INTERVIEW WITH JOSLIN EATTS
3 June 2000

I = Interviewer R = Respondent

TAPE 1 – SIDE A

Erica Addis on camera. This is DAT Tape No.3 for the Channels of History project. Interviewing Joslin Eatts in her home in Leo Street in Mt Isa and the current time code on the camera is 28.07. It is half-way through Camera Tape 6.

I So Joslin, I'd like to just get a sense of your life because I actually don't know that at all. So I'd like you to tell me where and when you were born and what your name was and what your parents' names were.

R Okay, well I'm a McCabe, that's our family name. My father was Harry McCabe and my mother's Alice Wilson. And we come from the Boulia area, which on my mother's side is the Pitta Pitta Groups and my Dad comes from the Murrawalli Kurrawalli Group which is the Channel Country. And my Dad was born in his country and my mother was born in hers and I was born in Winton, just on the edge. My life out there, mostly in the Channel Country was probably after Mum and Dad got married and I was on the way and the first thing I remember – I think I must have been about four years old – and I remember my Dad had two camels. My Mum and Dad had two camels and I used to ride on them. Oh, boy oh boy, what a time. And I had pets. I had bilbies and I had a pet snake and my Mum killed the snake and I remember I cried for weeks. After that, it was just roving the country.

That's most of my young life was in the bush, with them, and then we finally sort of, Mum and Dad left there. Maybe the work had slowed down by then, so they went to Winton and Boulia and they did different contract jobs. My Dad has always worked out in the open and always on his own. Mum mostly too, with him, other than when she was having another baby – my brothers and sisters which were born in the four towns of the West, that's Hughenden, Boulia, Winton and Mt Isa. And other than that, we just mostly stayed in the bush most of our life until my Mum and Dad split up and the family split up. So my Mum took my two brothers and sister and I stayed with my father. And I never saw them for a long time after that, and all I can remember was bush. Fences. Poles and posts and all that stuff that Dad worked with. I mostly stayed with him until I got married and then I sort of went away and come back. Always come back to Dad and always went back to

Winton. He was still cutting posts and even when he, before he died, he was doing, what do you call? Fowl houses, still building fowl houses and garden sheds for people. So he died when he was 87 and my Mum's still alive. And that's it.

I That that you've just told me I'm really interested in and would love to unpick and get in more detail.

R Okay.

I So your father was Murrawalli Kurrawalli, your mother was Pitta Pitta, you were born on the outskirts of Winton. Do you know the circumstances of your birth?

R Yep. Well, I don't remember it, of course, but my Mum and Dad told me that when she was ready to have me, we were working somewhere down near Kurrawilla or somewhere down the back blocks of the Channel Country anyway, and they were fencing and yard building and so they packed this couple of horses up and apparently Dad got Mum to Winton just in time for me, and she had me and then they just packed me in the saddle bag and we went back to the Channel Country again. I said to Mum and Dad 'Thanks for that'. But anyway, I guess, I think for at least four to five, maybe I was probably about maybe four, five, round about five years old and I sort of, we moved around a lot. We never had any permanent place because, by then, in 1934 my Mum and Dad got married and then they just worked around there, up until about the 1942s or '45 when the one of the Acts come in that Aboriginal people had to get paid equal wage. Well most of our people moved. They left Springvale and Diamantina Lakes Station and, of course, my grandfather was the same. He was born out there in that country, spent most of his life there until he died, and he's buried in Winton. He never left either and, actually, hardly any of our family ever left.

I It was a long, slow process. It's a confusing history, that one about wages, isn't it?

R Yes.

I Because, as I understand it, that first Act, back in about 1898, wages were supposed to be paid but it got ignored.

R Yes, that's right. Yeah. Well, when the Welfare Act came in, which was the most worst, degrading Act that this government had ever, ever put together, and the reason they did it was because there was too many Aboriginal half-caste kids around and too many old

people and, as I said, they probably foresaw what would possibly happen. They wanted the Aboriginals out because by then they were quite settled in their little places and there was too many of the older people. Their culture has gone completely. So, what they did, they just herded them in and mostly kept them and put them on reserves, which there's still evidence of the reserves down there now, which I've done a lot of research.

I Cherbourg and

R Oh, no. This is out here in this country. A few of them did go. The Native Affairs, of course, had control of everybody at that time and, of course, we had Dr Ross in Boulia. Oh very famous surgeon, he was. He was also not a very nice man. He'd dissect a lot of Aboriginal people in the hospital there and 'I suppose you're going to cut that out but I don't care'. He used to dissect them for Darwin, on his …

I

R He used to cut them up, cut Aboriginal people up in little pieces, their hearts and their brains, and stuff like that, so they could experiment, and their blood was tested to see what species they came from because he was very strongly engaged with Darwin. When Darwin came out here to Australia, Darwin also paid a visit to Ross in Boulia, but a very brief one because he took a wagon full of heads back with him and body parts.

I Oh, this is all the … when you were saying 'Darwin' I was thinking of Darwin the place but you're talking about Darwin's Theories of Evolution.

R No, Darwin the man. The Theory of Evolution. That's right. And Ross somehow became embroiled in it, too, because he had the opportunity. He was the first Protector for Aboriginal people in Boulia, so it was a great opportunity for him to do that part and they both failed anyway, so they murdered for nothing, which is a pity I suppose. But at least those people just died for science.

I You're alleging that Ross actually killed people for dissection?

