INTERVIEW WITH BEV MAUNSELL
21 June 2000

I = Interviewer R = Respondent

TAPE 1 – SIDE A

I **Camera tape 48, DAT tape 18, time code 0, Channels of History project, Trish FitzSimons on sound, Julie Hornsby on camera. It's 21 June 2000 and we're interviewing Bev Maunsell outside her house in Dixon Street, Jundah.**

So Bev, I'd like you to tell me where and when you were born and what your name was when you were born, your childhood name.

R Yes, well I was born in Pittsworth, a small town on the Downs, just out from Toowoomba, ummm August 1947, and ummm my parents were Vince and Flora Barr and my maiden name was Barr.

I I've come across somebody else Barr. Is there a Jean Barr?

R A Jean Barr in Birdsville. She was a Crombie.

I Yes, is she any relation?

R Yes, she married my brother. Yes, she's my sister-in-law.

I Do you find that interconnection unusual?

R I don't think so out here, Trish. No. Because ummm I remember when we first moved to the west ummm I was younger of course, but most people I felt were related and yet we weren't related to anybody but thirty-odd years down the track and, as you grow up and some of the family have married locally, and now that goes on where, you know, we do have members of our family who've married local people and so, yes, it is quite common.

I Because I found an incredible degree of interconnection out here.

R You would too, yes.

I It'd be a bad place to make an enemy I reckon.

R Exactly and sometimes you will actually hear somebody telling a newcomer – I was going to use the word 'warn' but it might be a little strong – but sort of, you know, saying to

them, ‘Well, she’s his niece’ or ‘He may be her sister-in-law’ or whatever else, you know. You’ll hear people explaining relationships.

I With Barr, that interconnection between black and white, is that quite common in your experience out here?

R Well probably. I don’t know whether common. I mean it’s, well yes, ummm has been over the years. I mean, I’m not looking at just recently. You’re not asking about recently but over a period of thirty or forty years, yes.

I So just going back, it was just the Barr that …

R Yes that triggered, yes.

I … that triggered that. Going back into your childhood, then, Bev, what was your parents’ job in life and did you come to the Channel Country with your parents? I guess I’d like you to just sketch your life up until the time that you came to the Channel Country.

R My first years were spent on a farm ummm a little farm at a place called Captain’s Mountain just outside Millmerran. My mother virtually ran that farm on her own. My father and his twin brother had a dam-sinking plant so they’d go off, you know, to various places working the plant. My Mum actually had four children under age three. She had twins and then myself ummm thirteen months later and then another daughter seventeen months later, so she had four children under three, and ten years after that she actually had twin boys, so my father and all of his sons were twins. But, yes, she ran that farm on her own. I can remember that she used to … I can’t remember her doing it, but telling we children how she used to milk the cows and put the cream can, you know, up on the neck of the horse and ride down to the front gate and unload those onto the ramp even while she was expecting that younger daughter. So then we moved on to another property and we spent a few years there before moving on to yet another property, so most of my life was spent on stations.

I What would cause the movements, do you know? Why would your family move?

R I think that perhaps then it was a settling thing, you know, I don’t know … in those days parents didn’t speak in front of their children about their business ummm whether it be their financial position or ummm they weren’t as forthcoming as they are now, I don’t think. So I don’t really know. My father had a twin brother who was in partnership with

him and they just purchased various properties so, you know, we did move quite a bit in the early years, from place to place. And then we went to a property called Cooroora. We settled there for a long time. That's where I first did correspondence school, which is now distance education. It was primary correspondence with Primary Correspondence School in Brisbane but, you know, there was no School of the Air. We did have a governess but we didn't have ummm School of the Air or anything like that. When I was in Year 2 we actually rode ponies to school, to the local school up the road. We rode the horses and they sort of had the paddock there to put the ponies in and that was just a part of your school day, to unsaddle your horse and let it go and then you know, when you finished school, you resaddled it and rode home. Progress to bikes was fairly important.

I Where was Cooroora?

R Cooroora was ummm Meandarra, Meandarra area, which is still down on the Downs, around the Dalby-Tara area. My parents were involved in the community there for years and very active workers in that community.

I So what, then, brought you out here?

R When they were building the bitumen road between Quilpie and Windorah, my father brought a couple of trucks out to Thiess Bros and put them on that job there. Ummm he probably – I'm guessing here because I was at Concordia then, going to boarding school at the time – I think it was probably out here 18 months or so before he bought the home in Windorah and the garage in Windorah and ummm and we moved to Windorah. So, yeah.

I So how old were you then?

R I was 15 when I left Concordia. I didn't actually stay in Windorah at the time. I went back to Meandarra and I worked in a hardware type store there ummm for 12 months, during which I made my debut and things like that, and then I came back to Windorah and worked on the exchange there, telephone exchange. I worked on various properties west of Windorah and I met Graham there, of course, and …

I Was there a sense that, at the age of 15, if your parents had moved and were running Windorah Service Station but you stayed on the Downs, were you considered an adult at 15?

R No, no, not at all because had I not gone down there to work for friends of my parents, I would not have been allowed to go at all. You know, Mum and Dad were very strict and ummm in that sense, and I didn't know Windorah. I didn't know the Quilpie area. I didn't really know the country that my parents had moved to, which was quite strange, a very lonely and disappointing feeling while I was at Concordia, I think, not to know exactly … I knew where they were but I wasn't familiar with ummm with the area that they'd moved to, so I guess there was a sense of loss there and ummm I was focussed on going back to Meandarra where I sort of knew everybody and we had our friends and it was actually my parents' friends that owned this store there, and I went down and I actually stayed with friends of my parents and I worked for friends of my parents. And had that not been the case, no, I would have ummm not been able to do that.

I So tell me your first view of Windorah, then. 1962 you came to Windorah?

R Mmmm.

I So tell me what you saw. Paint a picture.

R It was negative but it's certainly changed since then. Ummm probably unfortunately, we arrived to the house that my father had bought at night time. Ummm it hadn't been inhabited for a long, long time and when they did have somebody in it, it was just some old gentleman who, you know, hadn't sort of looked after it and there was no furniture or anything in it. There was lots of dirt and lots of cobwebs. In those days they had many, many ummm really big sand storms, or they call them dust storms, but ummm so I mean it was absolutely filthy. There was no electricity, which I know that, you know, I soon learned that that was common and you do become quite comfortable with that. Having said that, I know that you can be uncomfortable with it too. Ummm yes, so I don't know that it was ... I was amazed. I really thought that we had lived in the country. I believed we'd spent our whole life in the country and I soon realised that we hadn't. We were now living in the bush. And this was the bush, yes. So ummm …

I So other than electricity, what were the things that made you think, 'Ahhh, this is the sticks'?

R Ummm perhaps it was the difference, because I had lived on properties and considered that I lived in the bush but ummm the dust storms amazed me probably most of all, the heat, ummm things that now are not important, I mean, but then at that age and having just

moved to Windorah. Ummm probably lack of services. Being so far from Quilpie when, especially when most of that road was dirt. They were just sealing it, you know, I think the bitumen was 68 miles this side of Quilpie on the western side at the time and ummm a lot of the road that wasn't sealed was bulldust so you were looking at many hours. We had conventional cars then, too, I mean we didn't have four-wheel-drives and the vehicles that we have today ummm to travel those roads either. So, perhaps isolation.

I So bogging? Was bogging a common thing?

R It was. You could step from a vehicle and step into bulldust, you know, so deep. Ummm fortunately I was a teenager and saw the humorous side of a lot of those things where I'm quite sure my parents didn't appreciate it quite as much since they mostly had the responsibility of getting us out of there. Ummm but, yeah, I ummm perhaps these things grow on you a little bit and you actually forget exactly what did ummm surprise me the most, but I think, you know, if I was to sum it up quickly, I'd say dust storms and the isolation, the heat, ummm yeah. A lot of the homes then weren't gauzed, you know, they didn't have fly screens, so ummm the Sunday roast dinner was quite a battle and you'd tend to go on holidays and keep doing this, you know, so yeah …

I Describe your first dust storm. What happened?

R I remember distinctly one of the younger brothers, Trevor, one of the twins running through that because he was actually up the street when it hit. But, of course, you can see them coming but we weren't … or I wasn't aware and I'm quite sure they weren't, being you know so many years younger than I, of exactly how that sand could sting their legs and ummm that it would become so forceful, so thick. I can remember sweeping it from the lino and my mother doing so and everyone helping and, you know, you'd have quite a lot of sand in the dustpan and you used to laugh and so you'd just sweep it out in bucketfuls, you know. And it would be in waves on the vinyl and going inside the houses and up against the skirting boards around the bottom of the floor. It's quite hard to believe today that that, yeah, older homes too, Trish.

I I read a description of a dust storm in the thirties, with people holding their sandwiches under the table.

R Exactly. That was something I'd forgotten about because you could feel the grit on your teeth and you could feel, you would ummm feel the grit in food. Yes, it seemed to just get into everything.

I And how often would this happen?

R That, you probably couldn't put an average on that because you could get perhaps two in one day and then you may not get another one for days, or a couple of weeks or whatever, but they happened quite frequently, yes, and it wasn't uncommon to clean up from one … and this is without vacuum cleaners and things like that, either. This is virtually with brooms and dustpans and my mother still scrubbed everything on her hands and knees. She wouldn't use a mop so, I mean, it was quite a task for her. But ummm I can remember times when we would no sooner finish cleaning up from one when we would be hit with another, or you'd spend all day cleaning house and it would blow all night and you'd wake up to that same mess in the morning. And the women would start again, and it was an accepted … there would be the odd moan and groan but it was still accepted. It was an accepted part of living there.

I What did the dust storms sound like?

