



# DAWN SHAW

1931 –

## “The Tree Lady”

Dawn’s agility belies her 86 years. She hates to be ‘cooped up’ inside and nothing gives her greater pleasure than to stroll around her garden with visitors, talking about the native plants she has nurtured from seed, and the reptiles and birds that visit to drink from the many water dishes. She was brought up by her grandparents Fred and Florence Schottelius on Cold and Wet Station in the Coonalpyn district. They were great animal lovers and her grandfather kept a large vegetable garden and also grew flowers.

She had come to the Riverland as a young woman with her girlfriend to work in the Berri Hotel and met her future husband Lesley Anthony Shaw (“Mick”) at the Cobdogla dance. They were married in 1953 and lived with Mick’s parents on their farm at Overland Corner for a short while before buying the disused run-down Overland Corner Police Station.

The following is a Zonta nomination for Dawn Shaw written by fellow Overland Corner resident Robert Cornwell;

“The “Overlanders” have always been recognised for their toughness and determination in overcoming the hazards associated with the trail through Overland Corner. Tales abound of the “Stony Pinch Track”, bushrangers, extreme temperatures, and just plain old gut wrenching toil, as they herded their precious animals towards their destination in Adelaide.

So, it is not inappropriate that one of the current citizens of Overland Corner, Dawn Shaw, be recognised for her generous contributions to the environment, her passion for the River Murray, and the determination and grit with which she goes about her personal mission in life.

Dawn, as a new bride, settled in Overland Corner in the 1950’s, and moved into the old Police Station homestead, built in the 1800’s, in an era when the river was watched for other reasons. Dawn was astounded at the bareness around her new home, and immediately started planting trees. Thus began the passion that now sees her recognised as “The Tree Lady” of Overland Corner.

Dead gum trees on the floodplain at Overland Corner are silent indicators of the influence of white settlement, and are reminders of the need for action, lest all the trees suffer the same fate. Dawn has always been a walker, on the floodplain, beside the silent river, and along the cliffs bordering the valley. It was during these walks that she decided on her plan to improve the health of the Murray – she would gather seed, propagate trees, and plant them out, on the floodplain and surrounds, but also out on the dry country, which has been cleared considerably since white settlement. She knows that trees prevent a rising water table, and increased salinity.

Thousands of trees grown from local seed are now evident around Overland Corner, and, just like Dawn’s reputation, are spreading further afield. Dawn galvanises the local population into tree planting exercises, and the slopes and plains at Overland Corner are bristling with trees of varying maturity. An indication of the respect that the locals have for her is evident at “Dawn’s Hill”, which has a bench dedicated to her efforts, overlooking her beloved River Murray, and from which, on her walks, she can rest and view the trees she has seen evolve from tiny seed to a flourishing, living thing.

The Shaw family, who continue to farm the land away from the Murray, are mindful of the need to keep land aside for the future. They have committed substantial acreage to Heritage, not to be farmed, where the trees, as well as the other native flora and fauna, can flourish, away from the plough. Dawn continues to plant trees in windbreaks along the paddocks, and loves taking anyone who can spare the time, to the Heritage block, to collect seed, explain the bush and to just plain enjoy the outing.

In today’s climate of concern about drought, water conservation and the future of the River Murray, unsung heroines such as Dawn continue to work away, knowing that her contribution will be a tangible and visible legacy for future generations.”



1. Dawn Shaw (nee Schottelius).
2. Dawn holding a young native plant grown from seed.
3. Dawn’s seat on “Dawn’s Hill” Overland Corner – which she re-vegetated.
4. Overland Corner high water in 2016 – this view from Dawn’s front garden.