R Yeah, of course he did. Everybody knows it. They all knew it. I didn't know it because I was only, oh I wasn't even born then. But my Mum and Dad, my Dad particularly, my Dad was a very smart man and, of course, we have Irish blood in us which means we're not full-bloods, and they spent all their life in the Channel Country. The whole lot of it. Dad never left the place. In 1942 my Uncle Reg left, and around about 1943 when he got

married, my Uncle Bill left it about 1945 when he got married. And my grandfather left it round about the same, oh no, after the Kidman birthday party. My grandfather went down for that. He worked for Kidman at the time and he had a fall off a horse down there in Adelaide and he was very sick after that, so when he came back he retired from stock work and ended up in the 'Curry Hospital for about four months after that. And he never went back. None of them ever went back because they would have had to pay them wages then. People like Milson and Shaws and all the others down there, they probably went downhill after that because they had no free labour any more. And they overstocked the properties, and even you can go down there at any time now and see the remnants of what they didn't do. So I guess, I'm not blaming anybody, I guess it's just the way the system was at that time, overtaking of all the lands, but they did destroy our people. The older ones, by 1924 the last old Aboriginal person was buried there. There were a few just after that and what didn't go to the Missions, because my great-great-grandmother, that's my Irish great-grandfather, great-great-grandfather, she was taken …

I What was her name?

R Her name was Dangri but he called her Jenny Lyn because he was Irish and he went to the Shearers' Strike in Winton, got involved with that, shooting people, and he was on the Irish side. He was one of the rebels, of course, and they called a mountain just outside of Cannington, actually, which is below west of here anyway, after him. It's called McCabe Mountain, because Dagworth Station wasn't far from there, so he was involved with all that shearing business and fighting and shooting and burning and all that and he was one that was sent to prison. So they sent him to St Helena Island in Brisbane and he stayed there until the First World War, so they give him an option to rot in jail or go to the front line, so he went to the front line and he survived all that. In the meantime, his wife was left at Diamantina Gate. She was a housemaid there.

I Diamantina Lake?

R Yeah. So she was left there and there was quite a few Aboriginal people there at the time. Would have been about 100. A lot of older people too. There weren't many kids because the half-caste kids were sort of taken away and a lot died out there too from disease and stuff.

I Can I just interrupt?

So this is Camera Tape 7, it's 3 June, we're with Joslin Eatts in her home in Leo Street in Mt Isa, and this is part way through DAT Tape 3.

I So your grandfather was Harry McCabe.

R No, my father was Harry McCabe.

I Your father, I beg your pardon.

R His name was Henry actually, Henry McCabe but, of course, everyone called him Harry.

I And you spoke about, then, your great-grandfather who was the Irish shearer?

R Yeah. Ah, well my grandfather was Mick McCabe and my great-grandfather was the Irishman Jack McCabe. And he, of course, had a wife and she was an Aboriginal lady. She was a Kurrawalli and her name was Dangri but he called her Jenny Lyn, which was a pure Irish name. They had five children and my grandfather was one of them. The rest, I can't tell you too much of their lives, I only know bits of their lives because grandfather never told us much at all and my Dad never told us much of the back history either. Most of Dad's stories from … was culture stuff, and where the old people were buried, he always told us that so we could find them and look after them, which is what I'm doing now.

But old Jack McCabe, I've found out quite a bit about him actually and, as I said, when he went to join the Shearers' Strike, he left her at a station on the Diamantina and she worked there while he went and did his thing with the shearers and he, as I said before, he went to war with an option of fighting in the front and he survived that and came back. When he came back, she was gone. The Native Affairs had taken her to a Mission called Taroom and she died there. So I've never been able to go up to Taroom and have a look for her grave but I've got some documented evidence so nothing much I can do there.

I Where is Taroom?

R And Jack McCabe, apparently when he came back from Diamantina Gates, after he found out she was gone, he died along the side of the road and his grave is still out there, which I'm looking for. I found it years ago and took a photo of it but the photo must be misplaced but the grave is there because my father and I used to often visit it. So he's there somewhere, but I will find him, and that's part of their life, I guess, and they just stayed in

the area. They never left it until mid-forties after the Kidman birthday party in Adelaide which my grandfather participated. He's also in the Kidman Collection in Longreach in the Stockman Hall of Fame. There's one big photograph, my grandad on a horse there, and that's it. He died in Winton. He was about 70 and so he lived, he's buried not far from Alice Duncan Kemp actually. So they were friends at one time.

I So you grew up knowing much more about the Aboriginal side of your family than about the Irish one?

R Yes. Yeah. We knew he was there but my Dad never spoke much about him, probably because he didn't know him. He would have died about, I'm just trying to think of the date on that tombstone. It was in the twenties, I think, 1920, because he came back from the war in 1915.

I When one reads a bit of the history, clearly, like sexual relationships between Aboriginal women and white men were going on all over Western Queensland.

R Yeah, that's right, they were. Well at the time when I did research on him, I just naturally assumed he was just one of those that just raped the women or lived with a woman and had their children and just took off. But he didn't. They had five children and anyone with five kids with two nationalities, it's for a reason. There had to be a deep affection there anyway. So it wasn't just one of those things. Not like the rest of them. They were out there for what they could get because there was only, in the early days there was no white women at all.

I I think there was something like one white woman for every nine white men.

R Mmmm. That's right, yeah. That's right.

I Have you ever read Tom Coles'

R Yes, I have.

I Well you know somewhere in there there's like a sentence that says 'We liked some station or other because the lubras were easy'.

R That's right.