R My description would be simply wind. Ummm we were travelling across – you would have crossed this area – the Morney Plain once, when our children were small and we had a foreigner with us. Ummm I can't remember from which country he came but we saw the dust storm coming across the plain and it was rolling. It was a great mass of rolling ummm across the plain and actually it was magnificent, and we weren't disturbed by that because, you know, we were quite used to them but when I looked in the back seat and saw this fellow that was getting a lift with us, he was actually leaning forward, you know, over the seat, and he was terrified and ummm he actually thought that there was a vacuum and we had a truck in front of us that was driving into this great roll of dust and he was expecting … he said to us later that he was expecting that truck to be picked up and to start flipping over. Ummm so he likened it to a tornado or whatever, but ummm …

I Tell me about dust storms now, while we're talking dust storms. How common are they now?

R They're not. No, they're not, Trish, really. We get the odd one but if … I would say perhaps if we saw one once a year … we get a lot of dust, dust blowing in the wind.

Ummm there's a terrible lot of dust here because we get the dust blowing off the yards across the way here, the Barkly Shire Council yards, so you could drive up the street and see that my house was just covered in a cloud of dust, and that's quite common. It's a little disheartening too, even though we now have vacuum cleaners, but …

I So what's changed, do you reckon? Why are there not dust storms any more? What do the locals think about that?

R I have asked that question of several older people ummm in the Windorah area and opinions vary but the most common one, or the one that seems to be ummm acceptable, is the rabbits. You know, you'll notice the … I'm not saying with the … windbreaks. Ummm vegetation on the sand hills, and that's not quite an answer to your question, sorry, but ummm you know the sand hills that you saw on your way in, they were all exposed, whereas now most of them, or a lot of them, have much vegetation covering them. They say that it was possibly the rabbits, you know, and now that the rabbits have … the rabbits apparently pull the grass, etc. from the roots and ummm they say with the control of the rabbits that the vegetation has now been able to get a bigger go on or whatever, but … so perhaps with that and ummm trees and things like that. I don't really know why that is thicker but it certainly must have an effect on the control of the dust storms. Well it does because …

I Ann Kidd thought it might also be related to the move from sheep to cows, because sheep didn't …

R Oh, right, yes.

I It's very interesting.

R Yes, that's interesting. It is, too. Yes, Trish.

I Had your Mum wanted to come to Windorah or has this been one of your Dad's schemes?

R It would have been Dad's scheme, yes. Mum was versatile. Mum was an extremely hardworking woman, very much a lady, and I admired her so much. She worked very hard, as most women did in those days, but she reared six children, having had two sets of twins and ummm she, as I said before, she scrubbed floors on her hands and knees. You know, mops weren't clean. That was Mum's opinion. She made all of our clothes on a treadle sewing machine. I remember her excitement when my father bought her a 32-volt

sewing machine on a farm that we lived on. She baked everything we ate ummm as in bread. She made our own butter, or we sort of, I was designated that job in Year 2 I think, but ummm you know, so I mean Mum was a woman who was an extremely hard worker and ummm I think that she would have gone wherever my father decided that we might move or wherever they decided that we might move to, and she fitted in to Windorah very easily. She didn't complain. I mean, Dad went about building, or installing a 32-volt electricity plant and ummm fixing up the place and making it as liveable as possible, I suppose, with the isolation and everything then, you know, and access to materials and things. But I often thought about her because I thought about what she'd left behind ummm and what she'd sort of moved to, and yet she did that with grace and humour and whatever it took to .... yeah.

I Tell me about working on the telephone exchange. Where was the exchange in Windorah? Paint a picture for me. You're 15, 16?

R Yes, and the exchange was within the Post Office itself. Ummm there was a much bigger building there at the time. It actually burnt down in a fire several years ago. There was just a small switchboard, you know, with the little shutters that dropped down to expose the number that was calling in and ummm I suppose we'll always remember the long short longs and the long and two shorts and the rings that ummm each station or whatever had. Ummm I enjoyed the exchange. I think the exchange was a lifeline. It certainly was then. At night time, I remember, we plugged, we would plug somebody from town into each property and I think the police station … I'm not too sure if we plugged the police station through to the Longreach Exchange but there was certainly somebody there from town that was plugged through to Longreach Exchange so that we had … probably people had contact at night if they had an emergency and needed to phone through, and there was also a contact to Longreach. But most young girls from Windorah during that era worked on the telephone exchange at some time, I'm sure, yes. Cheryl did as well, and for many years. But of course it's been replaced with STD and UHF radios are much more common and communication's improved.

I Would you run the galah session or did that come with radio and …?

R That wasn't actually a part of the Post Office ummm from property to property. I took part in the galah sessions while at Currawilla ummm you know it takes ten minutes to call around and each lady on each property would speak to each other, or gentleman, or

whichever, and just you know make sure that everything's fine and everybody's okay. Ummm I can't imagine their excitement when the telephones were connected to those properties. I remember the first time I pulled up at Betoota and saw a Telstra phone box in front of Betoota Hotel. I honestly did not believe that I would see the day. It was a wonderful feeling.

I So some people are nostalgic about the galah sessions. Do you think that's crazy or was there a way in which it was linking everybody together?

R I think you can afford to be, once you have a telephone installed ummm but no, during the years when that was your communication, that was the way that you checked on everybody. You knew, even if you had an accident or … oh, would have called the Flying Doctor base, but if there was somebody called through that needed the next door property to know that they were going to be there in X amount of time, or that they'd left the property that we were on, at least you know that if you can't call anybody that they will be on that session. I remember my husband and I had car trouble once out near Betoota and ummm German tourists came through. They were non-English speaking tourists and ummm I wrote them a note to give to Simon at Betoota and then crossed everything we owned I think, and they did that, and you knew well then that by five o'clock that afternoon that he would be on that session and word would be passed to the property that we were broken down on, so I mean, you put your confidence in that and that was what you had to depend on.

I Tell me about … was your job as a lady's help the next job? You told me once on the phone. What was your next job after being a telephone operator?

R I did go to ahhh … when I left the exchange, I'm just trying to remember in which order I did this. I don't want to get it wrong. Ummm I worked …

I This is camera tape 49, DAT tape 18. The DAT's now on 2752. This is the second camera tape of an interview with Bev Maunsell outside her house in Jundah, and it's 21 June 2000.

What was your next job after the telephone exchange?

R I went to a property called South Galway. Once again, that was west of Windorah. Ummm there were a young couple there, Rod and Judy Barnes, and she was to go away

and have a baby so I went out to stay there for the six weeks that she had hoped to be away and ummm I was actually there for three months. I learnt a lot. I was very young. Ummm by the time I left there three months later I was driving quite well. I would drive from South Galway to Windorah. Talking about the dust storms before, the road that we would take, and I was quite often on my own, was a little track ummm and it would quite often be so windswept that there were times when you could hardly, you know, pick your way. You'd have to know the direction in which you were heading and once I actually had to climb a windmill and look for the homestead. I knew that I was close to the homestead and ummm I just honestly didn't know which way to go and, as I said, I was young. I should have known but I drove over … I was in a little jeep and I drove over to the windmill and climbed the windmill to … oh, please let me be able to see the homestead, and I could, so that was following, you know, a dust storm I presume, and lots of wind and stuff, and sort of all windswept around that area, and I just couldn't see which way to go.

I What was the name of your job?

R Ummm if it was to have a name, it would probably be housemaid and yet I probably didn't ummm because Judy's husband Rod, as far as, if I can recollect properly, from what I just heard, once again did pretty much ummm followed my parents' direction, and he had actually asked my father if he knew of anybody that could go out there and sort of be there while Judy was away and, of course, Dad nominated me very quickly. So I was cooking. Ummm I was cleaning the house, manning the wireless, ummm you know driving off to wherever, if anybody needed picked up, or out to the aerodrome with the plant. The mail plane used to land there then, actually, a DC-3, TAA. Ummm just sort of probably doing the jobs that Judy did ummm you know, just seven days a week. But I learnt to kill there. I learnt to kill a beast and … not actually kill the beast but to cut the meat up and things like that that I was very grateful for later on.

I Did you feel vulnerable, being a 16, 17-year-old girl out on a station, with I guess mostly men?

R No. Actually ummm it was during the quiet time, during the Christmas/New Year period and ummm there was an aged cowboy there, a dear old gentleman. He's since passed away. And I helped him do a lot of things that he wasn't always physically able to do, and that's where I learnt a lot, so I was very appreciative of that. I heard lots of stories too from him.

I Like what? Tell me a story he told you.

R Ummm well, I probably wouldn't recollect a specific one right now but as in mustering camp stories and working with stock and ummm I guess his old ringing days. Yes, Trish, so he was an interesting old fellow and had, was an old bachelor. He'd never married. He just worked with cattle and horses for the duration of his life. Ummm yeah. One wonders, I suppose, whether they were even all true, but yeah he was a very interesting old fellow and he was called the cowboy.

I Would he be the …?

R Yeah he did the garden. He sort of emptied ummm well he took the scraps away from the kitchen and fed the animals and things like that, looked after the chooks, collected the eggs ummm looked after the meat once the beast was killed and ummm general rouseabout, I guess. So that was his life. That's what I meant when I said he'd sort of had a lot of interesting stories to tell because that was his life.

I You told me, I think, when we talked on the phone that you were called lady's help and I know …

R Yes.

I … that on some of the stations early in the century the managers' wives were allowed to have a lady's help, a woman there so that they wouldn't be the only woman when the men were around.

R Yes, yes, Trish, that's true too. That was for company more than anything and ummm they'd do light household duties. When I first … I'd forgotten that because when I first came out here a lot of the properties had … I worked at for three months and they had a bookkeeper, a housemaid, a cook, a gardener ummm several outstations where there were married couples at each outstation, so the number of people on a property could be ummm twenty, perhaps more on some of these properties, many buildings, and that's gone.

