‘Our forefathers came and saw wild country, but country with potential, that only people who were prepared to toil, live on the smell of an oily rag, battle for every mouthful, could see. And hope for the future, the chance of owning a little bit of property.’

*His grandfather came to Australia from southern China during the gold rushes. His father was born at Brocks Creek in the Northern Territory in 1900 and his mother at Yam Creek in the same year. The family ran a market garden on the outskirts of Darwin, were evacuated during World War II and were called back to Darwin as soon as the War ended to run the town’s bakery. He later worked in insurance and was involved in many community organisations.*

‘This is a new land, a new country; they’ve adopted this country; they wanted to make a better country of it. And it’s all ready for them to make. When my grandmother died at the age of 94 in Darwin Hospital here—she came out from China when she was I think a girl of about 15, 16—she’d never ever left the soil. She reared her family here. She got married, raised a family, reared children and had great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren. My mother was born here; she never left Australian shores. My father was born here in 1900, and my mother was born here in 1900. And from the stories that they told me, and what I’ve experienced myself: yes, it was very, very harsh. They came first of all as indentured labourers, and they had to work—well, you can imagine how they worked... gradually they did grow their rice. As you could realise, the Chinese in those days relied, their staple diet was rice in the... Pine Creek area. And they grew their own fruit and vegetables.’

(From interview with Diana Giese, 1991, quoted in her *Astronauts, Lost Souls and Dragons*, University of Queensland Press, 1997:)

**Eddie Quong:** Everybody has a hankering to find out where they came from. This [trip back to China] gave me the opportunity. It took me three or four weeks to understand my mother tongue. In the village, I met 30 people considered to be related to me. I was offered a house left to the last of my line in China, my grandfather. They said it was still my house; I'm the surviving clan. I called one of them, the head man, over and said: 'I bequeath it to all the village, and that man there will distribute it.'

And then I went like a Bondi tram.