I And it's like a sentence like that has a whole …

R Yes, well he's got Aboriginal descendants also. I mean, just about every one of them have. Costello has too. I'm not sure about Durack. I don't think so but I think one of his sons was involved with raping the women out there. So Dad reckons, and he would have known because he would have got the stories from the old people see, and that's how Aboriginal stories survive because they were passed down. But then there's nothing written so it's our word against theirs, but I believe him.

I Do you think that Aboriginal people, like your name being McCabe, that it was mostly, and I'm thinking, say, of Ruby Desace, that mostly took the name of the white father only when there was a kind of a relationship of substance as opposed to one …?

R Mostly, yes. Throughout the history that I've researched, I've found that that's quite true. That that was Aboriginal principle. They had very deep morals and principles, even though they were used and abused but that was something that they hung onto and I think spiritually, I think it was a way of telling their story too, on the other side of the tracks. Like the European side or the Irish, or whatever they were. Scottish or whatever. It was a way of leaving something behind, was a name. And, of course, the white people today don't pick that up. I mean, there's stacks and stacks of names around and you've only got to look at them. It's like Watson out there and Kurrawilli, you know, and Moses. He's throughout Alice Duncan Kemp's books. He was her leading man. Well, and Mary Ann. Watson was her father. He was a white bloke and he had the connections with Costello. But Moses was a full-blood and they sort of looked after him. He was respected but he was a different sort of a man, I guess, and there was conflict and Dad didn't know … yeah, I think Dad did know Moses because he didn't die till 1952. Moses was a very old man when he passed on. I haven't been able to find his grave, but I will.

And we were never told much about the white side. Mostly the black side. At that time you didn't. They didn't. The same as we weren't taught language either, because we could have been sent to missions too. So I probably spoke it when I was a little kid but that's about it.

I So going back, then, to your story, Joslin. So you were born in Winton.

R In Winton, yeah.

I But your parents, do you know exactly … you said you got put into the saddle bag as a tiny baby …

R Oh, yeah, then we went back to the Channel Country.

I Where abouts in the Channel Country?

R Oh, anywhere. Dad used to just, you know, there was camps all over the place and there's still yards out there today, still called McCabe Yards, that my grandfather and my Dad and my uncles all built.

I Where are McCabe Yards?

R Ah, they're all over the country out there. We've got McCabe Bores, McCabe Yards, Springvale, lots of areas. Mont Kyra we've got McCabe Bore down there. So there's, you know, looking at a map today … I'm not sure if they're still there but I think they are. Maybe not the yards but most of the older people, even the white people from around that area, they all knew about the McCabe family, so we're all pretty well known.

I So Joslin, your Dad was a fencer, was his …

R Well, when he …

I … was his skill, but he sold?

R No. When they got out from under the Act in 1927, they were free to do what they wanted to do so they went into contract work. Contract mustering, contract fixing up yards and oh, all sorts of different odd pieces of work that they did, as well as working on the station too. But they had their freedom and the whole three of them, all my uncles and my grandfather, were all given exemptions in 1927, which means they were free.

I And you got exemptions under the Act …

R Under the Act, yeah.

I … if your labour was defined as being vital to whites?

R Yes. Yes. Yes. So they stayed there and I think they were paid a small wage but Milson and the rest of them out there still didn't give them what they should have got. So even though … the Milson family is mostly the people that my family grew up with on Springvale Station and Dad always spoke highly of them. So if there was anything bad happened, he never ever said so. But it must have been very rare if something didn't

happen. And the rest of them, like the Shaws on Diamantina Gates and, of course, Kidman. Well, he was Number One out there because he did pay the Aboriginal people. The only one that ever paid them.

I Oh really?

R Yes. He didn't care whether they were under the Act or not. Mmmm, the only one. And that's probably why he was, today still …

I He was hated by the white fellas.

R Oh, hated by them, yes. Definitely. And Laura Duncan, too, Alice's mother, was the same too. They were slightly outcasted too because of the same thing. They protected the Aboriginal people around the late 1800s when the Welfare Act came down and it was slapped on every one of them regardless, and then, of course, Meston went out there and did his first report. But they protected them. There was a few stations out there that did protect them. They kept their … Milson was one of them, probably for work, my guess is, but then again, he may have had a heart too.

I Now as I understand the system, and it's complicated, so I don't understand it fully, but as I understand it, yeah, from the late nineteenth century Aboriginal people were supposed to get some payment but most of it went to the Protectors and lots of it never got through.

R Yeah. That's right. Never got through because they used it for clothing. So if a dark person went in there and they wanted a dress for the women or boots or a hat or something for the children or something for the men, you know, stockman clothes and stuff like that, that was all put down as …

I Against their wages.

R Yeah, against their wages, so by the time payday came there weren't much around. Much left. And, of course, during the fifties all the books seemed to have disappeared. Round about the fifties. And, of course, Boulia was the main protective office. That's where Ross was the very first one – Dr Ross – and then the next one was George Woods and it was sort of run by the pastoralists really.

I George Woods was the one that took all the …

R He was the photographer.

I Photographer. And we're going to see his photos?

R Yeah, yeah. Well I've got every one of them because they're all my ancestors. And he did probably, he wasn't much of a man either. He was just like the rest of them but only one thing that stands him out above them all, in my eyes, is he took those photographs. He left us something unbeknown, you know. I haven't heard anything much good about him anyway and a lot of the old people just say 'Oh, he was alright', you know. He used to ride around on a camel. He wasn't odd, I don't think, but anyway he married and he stayed in Boulia most of his life.

I By odd do you mean homosexual?