I Why has that gone and what impact do you think that going has had on women's lives?

R I think that it's had an impact on the community more so than just women's lives. It probably may not relate to that. Ummm loss of numbers, of course. There will always, I

guess, now be more males and young men in the districts than women because there were jobs there that were created for women and young girls. But loneliness could be an impact that it would have on women because, you know, if you had a housemaid and a cook – not that they mixed a lot, mind you, but at the same time you did have other women's company on the property and women around the same age, too, you know. If you had young couples on the outstations, and they may have children, small children, so the children had company. You know, they had other little children to play with and they all came into the station, which you could travel to the properties next door. They played a lot of tennis in those days and the properties had tennis courts so there'd be quite a crowd ummm at the tennis afternoons.

I And what caused that to end, do you reckon? Why do the stations employ fewer people now?

R Ummm I would be guessing. I don't know whether I could answer that correctly. If I said that it would be perhaps finance ummm but companies have bought a lot of the privately owned properties, or some of the privately owned properties. They have moved homes off them. Ummm you probably notice in Windorah there are quite a few homes there that were moved to Windorah from properties. Some of the smaller properties that they bought that were previously privately owned were used for outstations so ummm perhaps it is the bigger companies buying the smaller properties, or buying more properties and working their additional properties from the one station.

I When you started to work round these different properties, were there many Aboriginal people working on properties in the sixties?

R Yes. There wasn't, to me, there was no awareness of the difference between ummm how many white or how many Aboriginal stockmen may be working on a property. They were stockmen as a whole and if you refer to the fact that there may be eight ringers on a property, or any particular property, you wouldn't think as in how many Aboriginal or how many white and still don't. We weren't ever really aware of any ummm discrimination or racial … we all played tennis together. We went … everybody joined in at functions together. I know that many years ago ummm you know I hear stories of how Aboriginal people had to knock on a kitchen door on a property but I certainly didn't see any evidence of that when I moved into this country in the early sixties. And during my teenage years in Windorah, there were a lot of young Aboriginal men in and around the town and, I mean,

everybody played tennis together. They danced together. Everybody did everything together and people were never … this wasn't brought to our attention and ummm I think that it's probably sad that it has become an issue or that people have allowed it to become an issue.

I I think you're describing it very well, Bev. Part of this is to get a sense of how things have shifted and I know it's not always for the better but it's important to get across the sense of how things were then, how things are now. Did you come across Aboriginal women on the stations?

R No. I'd never thought about that actually but there weren't on … I didn't work on a lot of properties either. I mean , South Galway. I went out to for a little while ummm with Gladys Cross's mum. Ummm yes, but no. No, no Aboriginal women on those properties – during my time.

I So there were male stockmen but their families would be in the town or they were mostly single?

R Either that or single. Single, Trish, probably ummm because there wouldn't have been any reason for their wives not to have been on the property if the job ummm or the employment was for a married stockman. It wouldn't matter whether he was Croatian or Aboriginal so, I mean, yeah I'd say single.

I Had you grown up on the Darling Downs? You're describing in Windorah black and white mixing in easily. Had that been your experience on the Darling Downs or were there not many Aboriginal people at all on the Darling Downs?

R No, no, Trish, there weren't. There weren't any Aboriginal people in the area that we lived in at Meandarra. Ummm no, no. I don't remember ever ummm any families living in the district or children attending the school there either.

I So it was new to you, coming to Windorah?

R Yes. The first Aboriginal … the first people that I ever met were an Aboriginal family ummm a young couple, Dot and Johnny Gorrenge, and they are still amongst my closest friends today. I actually fell out of a tree there at a creek at Kiabra ummm whilst we were swimming and he was the only one brave enough to stay in the water and catch me as I fell, and quite a bit of blood and whatever there, and ummm we're very good friends today,

as we were from then and, I mean, I was thirteen and he and Dot were just a young couple waiting for their first born. So, yeah.

I Tell me about meeting your husband, Bev. How did that happen?

R I knew Graham. I didn't know him very well. He was extremely quiet, quite shy actually, and even though we both lived in Windorah which seems quite incredible because it was such a small town, but he was away a lot and ummm I knew him and yet I didn't know him really well. But there was a B&S ball at and my brother invited him to come along and I started to go with him from there, yeah, from that night.

I How old were you?

R Ummm I would have probably been sixteen point something. Sweet sixteen.

I Why was it that he wasn't around a lot? I want you to tell me what his job was and a bit about his life at that time.

R He worked for a gentleman called Percy McF who owned race horses and Graham was a jockey, so they spent many months away. They would go down as far as Oakey to races, ummm but they'd stay there for periods of time, I imagine to attend other race meetings – I'm not sure – and they'd sort of come back to Roma and they may be there … I can remember one year they were three months or something in that area, so … Charleville ummm Quilpie, so for what he would refer to as a racing circuit or whatever, he, yeah, he would be away and that was what he was doing. He looked after race horses virtually – groomed them, and he rode them, and he fed them, and he dressed them and he undressed them, and whatever else was entailed in that, yeah.

I Would he ride in races in Brisbane?

R No, no, no. We lived in Brisbane for a few years and he was what they refer to as a strapper, and it entails virtually the same type of work ummm riding track work in the morning and ummm outrageous hours. I think the track would open at 3.30 in the morning and ummm but he, yeah, and that was the same thing, just riding track work and ummm and grooming the horses and sort of looking after them in general. He would escort them to the races on the weekend, wherever that may be, in Brisbane, you know, the Coast, wherever.

I So when you met him, I'd like you to explain, was there a whole bush racing circuit? Like, he was a jockey. Could you explain?

R Yes. Yes. Out here. That was different, Trish. I think it … and I'm not too sure of how it worked because I was not familiar with the world of racing when we met but my understanding of it was that he rode amateur and ummm the jockeys in Brisbane were professional and they had – and this is my understanding of it – completed a three-year apprenticeship. So that was the difference if I think that's what you may be asking. But out here, ummm I would suggest they might have all been amateur but there was a racing circuit and I can remember eight meetings in nine weeks or something, that he was riding in even after we were married and had the three oldest children and we would trek around to all the race meetings. Ummm most of us just had conventional cars and some people would be pulling floats and it would be a great convoy ummm a lot of entertainment. There'd be a great convoy of us, you know, and it'd be … I can remember we'd be sort of going over a sand hill and you'd look at the next one and there'd be trucks going over there with all the horses on. Much excitement involved in that and yeah, so we'd all pull up for lunch. You know, there could be seven or eight vehicles. We'd all pull up for lunch and sort of have picnics under the trees and that was great for the kids. The kids loved it. They were quite well-trained actually. We got to the stage where we'd stop the vehicles and they'd be out collecting wood for the fires and, you know, climbing up on the truck and getting things down that they knew we needed so ummm, they were wonderful times. There was lots of flat tyres, of course, because the roads weren't sealed and – or still aren't, of course, to Birdsville – but ummm lots of flat tyres, lots of lost mufflers along the way and ummm many stories came from that.

I How would you live if he was amateur?

R Oh no, this was … he had a permanent job as well. I mean, this was perhaps … well I wouldn't call it a hobby, I mean, but it probably was. He worked for … he worked on the western roadworks when they were putting the bitumen down at a place called Waveney and he worked for … the owner of the horses was Ron McCullough. This was later in our life, not when we were single. This was after we returned to Windorah from Brisbane. He worked for a man called Ron McCullough. Max Roadworks put down a section of that road ummm kilometres of that western road and he worked for the roadwork company for Ron during the week. He had a permanent job and this racing, of course, was just their interest so to speak. So he would get up in the morning and before he went to work he

would ride the race horses work and bring them back and ummm feed them and whatever and then he would go and do his day's work, and then again after work in the evening he would tend to the horses, and then on the weekends. But, of course, when the racing circuit started, well the boss went as well. So, yeah, and he continued, of course, with the wages and he worked virtually full-time or travelling or whatever with the horses then, yes, so he was actually riding for his employer as he was before we were married when we worked on the property with Percy McF when they were out here. Percy owned a property west of Windorah called Paraguay and ummm so I mean that entailed both as well – station work and the race horses, yeah.

I What did that mean for your life then? What was the

R

I What did that mean for your life? What was your role?

R It meant a lot of changes for me, actually. It really did because I had had nothing to do with the racing world whatsoever. Ummm I had no idea about it, whether it be the horse or what was involved in it. I learnt very quickly in Brisbane. I mean, I got to the stage after five years in Brisbane where I could rattle off the breeds of most of the horses that were racing each weekend or during the week. It did become my life, as well as the children, of course, and him, I mean Graham, but I don't think I ever enjoyed it. I became quite sick of it actually. It probably was never for me and yet I respected Graham's love of that ummm life.

I What did it mean in terms of your schedule? Paint a picture of your day if Graham was race horsing, working, race horsing. What did that mean for your life when your kids were little?

R When we lived in Brisbane, I felt that it was difficult because I already had a baby when we moved to Brisbane. Our son was born in Toowoomba and then after three years in Brisbane I had two more children, so I virtually had three babies. I probably had to remind myself quite often that my mother ran a dairy farm, or their little farm, because ummm I did accept Graham's life because that was his life and that was his love but I was not impressed with the world of racing and ummm it wasn't often that anything happened to improve on that. For me, personally, I didn't really have anything to do with the racing side of his life in Brisbane other than ummm launder the clothes and things that, you know,

the jockey wore. We had … there was a jockey living with us, Dougie Messingham, who is also godson of our son. We were with a lovely family, a fellow called Graham Ramsay, so I mean my world was the home and learning to cook. I was a pretty terrible cook and so that's probably where I started to learn to cook. Adjusting to life in Brisbane was probably something that I found really difficult. It wasn't probably, it definitely was a difficult time for me. Ummm so a lot of things changed together, Trish, as in, you know, the racing world being there and we'd not been a part of that Brisbane scene. I was quite excited about the fact that Graham rode in races out here when we were going together and that we got to go around to the races and, you know, watching him ride, and I liked that. But once we got to Brisbane, of course, and he was working at the stables and wasn't a part of the riding, it's not that I wanted him to be but I didn't really have anything to do with the racing side of his life there. He worked there at the stables full-time and, of course, had it been later in our life, or even earlier in our life, I probably would have gone over to the track and watched him work the horses and things like that but I was virtually housebound with small children and the cooking and the housework and stuff like that.

