

Jimmy Little

Jimmy Little was born in 1937 on the Cummeragunja Mission on the New South Wales side of the Murray River near Barmah, Victoria. His mother was a Yorta Yorta woman from the Murray River area, and his father was a Yuin man from Wallaga Lake, near Bega on the south coast of New South Wales. They performed music and comedy shows in the surrounding towns, and Jimmy grew up in show business.

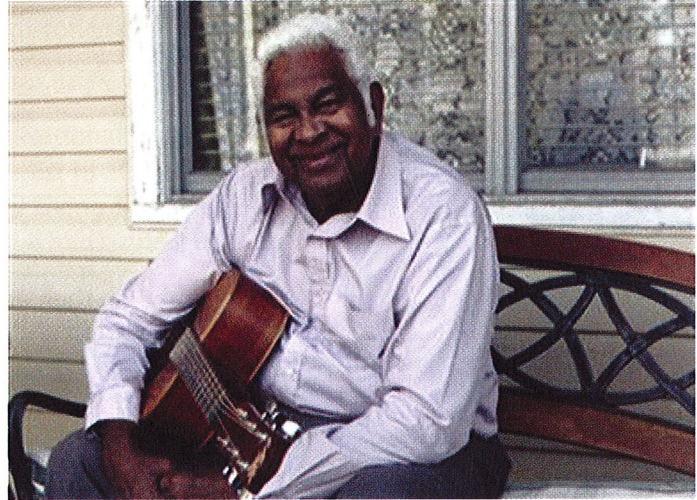
At the age of 13 he was given a guitar. By this stage the family had moved to Nowra, New South Wales. He began playing at local concerts, where his smooth singing voice made him a popular performer. When he was 16 he travelled to Sydney to perform on a radio programme. Two years later, in 1955, he moved permanently to Sydney and became a country and western artist. He quickly became popular, gaining nicknames such as 'the Honey Voice' and 'Gentleman Jim'. In 1956 he released his first single, 'Mysteries of Life'.

In 1958 Jimmy married singer Marjorie Peters. They had one daughter, called Frances Claire. He released a song called 'Frances Claire' when she was 18 months old.

Jimmy gradually became better known, although he had to work in a towel factory to earn enough money to support his family. He played at concerts and dances, and appeared on the television show *Bandstand*. In 1959 he had his first hit, a song called 'Danny Boy'. This was followed by more hit records, and some acting including a film called *Shadow of the Boomerang*.

His biggest hit was released in 1963. 'Royal Telephone' was the number one record in Sydney, and went to number three in Melbourne. He was named as the Australian Pop Star of the Year in 1964. When his musical career began to wane at the end of the 1970s, he trained as a teacher. He taught Aboriginal music students at the Eora Centre in Redfern, was an ambassador for literacy and numeracy for the NSW Department of Education and a lecturer at the University of Sydney's Koori Centre. He was inducted into the ARIA Hall of Fame at the 1999 ARIA Music Awards. He remained interested in performing, and continued to release records through the 2000s.

He died in Dubbo, New South Wales, in 2012.



Singer and actor Jimmy Little was named as one of the original National Living Treasures in 1997. He remained on the list until his death in 2012.

The Cummeragunja Walk-off

In 1939, when Jimmy was 2 years old, the people living on the mission protested about the way the mission was being managed. They demanded improved living conditions, and to be allowed to come and go without having to ask permission from the mission managers.

Led by Jack Patten, about 200 people walked off the mission, moving to nearby towns. The Little family left soon after, moving to Jimmy's father's tribal home at Wallaga Lake. They later moved to Nowra.