R Ah, no he wasn't a homo. No. He had a wife and I think, in Boulia, so he spent most of his life there, and he died there and is still buried there. But, as I said, I haven't heard nothing. He wasn't a cruel man, Dad said, but he did take all those photos and he only took the photos of the Channel Country and Boulia. And they're all my people. And that's the best thing that that man could have left me. It's more than a million dollars. Because he's left me something. He's left us something, our families. And one of the photos, my Dad's in one of them. And that's just absolutely wonderful. And, of course, Bogey, Alice Duncan Kemp writes about him also, well he left a couple of them and I've got another one and Dad took photos. When he was a young boy he was mad on photography.

I Your father?

R Oh yeah. He loved it. And Milson bought him this camera and he used to take all these photos of Aboriginal people. Now when my father died, I looked everywhere for them. I couldn't find those photos and I knew he had them. So I took a run down to Sydney to chase the family up and he had them down there.

I Who did?

R One of the Milsons.

I

R Mmmm. And so I ended up getting copies of them anyway.

I Is Springvale …

R But they were my father's photos.

I Sure.

R Yes, so I just … I mean, I never got the originals but it doesn't matter, I've still got the photos.

I Do I make it up, or is Springvale, is that Bob Morrish?

R Springvale …

I Bob Morrish, is that owned by Morrish?

R No. No, no. It's always had … Milson was always. Desace was in it from the beginning. I won't go back into the history because I've got all that.

I

R Yeah. Springvale Station is between Boulia and Winton. Or Boulia and the Diamantina.

I So near Diamantina Lake?

R Yes, it's about 20-odd k's away anyway. Well they were the two stations, they're the two major stations in that particular area. The Springvale where all my family were born there, on my Dad's side, except my great-grandmother's. They were born down below Murrubri. That's all their country down there. And that's the Kurrawalli lot. And Diamantina Lakes, well I've got a lot of family there too, but it was a government-owned station in the early times, after the Shaws had it for over 20 years, and McCartney, of course, had a share in it and they were very wealthy people. McIlwraith was involved with a lot of it too.

I Janet Holmes à Court

R Oh, they bought that after the Milsons sold out, yeah, they bought it round about the eighties, I think. And then, of course, it was gazetted into a National Park and so is Springvale Station now, and then I lodged a Land Claim over the lot of it so we can get some of our, well get it all back, not some.

I So I want to talk about the Land Claim stuff. Can we come …?

R Yep.

I So just talking a bit more about your childhood.

R Oh, my childhood. Yes, okay, well, as I said, my Mum and Dad busted up and Mum took my other …

I How old were you?

R I was about, Janet was a baby. I'll just try and think. About 1945-46 I think Mum and Dad busted up and she took the other children and I stayed with Dad and they were always fighting over us for quite a number of years. Dad would come and pick the kids up and we'd all be together for only briefly, then Mum would come and take the others back and I was always left with Dad and I used to often wonder why, you know, maybe they didn't want me or maybe I was a rotten kid, or maybe, I don't know what it was. But anyway …

I Was it maybe that you and your Dad were especially close?

R I think so. Probably because I think I've spent just about my entire life with him, up until he died. And probably, even after I got married, it still was the same. Probably why I divorced my husband. Because I wouldn't leave my father. So that's probably it. But anyway, Mum ended up in Ingham, up that way with the children, the other two brothers and a sister, and she came and got me. I remember I was about 11, yeah about 11. She came and got me and took me up there and I didn't want to go. I didn't want to stay there and my Dad bought me a birthday gift, a pushbike – the first pushbike in my whole life, and I loved it. So I decides not to go to school this day. I packed my schoolbag, my sandshoes, and some food, and I was going to ride my pushbike from Ingham back home. I got as far as Townsville. It took me two weeks to ride my bike from Ingham to Townsville and I was lost then. So I hid in the cemetery in Townsville for about another three more weeks, just lived on Burdekin plums and apples, and I was 12 by then, so I had to get a job, so I went and put my age up, got a job and I worked there for 12 months and caught the first train home to Dad. And I never seen Mum for a while after that then.

I So this would all have been well, we're talking the fifties here, so …

R Yeah, about the fifties, early fifties it was, yeah.

I So the Act would have been in force and you would have been under the Act, would you?

R No. No, I was … we were lucky. As I said, Mum was exempted in 1938. My Dad, uncle, grandfather and two uncles and grandfather were exempted in 1927.

I And what would you …

R So that means Mum was still under the Act in '38 and I was about a year old, so that'll give you an idea of how old I am but don't you dare put that down there. So I was only briefly under the Act for just a little while because my parents by that time, then, were exempted. So we were free and Mum and Dad could do what they wanted then. And mostly, as I said, after I was born they just worked contract work and that. But we had a topsy turvy life, my brothers and sisters, you know. At least they were together. I used to … you know we missed a lot together as kids, and today we're still very close. We don't …

I Are you the eldest?

R Yeah, I'm the eldest in the family, yeah. And Janet's the youngest, and she goes to uni too. I said 'We're both stupid bloody people, going to university at our ages'. But no, she's doing Mental Health, which is good. That's Stolen Generation and the effects, and it's very well-deserved too. Where I concentrated mainly on history and culture.

I And what was your mother's exemption based on?

R Ah, because she was half-caste and she was married. And she had a good, reliable husband, so they let her go.

I And even after the marriage broke up …

R Well, they were free. Nothing anyone could do about that then.

I So once you were out of the Act, you

R Yeah, you were free. That's right, unless you did something wrong or you were starving, you couldn't work. Now they were two exceptions. You could have been placed back on the Act.