I With the races out here, before you went to Brisbane, were women an important part? Just describe what part the bush race meetings might have had in women's lives.

R Probably work, as in ummm catering is always an issue here whenever there's any sort of a function, including the races, ummm people, whether it be Windorah, Jundah, Stonehenge, or whatever small town in the west, and a limited number of houses, limited accommodation, of course, so on a personal level there you've got women racing around probably wishing half the time the races weren't on because they're making beds and cleaning house and cooking up a storm for both the function and the visitors that they expect to have at home. During the sixties and seventies women really dressed for the race meetings. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed the opportunity for the women to dress up and to wear hats and some of them still do – Birdsville, Bedourie and Windorah – but a lot don't. The mode of dress, or the expectation of the mode of dress has dropped. There was much excitement. There were many catalogues out on kitchen tables and women would be pouring through and it wasn't uncommon to have two or three outfits exactly the same, and the question was 'Do you get the David Jones catalogue?' sort of thing. But there was a lot of excitement, much more excitement generated around the race weekends in years ago than now. It's more commercial now and ummm there's a two days race meeting here in Jundah. The Friday attracts mostly connections to the horses, as in owners, trainers,

jockeys or whatever. The Saturday is the social day. And it is nice to see that some people do still dress nicely, as they would anywhere else for the races, but I guess once nobody would sort of come along in jeans and tops, whereas now that's just accepted mode of dress.

I It seems like

R and ummm

I Was this about women not being allowed at the races?

R Not accepted, yeah. Their presence wasn't accepted at the races and I saw a photo of Betoota and they were all men and they were all dressed up in their, you know, high collars and everything and there were several women there. I was told it was the first race day. Now whether that, see I don't have my facts straight and I hate that, because that could have been the Betoota Race Club that didn't allow the women at the races. It may not have been a general …

I I can check that out. So you think, in what sort of era do you think women were not allowed at the races? Or at Betoota?

R Judging by the photo that I saw when this was said to me, and there were several women, the period of dress would have been, I'm guessing at around 1920, early 1920s, and I was told that that was the first day that it was accepted that these women attended the races and my understanding of that was that it was like an unwritten bush law ummm because Laura Duncan was one of those women and from what I've heard, she would probably attend if she thought that, you know, they …

I Are you talking about Laura the mother or Laura the daughter now?

R If that photo was an early twenties and she was in her mid-twenties, ummm it would nearly be the daughter. That would be the daughter.

I So by the time you were actually going to races in the sixties and seventies, it was a big deal for women?

R Oh, it was a social event. Probably the social event of the year for women.

I And how about the pub? When you arrived in Windorah, did women go to the pub?

R No. Well, they went to … they did go to the hotel but never, not in the bar. I wouldn't say 'never', not to the bar, the pool room, although ummm the country hotels, or the bush pubs, are much more casual than hotels anywhere else. I mean, even right up through Kynuna and any of the small hotels, aren't they? And people do wander around ummm but that's more so today, I suppose, but I think for as long as I remember ummm they probably wandered into the bar of the Windorah Hotel. It wouldn't be frowned upon. I mean, I wouldn't have been allowed. I would have been, you know, I would have been in trouble if Dad or Mum caught me in the bar ummm but that was different people's opinions and expectations, I suppose, of their families more so than … and then children can sort of wander in looking for Mum or Dad or whatever here, you know, have a barbeque and it's more or less a building more so than, you know, sectioning it off and saying well ummm you don't go into the bar. But there are still women, and that includes myself, I would prefer not to be in the bar of any hotel, and that's no offence to any local hotels, or any hotels in the whole shire, or the Diamantina Shire either. I would prefer to sit in a lounge or a pool room than to be in the bar of a hotel. But, once again, it depends on who's in there and I'm sure, as in condition more so than person, ummm I'm sure that's probably most people's opinion, you know.

I So the public bar was like the male space where you'd find people drinking too much?

R Not always but it was a place where you could find the males had had too much to drink, you know, whereas they probably, you'd have a less chance of them being in the pool room, whereas now they could be in any room and people don't mind so much anyway, you know. I think the hotels in the country are very casual too. You know the families who own them, or who manage them and run them. Ummm they're everybody's friends. You would go to the hotel. You wouldn't go into the bar because you necessarily wanted a drink. You might just go in looking for them or somebody else and I've often sat in this hotel and the Windorah Hotel and had coffee, because they'll go and make you a coffee and have a chat.

I And was the bar in any way the bank when you arrived in Windorah?

R No, not that I remember, Trish. Not that I recall. Ummm because the only bank that I can remember having access to in Windorah was the Commonwealth Bank at the Post Office. Yeah. But …

I **This is tape 50, Channels of History. It's still DAT tape 18. This is the third interview tape with Bev Maunsell and it's 21 June 2000 and the DAT is on 1 hour 1 minute 44 seconds.**

So Bev, what was it that brought you and Graham back to Windorah, or back to the Channel Country, and what year was it?

R 1971 was the year, Trish. It was ummm a combination of all things. All things, including all things about living in this area, and missing the west. I think perhaps ummm freedom for the children was most … I mean as in safety issues or, you know, freedom to play wherever and virtually, you know, have that ummm the safety issue. I honestly don't believe that I had ever had to ummm remove keys from a vehicle before. I was quite spoilt by that or ummm lock a house at night. Ummm not, the small things, I guess, that you enjoy but you don't miss until you don't have, like walking alone through the streets at night. I never ever felt safe, even going down to the local shop. I knew that I was safe. In hindsight I know that but it was just that coming from living on properties and then out in a place like Windorah where everybody was safe and you could, you know, you could break down on the road, change a tyre. You wouldn't worry about the oncoming car, if there was one, if you were fortunate enough to see a car coming. It would never enter your head to think, 'Oh, I mightn't know this person' because it doesn't matter if you don't, they will still hop out and give you a hand and whatever. A lot of those things I found hard to deal with. The fact that …

TAPE 1 – SIDE B

R … and if they happened to stop, perhaps, you know, and this was just my feeling. I'm not insulting anybody in the city, that's for sure, because it probably, my opinion probably sounds ridiculous to people who've lived there all of their life, but I did miss that feeling of safeness if I was home alone with the children at night – that feeling of, I didn't like to lock up and plus I think that financially for us it was much harder living down there than it had been. Of course we had three children. We didn't, we were married with children, we weren't as single people in Windorah either. But most of all, it was homesickness.

I So was it your decision to come back that Graham then went along with?

R No. It wasn't actually. It was a mutual decision. We … in those days there were telegrams and we received a telegram from my parents telling … Graham did, telling him

that he could start work in Windorah the following week so that was about all we needed. But they were aware that we did want to come back out to the west and I should imagine my mother mentioned that to Ron McCullough, and hence the telegram. But we certainly packed in a hurry and made arrangements and everything and made that working day.

I So it was 1971? What work did your husband come back to and what life did you come back to in Windorah?

R Well, ummm Graham came back to working on the roadworks there, that western road when they were putting that bitumen down, and ummm I actually lived in my parents' home because it was vacant. I lived there with the children. He would go out to work, as most of the men that worked on that road, Max Roadworks, the ones that came from Windorah, did. They would go out to work and sort of come in during the night or whatever. So everything changed for us, I guess. We were back in the west and Graham wasn't home every day and every night but he would be going off to work and coming back in with the manager in the week or whatever and on weekends. Ummm I think possibly I appreciated mostly the things that I just mentioned that I wasn't comfortable with. I also often joked, and yet there was a sense of truthness there, about I'd rather pay perhaps two or three dollars for a loaf of bread ummm than to have to lock the whole house up and go down and unlock the car and re-do all of that ummm to pay ninety cents for a loaf of bread, so I mean, I made reference to those sort of things quite a bit I guess.

I And you could live on just his wage back out here?

R Much more easily then. Yes, I think that perhaps coming, going from Windorah to Brisbane and ummm there was certainly a lot more spending during those years because of what was available that we hadn't had access to, even going out. I mean, we were young and I think that was another thing. With the people connected with the racing world were very social people so we felt that we were keeping up with the Joneses. We were all very much the young married couple from Windorah, I'm sure, but yeah, we probably had quite a busy social life ummm and a very different social life too, but I enjoyed that just the same, but I think that it was a lot easier for us to live in Windorah and there's always something to do. You know, the lady might get you to work at the shop for a little while, or whatever, you know. You sort of … it's not that I didn't work ummm I often did something when we came back out here, yeah.

I And you were also doing all the family stuff, cooking and cleaning?

R Yes, yes, Trish, and on the properties, like when we were at Currawilla, I mean, you ummm often the manager and his wife were away and you're doing the cooking so you're working, you know, and they would quite often get you over there to do whatever so I mean, things are shared around and you're kept. I mean, you don't pay for gas and electricity and groceries and things like that ummm you may earn a lower wage but you're not paying out every day either.

I What took you to Currawilla?

R Probably the yearning to go back to station life. That's probably a strong … and is still with me today, that yearning. Ummm I think that's as strong as ummm the need to move back to the west if you move away. I think people change, though. I … people do change and circumstances change and, you know, I could probably say well yes, I talk about coming back to the west but then I wouldn't know whether I might move away from the west at some time either, you know.

I What did you love about station life?

So Bev you were saying that you really wanted to get back to Currawilla because you loved station life. There might be a perception in some parts of Australia that living on a station would be fine if you owned one but that working on one would be poorly paid difficult work. What was it that made you love station life?

R Ummm I think once again the peace and quiet ummm for me was one of the stronger factors. Having so much time to spend with your children. There were down sides, of course, with the education of your children, especially when we were moving into the time when our children were ready to start school. Our son Geoffrey was in Grade 1 and we were looking at two more children coming on for the primary schooling. But, as I said earlier, I had done primary correspondence school so I was familiar with that way of educating children, so I don't think that was really even an issue for me, or I wasn't deterred by it. My husband loved to work with stock, foremost horses I'm sure, but also the cattle work. I think men with their cattle work is a little like an addiction too, as it may be with a truck driver or whatever else, where they ummm that's what they feel that they need to do and that's what he was happiest doing. And so I think it was all a combination of all of those things. Ummm it's really hard to sum it up just into words and say exactly

what it is. I miss it still because there are times when I think how wonderful it would be just to get up in the morning and hear nothing but the birds and the motor running and whatever else, you know, the noises of the property working which, of course, are quite different to the noises associated with living in a town. I think that's why I have ummm kept the block next door here and I sort of go out the back door still today and can look at the bush, so that was an enticement for both of us, and I think for our children to be able to also ride horses and be a part of the life that … not the life that Graham had had as a child because he was reared in Toowoomba but the life that I'd had as a child. It was just the preferred way to go for us, I think.

I **This is a late ID. This is tape 50 for camera, tape 19 for DAT. This is the second DAT and the third camera tape. We're interviewing Bev Maunsell in her home in Jundah and it's 21 June 2000.**

So Bev you were just adding something while we were waiting about the pleasures of station life, about your husband being home. Do you just want to tell me about that?

R Yes, we both decided, you know, during the years that we had in Brisbane and we were both busy and it was sort of consumed by babies, I guess, race horses and a very busy time, ummm I think we were lured by the peace and the opportunity to once again be a family, to have more time together, more time with the children. Ummm you know, we'd go camping on weekends. We'd pack up the vehicle and take the children out to a waterhole and spend the whole weekend with them. Other friends, if they wanted to come, you know, would come with their children or, you know, as well, so ummm we'd have fishing trips and just got to do a lot more things with the kids together than we'd probably ever done – or definitely ever done.

I So Graham was no longer jockeying every weekend?

R No, no. And he did stop riding. That was the end of his riding career.

I And you were glad about that?

R I didn't mind the western … I enjoyed the western racing circuit. As I said before, you know, we have a lot of memories of those trips, a lot of special friends that remain friends today and that travelled with us, but certainly pleased to see the end of the Brisbane racing time.

I Did you know Miss Duncan at Mooraberry because that would have been the next station?

R Yes, I did know her. I didn't know her really well as some people do. I heard a lot about her before I did meet her and the first time I saw her she came flashing into Windorah, you know, in … I think she was driving a Mercedes and I thought, 'Oh, who's that?' That was quite a rare sight for Windorah then and my father said that that was who she was. He knew her very well.

I Can you give me her name?

R Laura Duncan.

I Could you tell me this story, putting Laura Duncan into the story early on? I'd love you to tell me the story.

R When she came over the sand hill?

I Well, just the story you're telling me. I said the name 'Miss Duncan'. I'd like you to say 'Miss Duncan'.

R Oh, yes. Miss Duncan, because of course we all called her Miss Duncan and only now would we say 'Laura Duncan'. Miss Duncan, she was Miss Duncan to anybody that spoke to me about her anyway. I didn't hear anybody refer to her as Laura or to speak to her, call her Laura when they were actually speaking to her. Mostly behind her back you would say Laura Duncan. But, yeah, she was Miss Duncan to most people.

I So could you tell me the story of when you first saw her? Just tell me the story you were just telling me.

R Oh, right. Oh, okay. When … yes, and a Mercedes came up over the hill and entered Windorah and we sort of really looked because it wasn't a sight you saw in Windorah every day, driven by a woman, silk head scarf, and I said to my father, 'Oh, who is that?' and he said, 'That's Laura Duncan'. Miss Duncan. She had passed as quick as she arrived so I didn't really meet her or get to speak to her. Ummm my second … the second time … I went to say the second sighting … the second time I saw her, she arrived at Currawilla and up over the sand hill she came – I think she was driving a Land Rover or Jeep or something – and the same thing again, silk shirt, silk scarf, and of course by then I guessed

who she was because she was living just next door, and she was the same lady that had flashed through Windorah in a Mercedes so, yeah, wonderful lady.

I What was her reputation? Tell me the stories you heard about Laura Duncan.

R I don't have lots to tell. I mean, they were ummm I knew her to speak to briefly. My understanding is that she was a very hardworking woman and that she was the first 'lady' who dared attend the Betoota Races with the gentlemen. And not only attended but stood up there with them to have her photo taken doing the same. So ummm I think that she's probably worked hard most of her life. I admire her for, you know, working that place by herself and yet still remained a lady and ummm, yeah, I don't infer that others don't either, you know. I don't really know as much about her as probably the older generation.

I How about Maud Chaffer? Did you ever meet Maud and what was she like?

R I knew her much better than I knew Laura Duncan. She owned Waveney, owned Waveney Station, which was a lot closer to Windorah. My husband worked on Paraguay which was nearby. I saw a lot of her. My sister-in-law actually worked on that property for six months, my husband's sister, and so yes, she I think was a tough lady, ummm quite tough. I met her husband as well. He appeared to be a much quieter man. Ummm the thing that caught my attention about her the most was the amount of opal rings she managed to fit on all fingers. Yeah, I don't sort of have a lot to say about her really. I guess …

I I'd love you to just give me a sentence that has her name in it – Maud Chaffer – and am I to take it that you didn't like her much? I want you to be blunt.

R No, it … no, I don't think that she was a lady, given our age difference. Ummm I don't think she was a lady that was easy to get to know. I'm not suggesting she was inhospitable but I was a teenager, or in my early twenties, during those years and she was a much, much older woman. She actually retired from Waveney, Maud Chaffer did, while we were at Currawilla and moved down near Toowoomba to live. She had an Aboriginal fellow working for her for many, many years, Johnny Costello, a lovely man who probably took on the role of carer, to some degree, when they moved down to Toowoomba. But I didn't have a lot to do with her, even though I saw her at every function that she attended in Windorah. She was more to the age group of the Miss Kidds from Mayfield, Mr and Mrs Kidd from that older generation, so I didn't have a lot to do with her.

I Would that have also been a class difference? Would owners of stations not talk so much to staff on stations or am I getting quite the wrong idea there?

R Never. I never ever found that to be the case and I'm sure that others would agree that you would find that to be more common with managers, some managers of properties. I don't believe, in my own mind, that owners of properties ever had a class distinction problem and yet, there have been managers in the south-west during the past years that have had an attitude towards the working class of people.

I That's interesting, isn't it? Why do you reckon there's that difference?

R I don't know and I don't think that it's probably so common west of Windorah. As you move in closer it seems to be happening more so and it amused me at times to observe this and to have known owners of much, much bigger places who treated their workmen as equals, and then to see managers of much smaller properties treat workmen as workmen or as a lower class citizen. I have witnessed that over the years but, as I said, I know I'm repeating … I really do feel that it's less common the further west you go.

I I'd like you to tell me that thing you just said about Miss Chaffer. Did you feel like you really knew Miss Chaffer?

R No, no. I felt that ummm that Miss … my opinion is that she was a working woman and not so much a social lady. If there was a comparison to be made, I think that Laura Duncan ummm was probably more sociable than Mrs Chaffer, yes. I think that she is a lady who I probably knew for years and yet didn't know at all, whereas with Miss Duncan I did feel that, you know, I could sit and become quite chatty with her the first time that we met, but I didn't … I can't recall a lengthy conversation that I ever had with Mrs Chaffer.

I What role did Mrs Chaffer's husband take on the property as opposed to the role that Mrs Chaffer took?

R Ummm Walter Chaffer passed away shortly after I moved to the area. My opinion would be that he played a quieter role in the family, or the marriage. Every time I hear his name I just associate him with the closing of the Jaycee, you know, because he actually bought that hotel and closed it down so that his ringers couldn't drink there. And so he'll always be remembered, I'm sure, each time we drive past the ruins there. I suppose I feel a little

disappointed that that happened. The building was still standing when I first moved into this country and, yeah, so that was a shame I guess.

I I heard that story that it was Maud that had the Jaycee closed down.

R Yes, well this is the chance you take, too, I suppose. If you give an opinion and it may have been her and the story was told to me that it was her husband, so yes, and I wouldn't know because it was most certainly closed well and truly and deteriorating by the early sixties.

I Is this an area where you get lots of stories about people? Do you often hear that you get two different stories, slightly different, because it's a small community with people passing on information?

R Yes, yes, yes. We discussed that. Especially now that the museum is open in Windorah and we have the museum here and we've had school centenaries, so you come face to face, you meet this problem face to face, and you know we've put much emphasis on the importance of getting it right and how do we get it right because the information that we collect comes from these people and if there are two conflicting stories and the event was many years ago, we don't really know, so I guess we could probably judge that on ratio as to how many have told us story (a) and how many people have passed on story (b). It's a sad part of losing that older generation from the west and I think we are rapidly. They're either passing away or moving away. So, yeah …

I Could you think of an example that would come to mind where you've heard one story one way and one the other? Other than the …

R The one that we just spoke about. I can't recall one, no I'm sorry, but that's not because there aren't any. It does happen where, especially when you are collecting data for the things like a school centenary which we had here at Easter time, the Windorah Development Board with the Cooper Bridge Jubilee last year. I mean, we discussed these things. They're ongoing discussions but they pass. It's not something that I sort of have ticked up any particular story. I probably would, with a little more time, because as recently as the end of last year Jeannie and I had several discussions over conflicting stories that were told for the Cooper Bridge Jubilee too but fortunately enough there was somebody around who was actually there, you know, at the time that that story happened and they were able to say, 'Well, no, this one is correct'. So whenever that can happen,

you're right, but when the older generation, you know, pass on, well I suppose it'll be very difficult then to find out fiction from non-fiction.