I And I think, if you were exempt from the Act you weren't allowed to go to reserves, were you? You couldn't contact your people who were under the Act?

R Oh, no. No, no. Well, when they took poor old grandmother Jenny away from Diamantina Lakes, there was five old people destined to go on the Cobb & Co. Oh, it wasn't Cobb & Co., it was the coach, the passenger coach that used to run from Windorah and Murrubri and all those stations out there, so they were supposed to pick them up and when they got there, there was only three left. The other two had died and, of course, the rest run away and hid. But they grabbed my old great-grandmother, she was nearly 80, so there was one white passenger in this great big coach and the other three people had to walk from Diamantina Gates Station to Winton. So you could just imagine …

I Because there was one white passenger …

R One white person, yeah, that's right. They couldn't. So one of Dad's uncles died before they got to Winton. He's buried somewhere along the road. I've never been able to find out where and I can't find any documented police records but Dad said he's buried there somewhere, but you'd never ever find him in a million years. Ever. Unless bones were exposed or something, and then you wouldn't know if it was him or not anyway.

I Now Joslin, I'm going to ask you a question that you might find offensive, but I'm interested in this film to put next to each other different views of history. It's been put to us in the last week or so that Aboriginal people finding burial grounds hasn't got a basis in history because Aboriginal people would put bodies up in the trees and that then the bones would … that there isn't a kind of a burial place in the way that white fellas understand it. How would you respond to that?

R Yeah. Yeah, well that'd be right too, because they had their own customs with burial and different areas had different ways. In the Channel Country they were all buried in the sandhills and they were left there. Their bones … sometimes in some of the areas, now Dad was telling me when he was only a young boy, because he was born in 1905, even then they were still burying them traditionally, and he as a kid was never allowed, of course, at any of those special burials because they were very special ceremonies. He said they used to bury them in the sandhills and then they would get their bones out after a certain time and put them together and they were always reburied back in the sandhills. But they were in a compact. I have discovered about ten traditional graves like that and I've also discovered burials that have never had that second burial. So they're still there today. But there was a time when everything was traditionally, including burials.

Today when I find a grave, I document them, I find their history, who they are, I give them a life, and then their spirit can return. It's not just any bones, it's somebody's bones. To me they have a special meaning. Maybe not in the traditional sense from two or three hundred years ago but a different sense, but still just as spiritual, and just as meaningful. I wouldn't go and take their bones and do like they did because I wouldn't have the expertise or the rights to do it. Now each person in a family clan group has special rights and special procedures in burials. And the women did too. Each single person had a special thing to do. I can't do those things because I don't have that right. You have to be fully initiated to have that right to do that. So I'm doing, I guess, the second best thing. I'm looking after them. And I do other things that I can do now as a descendant of those people. There are special little things that I can do, which I do. It doesn't solve it completely but it does pave the way that I'm still carrying on traditionally but in a more modern way. And the feelings are still there, the deep feelings are still there, because they'll never go away. It's like if you go to a funeral today, anyone's funeral, sadness is there, the sympathy, the hurt. All those things. Even if it's not your relative, you still feel that sorrow for anyone. It doesn't matter who they are, even if you don't know the people, but out there, in that country, when I see, when I find these places, and I've found a lot so far, I document them, I have my own way of doing that, and I have a special procedure that you have to do. And that's what I do so, as I said, I can't do what they did because I don't have that right.

I So Joslin, you were with your Dad mostly around Springvale Station …

R Mmmm, mmm. And Diamantina, all that area. Winton … yes.

I That's something I don't precisely understand. Isabel tried to explain it to me and Isabel talked about how she grew up on Glen Ormiston and that her parents both worked on Glen Ormiston but then her father would be taking contracts on other stations as well. How did that …

R Well, when that happened …

I … work, I guess, between Aboriginal people and the white station owners?

R Well, just going back now, if I remember, there was times when Dad wasn't there and I remember Mum used to go into Boulia because we used to stay at the camp there, because I just vaguely remember.

I This is the One Mile?

R Yeah. No, no, not that one, that's the government one. This is the Aboriginal camp, the other one. I remember the corroborees that used to be there when I was only a kid and lots and lots of Aboriginal people, so that's probably how they did it. If Mum wasn't working, well she … she used to just help Dad. She didn't, like, he wasn't away. Like the white people's system in them times, they changed, like, from first settlement they'd shoot them or rape the women and kill the kids, or whatever, and then there was another phrase that come in, 'Oh, no, we can't kill these mob. We'll keep the best woman for sex and we'll keep the other ones to do all the work and all the stockmen'. See? 'The old people, well we'll just send them to the mission' so that was the next phrase. And then the third phrase, they got rid of all the old people. By then they had to pay wages and they only kept the women for sex partners. They all had them, every one of them. And if there was any kids, my guess they were killed, because I can't find too many half-caste kids, but most of them did die. From research material that I've found, it was a flu epidemic that the soldiers brought back from the war.

I

R In 1918, I think, or there was another one came from 1910, 1911. There was about two or three different flus that came from Europe and they were brought back by the soldiers. Not on purpose, of course.

I It was 1919, I think, yes.

R Yeah. Because that's when my Dad's mother died, in that one, and my Dad's youngest brother, and they're still buried out on Springvale.

I Now Joslin, another question that comes out of that, that you might find offensive but I'm interested in your response to it. Again, it's been put to us that Aboriginal people didn't value half-caste kids any more than whitefellas did and that Aboriginal people would have left half-caste kids to die and that part of the Stolen Generation thing was white people saving Aboriginal babies, half-caste Aboriginal babies, that would otherwise have died.