I And tell me, Bev, how you landed up in Jundah.

R Ummm that decision was a slow one. Probably … I had a miscarriage at Currawilla. It's not the sole reason but it was a deciding factor, I think, because I was pregnant with Raelene, the youngest daughter, then and I think that both Graham and I … we talked about it. He ummm was ready to leave, probably more so than I at the time but because I had had a miscarriage while I was there and circumstances that surrounded that, some of them hadn't changed on the property and I think that he sort of felt that perhaps it was time to come in closer, lessen the workload. Ummm I had been teaching our three children then, correspondence, or distance ed, and … but there were a lot of factors that, you know, I probably won't discuss because I know that there are women out there that taught their children and they did cook for the station and they did ummm cope with that. I was coping too but medical reasons would probably sum that up with this second pregnancy and so as not to go through a second miscarriage and ummm … and I was ten years older than I was when we had the other children, so for medical reasons would probably sum that up and we moved in closer, and that is why we left Currawilla when we did, and as quickly as we did. We made the decision fairly quickly and … I think we regretted that move a lot of times during later years.

I Because on a station you're isolated from medical help, aren't you?

R Well, I think that that can be a misconception too. You know, having had the years … the years during which I had the first three children, we did live in Toowoomba and Brisbane ummm and I honestly believe that I could wait for as long to see even a private doctor in Brisbane as I've ever waited over the years out here for the Flying Doctor plane to land. So I'm not … I think medical isolation can be exaggerated in that respect ummm yet sometimes if you do have a life-threatening case, it may make the difference if you did have, and of course it would make the difference at times. I can't recall an incident, though, fortunately …

I So this is camera tape 51, it's DAT tape 19. This is the fourth camera tape with Bev Maunsell. It's 21 June 2000 and the DAT is on 2421 and we're in Bev's kitchen in Jundah.

I think we'd finished that thing about medical isolation so tell me about Jundah. What year was it when you arrived in Jundah?

R We moved to Jundah during that pregnancy, when I was having Raelene, early 1977. Ummm my husband had a truck driver's position on the council and we lived in a council house for probably about four years before he started … he secured a job with Telecom. He was with them for eight years. We bought this house here. I started work at school as a teacher aide in 1978 and I'm still there. After having made jokes that I'd be there with my grandchildren, I've actually seen one go through the primary school and he's now at St Brendan's in Yeppoon, so yeah.

I And did your kids go to Jundah School?

R They did, yes. Yes, Trish, they completed their primary schooling here and the youngest girl Raelene, she actually did Year 1 to 7 here in Jundah.

I And do you think that having taught them out on Currawilla gave you real qualifications for your job? I don't mean in terms of bits of paper but did you learn lots about teaching, teaching your own kids?

R Yes, and it was the reason that I actually secured the position, I think. That was the only experience I'd had, other than being a mother, but it most certainly was experience and, yeah. So the home supervisor, obviously, then to work as a teacher aide for the principal who obviously thought that, you know, that was an asset for him.

I So you would have seen a lot of principals come and go at that school.

R A lot of principals. How many? I've stopped counting. I stopped counting ummm probably around the 15 which was quite a while back and principals started to even leave during the year, during the school year. Once upon a time they'd stay around. I mean, during the sixties, early seventies, principals were staying three years, two years minimum, but then they, you know, it was very difficult for them to adjust for all of the obvious reasons, yeah. So I worked for a lot of principals.

I Why is it, do you reckon, that you've done the job for 22 years and, I take it happily …

R Yes, oh yes.

I … and that the principals have come and gone? What's your perception for the reasons for that?

R Ummm it's much easier when you are a local. It would be probably more difficult for a principal to move from inner city to Jundah than it ever was for me to move from Windorah to Brisbane. Ummm quite often they would have families. Sometimes perhaps he may not ummm he may be prepared to stay but his wife may not, or vice versa. Then if you have a single principal, I think loneliness is an issue, so there doesn't seem to be an answer to that problem. There are negative sides to both, single or married. With me, I often joke that it was quite easy to stay in a position when your boss kept moving on, which was what was happening. You know, changing of principals, changing of students. It is a wonderful feeling to go through an entire primary school life, or through a child's primary schooling life with them from Year 1 to 7, which has happened three now, for three generations, and I found here, having done that, that they remain very close friends, those children. Some of them are married now and their children are actually at the school so … and yeah, so I wonder if my children ever wondered what it would be like to have some education without their mum being around. Yeah, probably different for them.

I Did it ever occur to you to train as a teacher or was there just not that kind of space, I suppose, in your life?

R Well, it was suggested to me actually, because one of our friends, a Telecom technician here, his sister did it and they kept saying to me, you know, 'It's only three years'. This was quite a few years back. I don't really have the answer as to whether I was quite contented just to be a teacher aide, perhaps not have the responsibility. A lot of other things going on in our lives at the time might have been, might have even made it impossible, but I'm not sorry that I didn't do that although you often think of the number of times you could have become a teacher many times over, I guess.

I So it's been a good life as a teacher's aide?

R It has been a good life, I think, and we ummm other teacher aides and myself have noticed that if we attend workshops, conferences or whatever, the work that we do in comparison to the work that teacher aides have the opportunity to do in other schools, we are lucky. We are much luckier as in the fact that we actually can supervise the children, take classes and ummm all work is set by the principal, of course, the principal …

I I suspect the school's been lucky too.

R Visiting people from the Department often say that, Trish, that the small … and it is important that the small schools have some stability, especially when you do have principals consistently leaving the small schools in the west. It's really important that they have a mainstay, or a couple of mainstays, which we have at the school now, so yeah.

I Coming back to the … oh did you want to finish something there?

R No, it's just the permanency thing, you know, and probably direction for the incoming principals, too, assistance to them, you know. Yeah.

I Coming back to Jundah as a town, what struck you about Jundah as a community compared to Windorah? Because they're two towns of approximately the same size, 100km apart, you've lived in both. What's Jundah that's not Windorah?

R They're totally different. We've had many conversations as to why. Windorah have now formed a Windorah Development Board, as you'd be probably familiar with. I believe myself that a lot more community spirit, that I believe that there's a reason for that as in the fact that there's more permanency in the town. Windorah residents are, you know, first and second generation or whatever. Jundah is the council town where you have the administration centre here for the Barkly Shire Council, you know the work depot across the road, and we have a lot more itinerants here – people who are not permanent, who ummm and we don't really have … and that is why. I mean, I think that's why. Probably fifteen years ago, I think there was a stronger community spirit here, before we lost perhaps the older generation who have either passed away now or moved on for various reasons. Ummm I'm not saying there's no community spirit but it appears to be a lot stronger in Windorah and I think that might be why. Jundah's consistently dealing with people or ummm our community are a moving community where you do have those people coming and going. Ummm a lot of people move here short term, and they're very interested, but they do move on as well, whereas Windorah you have that permanency where they're there year after year and locals with a genuine interest in the local community. The whole shire ummm they're very unselfish people.

I How about race relations? How are race relations different in Jundah than Windorah, if at all?

R I've lived in Jundah for 22 years and we've only had, to my recollection, one Aboriginal family who lived here. Husband was a grader operator on the Barkly Shire Council. They had three children that attended the school here and they probably lived here for eighteen months to two years. I don't recall any other Aboriginal people living here. Some people will say to you that they're not accepted. Some people will say that there's a myth, you know, there are mythical beliefs as to why … I don't really want to touch on that because I don't know. As a story of a young woman killed here and some will tell you it was by a young Aboriginal. Some will say definitely not, so ummm and give you reasons for that, you know, why it would not have happened and how they, you know … so I don't know. I'd … but ummm when I first moved to Windorah there were lots of shanties around the town, you know, the little shanties made of corrugated iron and ummm large families of Aboriginal people there, lots of small children, and yeah … but, of course, they've all gone now.

I And why have they gone from Windorah, do you think? I mean, there's still a number of Aboriginal people round Windorah but why is its Aboriginal population less now, do you reckon?

R Probably … my first thought when you asked the question was opportunity, more opportunity, and this is with more awareness of what opportunities there are out there, and before not really been aware. But I don't think that applies to any race as far as the west goes. I think the awareness came to a lot of people out here with improved communications and improved roads, you know, improved vehicles. I mean, once upon a time it was ummm a really big issue if you were going to Brisbane or somewhere whereas now, you know, people fly down in their own aircraft or whatever. It's just not all just drive, it's not a major exercise or …

I Do you think it's because the stations employ fewer people there was less work for Aboriginal people? Is that part of what you're saying? Same as for white's?

R Yes. Yes I do believe that, again. I also think that ummm they quite often move as a family, even in adulthood, so that if the older generation leaves, if the mum and dad leave, then perhaps even the married children leave with their children, and that can wipe out a whole family of … yeah … or families, and even cousins and ummm yeah. So that was something that did happen, from Windorah, yeah, years ago when, you know, when one family moved away and then the older children moved away, and of course they took their

children, so … yeah, so I think that that has happened with the old families that I mentioned that were there in the sixties.

I So the Gorrenges are the main Aboriginal family that's continued to live in Windorah?

R They are, yes. Yes. And support the town and the functions and the school.

I Up round Boulia I heard the story that Aboriginal people had worked on the stations less after the mid-sixties because the stations were forced to pay them cash wages for the first time but before that they would get part of their wages from the Protector, but that the stations didn't have to pay them full cash wages. Do you know about that?