R Well my guess is, and it's not 100% positive because I haven't got no proof, only just history, oral history. They did kill some of the babies at the very beginning, but not many, because by that time they knew what was happening down south. Aboriginal people had a

wonderful way of telecommunication and Australia was so vast but they knew what the whites were doing, how they were just moving in and just taking over and shooting Aboriginal people, take up the best lands and all that. They knew that so they were waiting for them, even on Diamantina Gates in 1864. They were waiting for them because they murdered him. Which I found his grave in the massacre site that followed afterwards. So that's just one of the events but they were prepared anyway, and they were prepared to die too, to protect their country.

I And going on beyond that kind of …

R And the kids, yeah. Yes.

I … savage period, I wondered, for instance, and I need to put this question to Isabel so I'm not asking you to tell me about Topsy but I just use this as an example. You know how Topsy, Isabel's Mum, Topsy Hanson's Dad was Scottish …

R Yes, know all about her.

I Yes, and her Mum died as Topsy was born and the story is that Topsy was left for dead.

R That's right.

I And I must say I asked Isabel, 'Wouldn't the Aboriginal women around Topsy have looked after the baby?'.

TAPE 1 – SIDE B

R I don't think so. No. Personally, at that time, there was a lot of hate for them because they knew and fear, fear was a lot of it, and they'd heard all about what they were doing in Victoria, Adelaide and New South Wales, how they were taking the kids away and just raping even kids. Even in Burketown they had a special place up there where they used to just rape the young kids.

I So you're saying there was fear of half-caste …?

R Yeah. Yeah. Because they knew they were special, they were treated better than the black ones. See Victoria bred them. That was the breeding farm. Victoria was the very first, actually, that they bred them, and it was for a purpose. To bring the women out. And so

they could have a white race, pure white race, with no convicts. Victoria was the only state in this country that did it. It was like farming. They bred them for reasons.

I You're saying that traditional Aboriginal people would have seen whitefellas as creating half-caste babies to breed the Aboriginal out …?

R Yeah, they knew everything. They would have got all that wind from all down south and they also got the last version. 'Please don't kill any more babies because we're too many of us going too fast' and by that time, by the sixties, by the 18 … that's just my brother.

I Hello.

R It's just two friends, just doing a little bit of thing.

I Hello, I'm Trish.

R Trish and Erica, and that's Stan.

So by the 1860s, they'd known all what was happening and what to look for the future then, so they started to protect the kids then, the best that they could, used to hide them. And even Mum will probably tell you too, when she was little her Mum used to cover her with charcoal so they'd make out she was real black, see, because she was half-caste too. Her father was a whitefella. And they did it to a few others, too, around. And this is in the early 1900s, they were still hiding half-caste kids. But by then they'd treasured them, too, at that time then. Say from about 19 … maybe from the 1900s onwards, or even before that, they started to really look after them because they knew their race was dying and they had to have somebody left.

I So you're saying that traditionally Aboriginal people may have killed half-caste babies to keep their own culture together?

R Yeah.

I But as things became more and more dislocated …

R That's right. They knew they had to hang on because they probably foresaw the future. They were very spiritual-minded people. I mean, they lived in the past, thousands and millions of years back, it's only natural or them to think millions ahead, in front, and that's what they did. So that was one way of preserving their culture. They knew, because once

an Aboriginal person is born, it's what comes in here and it'll never go away. And it doesn't matter how educated you are, either, or how far any generations to come will go, you're Aboriginal in here. And you've only got to talk to some of those people in Victoria. Since I've been going down to university down there, I was surprised. I thought 'Oh, my God, what are all these white people doing here? At this Koori institution?' They were all black. And then I delved into a bit of the back history, then, of Victorian Aboriginals, and that's what I found. And it's true. You've only got to go down there to see that. You talk to people and they're Aboriginal people but they're whiter than most Europeans. Culturally, they're more educated, they live in beautiful homes and married white blokes, or maybe white, I don't know. They're probably Aboriginals too. But they just live normal lives but it was the breeding system. There weren't too many people escaped that.

I So Joslin, you then, both your parents were part Aboriginal?

R Yeah.

I Did you, in any way, grow up feeling something less because you were not fully Aboriginal?

R No. No, I didn't, actually.

I I shouldn't say 'fully Aboriginal'. You know what I mean.

R Yeah, I know what you mean, yeah. No, I didn't because I remember a lot of the kids around Boulia when I was little, and even in Hughenden after when we were over there, Dad was carting wood for the powerhouse, there was a lot of little black kids there too, so we got on … I always got on well with them. But most of my young life was fight. I used to fight my way through school, through everything, and got expelled quite often for punching them up, name-calling and that sort of stuff.

I So that was racism?

R Yeah, racism. Yeah, right through, and then of course we come up, Stanley and Janet, Johnny and I, we would have come up through that time when there was, it was just time to fight. You had to beat racism. That was the main thing and by then we were free, see. We were born free. That's what it was. And we couldn't understand why we weren't free because even in Winton, I remember, we all lived in camps. We never lived in a town. We used to live in a camp called Boomerang Alley which was just outside of town and we

were there for quite a while and we had to go to school, and that was terrible, you know. Boy, oh boy, did I fight. And when I look at some of the old people there now, you know, blokes I bashed up. We smile now. Yeah, God I used to give them hell.

I So tell me about that.

Can I just stop you there? We'll put a new tape in.

R Good, time for a smoke.

I I haven't been writing down the numbers have I?