R No, I don't know anything about that, Trish. No. It's an interesting point but no, I haven't heard that.

I Tell me about the role that you've taken in the Jundah community, other than being teacher aide.

R I probably played a much … I did play, both my husband and myself played a very active role in the community when we moved here and we had the three children in school, you know, with the committees and the Catholic church and the school, the P&C and the golf club and whatever. That's gradually changed, I suppose, over the years, with your children leaving primary school. Ummm I think we go through … there is a difference, too, here where quite often things are left to just a small handful of people ummm and after many years, and if you've passed the stage where perhaps your children aren't at school or whatever or you've been doing something … and like then I gave a lot of things away that also ummm I lost my mobility in 1993 ummm which slowed me down a lot, around here.

I What happened?

R Ummm we used to go skiing every Sunday, out to Ramulla, a property out here, and my son-in-law owned a boat, a speed boat, and at the end of the day, just before we were ready to take the boat out ummm I was hit by the boat, by the propellor, which severely damaged down the front of my left leg and my left foot. Ummm so it was twelve months before I was walking again, although I look back now and realise I wasn't walking, I only thought I was walking. I was virtually shuffling along. Ummm so I've gradually … it was only a couple of years after I started to walk again that my husband passed away, so I mean we did get out of the community ummm fundraising and things like that. We weren't sort of

going and playing tennis any more or sort of participating in sport and … as I used to, and he used to play golf. So, I mean, circumstances have changed my role in the community, and they do change as it goes along, too. Ummm for the past three years until March this year I was a councillor at the Barcoo Shire Council. So I think that all permanent residents in a town are playing a consistent role in the community, whether it be to go out to a truck that's broken down or to, you know, you'll quite often get a phone call telling you that somebody needs some help or there's a problem somewhere, or asking you to do, you know take off somewhere and do a little job. Once again, kilometres aren't an issue. The distance doesn't matter. Ummm so … and I was saying to you before that I think that everybody's always in readiness to play a role, even the unexpected, as happened the day of my accident and you know, all of a sudden … we didn't have an ambulance driver, we didn't have paramedics. We … my friends and relatives that were there at the ski hole had to take total control – and did, with much competence.

I So in that twelve months, like I ruptured my tendon so I know what it is to … who was really here for you in that whole accident …?

R The community. I think, professionally or …

I Humanly.

R … personally, or humanly. Ummm I think the town. I spent two months in hospital so ummm and then when I came home … it was difficult to come home because you've become dependent on the fact that you have all services in the hospital and yet, even before I left the hospital, ummm services were being put in place and the doctors were contacting Jundah to ensure that the matron here would do twice daily dressings for, well it was six months or so, but for as long as that was needed. Ummm the kids at school, I mean, if it wasn't for their heel to toe, heel to toe with me, I couldn't walk into school without they weren't singing 'Heel to toe, Aunty Bev', I probably would have never learnt to walk properly. Wherever you go people care and they help you and they might adjust a situation to accommodate you to get in there or whatever.

I When you were describing early in your marriage your husband was working all the time and you were looking after the kids and helping him, did your accident really change your relationship with your husband, and if so, how?

R It certainly changed his role in the home as far as ummm helping in the home. Ummm it changed dramatically, I suppose. He had ... I was in hospital for two months. I mean, he was taking care of the home and whatever. He was in total control for the whole two months that I was away so when I came home, that was ongoing, and he continued to assist with all chores around the place until he passed away.

I Do you want to just tell me a little bit about your husband? Sounds like you got a great schmack of bad news in the mid-nineties, Bev. Tell me a little bit about your cancer scare and then your husband dying.

R Mmmm. Yes, it did continue but, you know, it does that for many people. It's a sad thing. Ummm probably the years that we were looking forward to, as in that the children were reared and we discussed travel and we had a son in the Territory at the time so we'd been over there enough for my husband to finally get the travel bug, and ummm yes I had a call up, a cancer scare in the September of – my accident happened in '93 – ummm in September '95 and, of course, it was clear but Graham insisted that he take a week off and accompany me to Rockhampton and ummm and all the while he actually had brain tumours and we weren't aware of that fact, so that's a sad point for me. Ummm and it was just two months later, yes, in November and he came in from work and he had a back pain and a headache and ummm he actually had a stroke here, just he and I that night, at midnight. And we flew to Toowoomba the following day to have the, you know, to find out what caused that stroke and they told us about the brain tumours, and they were inoperable and Graham chose to come home so we did that. We brought him home to here and eight weeks, eight weeks later he passed away, and ummm I think there was an example of strength and ummm the fact that the specialist in Toowoomba actually thought my husband was, Graham was transferred from Longreach Hospital to Toowoomba. He couldn't believe that he worked on the Monday and just arrived after having been bogged and whatever, arrived home that night around eight or something, and sort of suffered the stroke at midnight. So I suppose now I wonder if there were signs that he didn't speak of ummm because, yeah, not … I don't think that people even go to the Flying Doctor as they probably do attend ummm doctors' surgeries, you know, in less isolated places. I think at times, or I suspect that they might just think, 'Oh, I'll be okay', you know.

I This next question, Bev, I hope you won't find it an offensive one. It's my perception that a lot of men in this community are not very healthy compared to their wives. I feel like I'm seeing a lot of salt, a lot of fat, a lot of overweight, and I'm clearly overweight, and I

know that the health statistics for men generally in rural Australia are very low. Do you think that's a big issue? Do you know a number of young widows in this community?

R Ummm I do know, yeah, and I have two friends from Windorah who were widowed young. I don't … neither of those cases were related to what you just mentioned but I do believe that in the past there wasn't an awareness and perhaps that some of the men, or a lot of the men, if not all of the men, many years ago thought that emphasis on eating salt ummm and things like that, healthy eating was hogwash, for want of a better word, and I think today you would see … I see a big change in that area where perhaps corned meat and damper have been replaced by fruit and whatever, and yet I have seen a lot of old people, and including men, who've lived extremely hard lives in this country, have worked out in the hot sun from very early morning until late at night, seven days a week, no holidays, ummm roll their own cigarettes, drank alcohol, and did all the wrong things, and not even having access to fruit, and not often veges unless they were grown on the property, so … and they've lived till their eighties. So I mean, you know, you do have that ummm I'm not suggesting for one moment that that's a healthy way to live but it is interesting to observe that and be probably in an area where you can, because I admire old cowboys or ringers or station workmen who are aged anywhere between 65 and 80 because they really had it tough and paid very little, and you know.

I What is it like for you? You're 47, you're a year …

R 53. I'm 53.

I You're a year older than my eldest brother …

R Uh, uh. Right.

I … which is an irrelevance …

R Yes.

I What's it like to be a widow in Jundah? How has it shifted your life and what do you see for yourself in the future?

R The future is probably something that you don't want to look at because you thought you had that all worked out ummm but the word 'widow' is probably a word that I didn't even associate myself with because you don't think about it and somebody mentioned in

Longreach … and it was actually Jeannie that said to me, ‘You are’, and made me really face that fact. The community, and I’m not just saying the Jundah community, most certainly foremost, but not only the Barcoo Shire but many, many people in the Diamantina Shire and Quilpie supported me through that time. The support was incredible and I will probably write a book on it alone, and that’s the case if anybody loses anybody in this country. And the support is ongoing. I found that too. It wasn’t something that they just forget about in a week or two weeks or three weeks, then go on with something else. It’s still there now but … and I’m fortunate enough to have children here, and grandchildren. At the same time, the loneliness is a different loneliness because it is for your husband, it is for your mate ummm and probably, you know, to keep myself busy I realise in hindsight was what I focussed on to try and help me through that. I had no thoughts of leaving here because I wouldn’t even consider leaving the security of the home. It’s as if you’re hanging on to the only thing you have left. I’m not including my children in that statement. Ummm but at the end of the day you are on your own and I know that nobody can change that. I know that the children can’t even take it away, or the grandchildren, but it is really lonely, and ummm I think sayings like ‘Time heals’ ummm there’s times when I don’t believe it is, of course. There’s other times when I realise I’ve let go of things like, you know, I’d hear the truck coming up the road and I’d, you know, someone else was driving it, of course, and I’d sort of put the kettle on and go to think, ‘Oh, what will Graham have for lunch?’ and all of those consistent realisations that, ‘Well he won’t be in for lunch,’ whatever, I think, yeah, they don’t happen now. That’s the difference that I can talk about four-and-a-half years later but I think it does get lonelier ummm and there are times when I still can’t believe it, you know, and I know that that probably sounds silly but I just cannot believe that, yeah …

I When we just arrived, Bev, a little kid came to the door and had an invitation. Does that kind of thing happen a lot? Kids that you’re not related to calling you ‘Aunty Bev’ or whatever. I’d like you to talk about that kind of side of your life.

R Yeah, I think that, yeah that’s ummm that has always been the case that we were very close to, you know, when you think that we moved here all of those years ago – 1978 – and there were even children like at the high school then who later had children while we were here and their children ummm, as they were old enough to speak, started to call both Graham and I Aunty and Uncle, which is quite common in this area, or in the west. It continued on at school. There was probably half a dozen of them that called me ‘Aunty Bev’ from when

they could speak. It spread ummm and the children called both teacher aides at the school 'Aunty'. Ummm yes, I quite often have children in here after school and they do activities or colouring in, or we make things from cardboard or whatever it is they want to do. We just make a mess sometimes. Ummm and I'll quite often get little notes or letters and they'll just pop in and drop them off or … and, as you said, the little boy next door, yeah, he came in with an invitation. He was just going to prepare a party or organise a party. Ummm I think they're the things that keep you here. Ummm they're the things that you would most certainly miss if you did leave. Yeah. So, I mean, they're not related but ummm I often wonder what impact you have on their lives, especially, you know, we often recall teachers that, perhaps one we may not have been that fond of, in the classroom, and I quite often will be at a function and just catch somebody's eyes and think, 'What was he thinking when I caught his eye? Was it something that happened in the classroom ten years or more ago?' you know, sometimes that happens, but when you receive these little, like an invitation, just to a little party that they're organising for no reason, just to have you over, ummm you start to hope then that those thoughts are all positive, or mostly positive anyway.

TAPE 2 – SIDE A

I You've lived in this town through the years of Mabo and WIK and Native Title. How have those kind of big national policies and court cases and so on influenced life on the ground in the Channel Country? And I guess really, race relations.

R Ummm in general, I think they've had a very large impact ummm across the spectrum, as in whether it be Land Rights ummm there's a whole host of issues, as you could imagine, that come from Land Rights alone, ummm you know with the oil companies and the councils and development of any type. So you open up a whole can of worms there, so there has to be a very large impact. I fear ummm that people may be influenced without, through ignorance, ummm I often feel that I'm listening to politicians speak about these things and I don't believe that they know what they're talking about. Ummm I think it's a delicate issue. I'm a little reluctant to speak about it, I honestly feel that it's so delicate. I also believe that it would be sinful to have people … Aboriginal people influenced ummm encouraged to ummm become something they're not, or to have opinions that aren't really theirs, to change their personality. They're the things that I fear about it, and that might happen.

I **This is tape 52 camera, tape 19 DAT, no ADF but it's about 1 hour and 1 minute and this is tape 5 from Bev Maunsell.**

Okay. What shifted in race relations? You were saying that there are some tensions now that there weren't before. Is that what you're saying?

R Yes. Yes, I feel that that's the case. I wonder if it's ummm because … I feel that even if the Aboriginal people, the local Aboriginal people, may choose to get on with their lives and not become a part of this issue, that they are encouraged to do so. There is so much media attention focussed on all sorts of Aboriginal issues, whether it be Land Rights, whether it be ummm reconciliation, whether it be ummm WIK or whatever. It appears that for years these issues have been, are issues on the news, and these things have been brought to Aboriginals' attention. Ummm so I think they're really having it pushed down their throats, whether they want to just get on with their lives and not, you know, think it's an issue, or whether they don't. That's my personal opinion. I feel a little sad that ummm I'd probably say that I feel sad that to think that ummm even when, yeah, Aboriginal people who live as close as Windorah might be affected or may feel that any white person, to feel that white people discriminate against them. Ummm I would hate to think that there was ever a wide division. If there's a small division, or a fine line there now, that ummm I think it would probably be fuelled by ummm everything they are seeing on the media, what they're hearing and seeing. I wonder if ummm sometimes it … yeah, ummm I don't suggest that people aren't sympathetic. That wasn't my inference, that people weren't sympathetic towards reconciliation or any other issue. Ummm I just feel that it has not been handled correctly. It continues not to be handled correctly. I don't think it's ever going to be handled correctly. Ummm it was approached from the wrong direction in the beginning. Instead of riling people up and having people become vicious, I mean, you have these people that … sometimes they don't even know why they're rallying or they don't understand. They may have a leader ummm who's leading them in a direction that they're not even sure where they're going. I'm sure that it could have just been dealt with in a much calmer manner, a more understanding manner, so that we were all made aware, or we all are probably aware, of the problem. I think that a lot of areas are financial issues and people are backing these things for the wrong reasons and I'm very unhappy with that, and I'd also hate to think that that did cause a very wide ummm gap between white and Aboriginal relationships in the west, in the western part of Queensland anyway, in the south-west corner.

I My impression is that relationships have actually been closer here than in other parts of Queensland.

R Mmmm. Yes. You know, I know that, you know, I heard a story many, many years ago that was supposed to have happened many, many years ago at a property called Mount Leonard at Betoota, where Aboriginal stockmen only knocked on the back door. I don't suggest that that's incorrect but I should imagine that in those days, so did the mailman knock on the back door, whether he be white or Aboriginal. So I think that sometimes ummm it's not discrimination, it's made into discrimination. There could even be, you know, times when the boot's on the other foot but there's always centred … I think that's sad. I attended Johnny Gorrenge's mother's funeral. No, I'm sorry, I didn't go to her funeral, I went to his Dad's funeral. But … we can't go back. I've made a mistake.

I That's all right. We can just start again. That's no problem. We'll cut out that bit. Go on. No problem at all. So that last bit we won't use.

R Okay. Either last year or the year before, I just can't recall, we attended Johnny Gorrenge's birthday party in Windorah and there were so many people that attended that party, I probably couldn't estimate the number of people that attended. There were property owners and managers that travelled vast distances to come back to Windorah especially for his party, and from all over. And I honestly did hope that night of that party, as everybody joined in and danced together and helped him celebrate his birthday party, that we were not seeing the end of an era, or the end of a time when that would continue to happen. My wish would be that that would continue to happen in this part of Queensland, or the nation, or whatever. Yeah, that would be my ideal but it's probably looking at the situation through rose-coloured glasses. But that is still happening here. That's the point that I'd like to make. His Mum's funeral, and you found many small aircraft that had flown from all over, and hundreds of people in attendance, and my wish would be that that type of life continued but unfortunately I don't think it will.

I Your brother has married an Aboriginal woman?

R Mmmm.

I How did that happen and was that difficult for your family or was that an entirely … I'm interested in that because, again, that's pretty rare in other bits of Australia.

R No. I think that was difficult for both of them and this is the point that I make with that, that it's just as difficult for the gin's side of the family, if it's difficult at all. But if anyone considers it to be difficult, I'm not them and I don't begin to judge, but yeah, so I would … I don't know. I would imagine that if there was any difficulty on the groom's side, there would also be difficulty on the bride's side. That would be my way of looking at it. But I would … yeah, because that's where I say to you, it's racial. I feel that it's racial to even, you know, try and give an opinion on that because if we aren't racial, we don't really have an opinion because it's united as one. You know what I'm saying? You know, you just …

I It seems that out here to be not racist means to not notice race.

R Yes.

I In the city, to be not racist means to respect the differences of different races. I think that's true.

R Right. That's an interesting point too, Trish, really. It's something I would have … and I probably did nod my head to not notice. I feel embarrassed to think that I might be discussing the differences, if there are differences. I feel that if we're going to discuss differences, then, with the left hand, we can't very well say on the right that there are none. Yeah. So, you know, I think that that's just probably point made, you know. As far as my three nephews go, Kevin and Jean, they are just loving, normal nephews and wonderful people, and I don't know why I'm saying this because it's just, you know, to me it's not an issue because all of my nephews and nieces are nephews and nieces, and that's it, full stop. My friends are friends, regardless of whether they are of what race or, you know, I don't really probably …

I Linda said exactly the same thing. Linda Crombie adores those grandchildren, adores them. I had no idea that it was linked to you but she says that it was a little bit hard for her at first but she absolutely adores those kids.

R Oh, yes.

I Is there anything I haven't asked you about women in the Channel Country that you think is important for me to understand, or about your life? Have I missed out anything big?

R No. Probably … not that I can think. It starts to go round in circles, I suppose. Yeah, I do believe that ummm I admire women all over the west. I honestly do. I admire all of the

women who have lived their lives in the south-west corner, as I do, and you know, northern New South Wales or anywhere else, because I think we will relate to each other as into how we've lived and experiences we've had. I think there's a comradeship and a closeness. There are bonds formed out here that you probably don't have the opportunity to have formed in other areas because we all do have to, as I said, pitch in, help each other, be there for each other, whether it be an accident, whether it be death. We, you know, carry on the medical role or whatever else until such times as we have professional help on site, so ummm I admire all western people for the role that they've played in helping other people and being there during sickness, during death. I mean, we've had many tragic accidents in the west that … or probably all people have, where just your normal everyday person has to be there and stay there and assist that person. I lost my Mum through an accident. I know that there were people there that came along, who found that accident. You're very aware of those things. There's no ringing triple zero, you just deal with it until someone comes along.

I on the phone for you.

R My granddaughter. Would you mind telling her …

Aboriginal people themselves, it's … from my observances it's not always Aboriginal people who approach the issue in the first place. It is quite often not and I often wonder if it were, if it may not have been approached in perhaps a different manner and then you wouldn't be dealing with so much division about it. You wouldn't be dealing with statements like well, take the cars and the clothes and you know, hand back a spare and a lap lap and let them have their land back. You wouldn't be dealing with statements and things like that because ummm but while ever we know and we're aware that there are people in higher places riding on their coat tails, so to speak, making lots of money from these issues, then I think that it'll be really hard to close the gap of division.

I A last thing. Tell me what your mother told you. Tell me did either your mother or father have statements they made that they'd say over and over to help you in life? Like my mother would always say, 'If you think you'll lose, you've lost'.

R Oh, my mother said plenty, I suppose, yet it was ummm I was from an era where a lot of those things were said to you consistently. But my father probably gave me the advice that I do think of the most, as in one of those little phrases, and he said to me, 'Never lose your

sense of humour. Bev, never lose your sense of humour' and I turned around and laughed and said, 'What, do you think I'll need it?' but I often have had to ummm consistently repeat those words. There's been times when I've thought, 'You really put the pressure on here, Dad,' you know, and things like that, and ummm but I think that's helped me. That's helped me a lot in my life, just those few little words, and I'm quite sure that when he said it, that he really had no idea how often I probably would have to even call upon that thought, but that's probably the one that I've referred to the most through the years. And there were a lot of times I didn't have the sense of humour working very well but I think that probably ummm the ability to be able to laugh again or to share a smile does help. It's good medicine.

I Thank you very much. Thank you for all you've shared with us.

R Thank you, Trish.

END OF INTERVIEW