R But they're all on your tape aren't they? They're all on your tape, yeah. Probably when you go over my stuff you're going to edit half of it anyway. (Laughs)

I See, the thing is, Joslin, we're at the moment, it's a broad research process and all of this is valuable for the oral history.

R Oh, of course it is, yeah.

I And then, from this, I want to make what will probably be like a 50-minute documentary. So you just imagine if I'm doing …

R Will I get a tape?

I I'd love to give you a tape.

R Oh, thank you. I would truly appreciate that. It'll be something, because I did one of my Dad before he passed on, you know, a video. Wonderful.

I When we finish filming, I've got what's called a release form that I hope you'll sign that will give me rights to use this interview but we can talk then, you know, what you would like.

R Yeah, okay, alright. I can't remember where we were now.

I We were talking about …

R Children? Were we talking about children?

I We were talking about Boulia.

R Half-caste children?

I We'd started to talk about school. I think that's what we've got there.

R That's right, school, yes. That's right, during my time.

I The fights at school.

R Yeah, it was really bad because …

I Hang on.

R Okay, okay.

I Oh, no, we are recording.

R Alright. It was bad when I was going to school because we were living in Hughenden at this time and because I'm left-handed and at that time they still had the British belief that if you were left-handed it was wrong, you were evil, or dominated by Satan and the devil, and that came back through their old Celtic myths from way back in the early century of their history. But they did carry it, not in all schools, but Hughenden, it must have been through that teacher, probably through his family, lilfestyles, and that sort of stuff. So, because I was left-handed, he broke these four fingers on my hand because I wouldn't … I was a left-handed writer. So, needless to say, my Dad came down, bashed him up and they arrested Dad and put him in the lockup for a couple of days, but he went to court and I don't know what the outcome of that, I never really asked Dad, but he was out anyway. He didn't stay in there very long. Probably got fined, I'd say. But after that, that teacher left and we never seen him again and, of course, my finger, well it had given me four months of leisure. No school. (laughs) So I loved it. But that was the worst part of my schooling days other than fighting my way through. Needless to say, I didn't get much education. We were only briefly in towns because Mum and Dad always worked out … contract work always entailed bush work.

I And what was it that kept your parents moving? Like, they weren't afraid to be taken under the Act, it seems. What was the engine to move?

R Well, I think it was freedom. Freedom to do what they wanted to do. And freedom to be in the bush, because that's the life they chose. I mean, they grew up through that way. My

Mum was the same and my Dad, too. And even today, I mean, you see evidence, even today, Aboriginal people, where they live is always close to their lands. That's why I still live in Winton. And when I bought that house in the seventies, I never knew that we had the Irish link there. Never knew until I started doing some history research of old Winton and I discovered that he had that piece of land. He had the whole block, actually, for his bullock wagons, and I thought 'Well, wow, if that isn't something deep. Of all houses, I had to go and buy that place'. I could have bought any house. I could have bought any house at all and, of course, after my life in the west as a young girl and a teenager, I was sort of just working in hospitals and … mostly hospitals I worked in. I didn't like station work and so I stayed mostly there till I got married and then my life changed.

I So, I want to talk about marriage but why didn't you like station work?

R I don't know. I mainly liked the hospital work. I suppose it was cleaner and there wasn't any chance of any bloke raping me or anything like that. I couldn't be locked up like my old people were. And I think that's basically the reason why.

I So did you directly observe girls being raped?

R Oh, yeah. Yeah. And, of course, alcohol. Well, we never drank, see, my Mum or Dad or any of us. A couple of the kids do now, like my brother there and one sister. They like a pot or two but I don't, never did. My Mum and Dad never either.

I So in what kind of circumstances did you see Aboriginal women being raped?

R Well, I didn't actually see them being raped but Dad told me what they used to do out on the stations. They all had an Aboriginal house, a specific house, only young girls in there, all for the white men. Every station had them. They were called stud places. Springvale had them, Diamantina Gates had them. Every station imaginable. Durack had one. Costello had one. All the big heroes had that.

I And they were jails, essentially, weren't they?

R Yeah.

I

R Yes, they were locked up and they were only used for sexual purposes and, as I said, their kids were probably killed. I don't know. Maybe they got a few out. It's hard to say. I never really did much research in that because to talk, when you're doing research in Aboriginal history, you have to talk to people and there's not much documented, I can tell you that, because the whites hid it. Mum's aunty is one of them, although he looked after her and his white wife accepted it because she had no choice anyway. So Mum was the same. Her people were all station people but Mum will tell you that side of that.

I So your Dad, you grew up with your Dad telling you these stories?

R Mostly, yeah. Yeah. Oh, yeah. And I believed him. Everything my father has told me, maybe not everything. He didn't tell me some … some things he'd tell me, little fibbers that I found out were not true. Other things he never told me nothing that I found out. But the things that he did tell me were honest things. They were cultural things. They were to do with the family, the history, and the way they were treated on the stations and them old people, the last poor old fellas still buried out there, and that was a really sad thing. There was eight old people left in 1924 and they were all in their seventies and their eighties, all waiting to be transported to the mission.

I On, this is Springvale?

R Diamantina. They moved them from surrounding stations, see. After Meston's report they started rounding and sorting them up then, see. And the few … they had a lot of the old people herded in special areas. They always had special areas set up for them. [Witchula??] was one of them. Meston got that one fixed up with Costello because that was part of his land, so that was a way of shoving everyone in there and all, oh yeah, you know …

I So was a station but all the old people got rounded up and put on one station?

R Yeah. Eventually, yeah, they must have made a deal with Costello so it was proclaimed an Aboriginal Reserve and there was well over two or three hundred Aboriginal people there by the 1900s. And 1904, I think, it closed down by then. They'd herded them all into Diamantina Station because that was another big reserve there. They had relay camps, what they call relay stations. We call them holding yards because that's where they used to hold them and there were usually sections, kids in one section, women in the other section,

and the men were always out on the stations anyway, working, and the old people were always in a section so they could dispose of them very smartly.

I And Palm, if anybody bucked the system …

R Oh, yeah, straight to Palm, yes. One of Mum's ancestors murdered one of the blokes that he worked with. Oh, boy, that was good. Everyone cheered. They thought it was great because he was a very cruel man and that's wonderful. I think one of the last ancestors died here a few years ago and we all laughed and we all had a merry old time. I rang Mum and she said 'Oh, God. Good'. But he was one of those cruel people. There were a lot of them but there were also good ones too.

I So Joslin, there is here, in just researching this film so far, there's an ugliness in that history …

R Oh, yes.

I … deeper than I even realised.

R Yes. Oh, there's a lot of ugly things.

I I want to come now to your life and I understand you saying you didn't want to work on stations.

R No.

I What were the race relations and the sexual relations and the gender relations that you observed as a young person on stations?

R Well, I knew if you went onto the station you'd have to end up in the bed with the bloody station owner, or the manager. That's where you'd have to, or you'd end up on Palm Island or Cherbourg. And they'd just work the guts out of you anyway. Get you pregnant and shove you on a mission. So I avoided those places. I wouldn't work on them. I always made certain I had a job in town somewhere, at the hospitals, or the pubs. I didn't like the pubs very much but I did work in a few of them, but mostly the hospitals is where I worked mostly, throughout my working life. Even after I got married I was still working in hospitals.

I So, from what years, from what ages would you have been on Springvale with the Milsons?

R Oh, I was only a little kid. After that, as I said, my Mum and Dad were free and they just did contract work and I just went with them till we ended up in Hughenden and I think it was the first year that I got my fingers here broken. So I could write right-handed, and I still can't write right-hand either. But from there, then, we just moved around until Mum and Dad busted up and I just worked where I could get work, and one thing, we could get work. You just had to watch where you were working, that's all, and who you were working for. But there was quite a few of them. One bloke tried to, I remember, he was a wardsman, tried to be smart and I remember kicking him in the fork and I think I must have busted one of them. But he copped it. He was going to get me charged and I said 'What for?' because I was very cheeky when I was young. I used to stand up to them all, coppers and all, because we knew the secrets and Dad was good at relating a lot of that stuff. And I was good, too. I used to observe a lot of things, like if there was whitefellas mucking round with black women, you know. I used to go out of my way to let them know that I knew too.

So it happened in a lot of the towns. I avoided it mostly and most of my jobs, even from there, like when I got married, I was still sort of working on and off when I could to help with the money – it was pretty tough – and he worked in the Railway. Then we busted up and I ended up moving down to Brisbane then, where I could get the kids education, better education. There was hardly anything out here then. And a bit of a tough battle for a while. I used to work, because you couldn't get the dole in them days, you couldn't get pensions or anything, so I used to work in a cannery down there then. And I think most of my life I was backwards and forwards. I'd go down to Brisbane and work for a while and I'd go back to Winton because Dad was still out there working around there, and till about the seventies when things changed. There wasn't that much racism around, I noticed, because I've had fights with teachers, throwing teachers out the window too and been charged with assaults and all them things, or bashing them up, because they were cruel to my kids. I copped it when I was young and I wasn't going to let it happen to them. So there were quite a few of those conflicts during the time when my kids were going to school but boy, oh boy, it's a wonder they didn't lock me up for life. I was really, really a nasty person. But I think it was, just going back over the years, you've just got to stand up stronger and you had to learn to fight.

I I'd like to understand a little bit more about …

Now I'm rolling, so it's 1708 here and it's 1345 on the camera, thereabouts.

Joslin, you wanted to tell me one more thing about life with your husband and how you brought up your children.

R Yeah, it was really hard, difficult, and he was working in the Railway and Mum was living here in Mt Isa then, and she went down to Brisbane so we sort of followed her down there, and then things went wrong from there. Just one of those things, I guess. He ended up picking up with someone else. So it left me with all these children.

I How many children?

R I had six kids then, and I was pregnant with my seventh. So I had no money, no way of getting anything at that time. So I got a job in the cannery. I worked then till I started having pains. I booked straight into the private hospital, down The Valley there, had the baby and went straight back to work. They give me two hours, so it took me two hours. I went straight back to work. And then I was there, just kept working for a while and got sick, and I ended up picking up with a bloke. I lived with him for a while and had some more children and that was a battle too. I was still doing the same thing, working and that, but I had a partner too. That didn't last long either. He sort of turned into an alcoholic and so we just split and went our separate ways and then I moved into … and I become a cab driver. I drove a cab for seven years in Brisbane to support my kids. That was a good way of looking after them and making money at the same time. I was lucky enough to win a licence through the government auctions. So I bought into the cab. I owned it, paid it off, and I leased it out in 1975, went back to Winton, leased it back to the company for 12 months and then till I got a buyer, and sold out my interests in Brisbane and bought the house in Winton that my ancestor owned, which I didn't know at that time.

From there, then, I tried to get a job in Winton but that attitude was still there, you know, and I didn't have the skills. I had no skills, not much schooling either to go with it, so I … and at the time a couple of the kids wanted to do Year 11 and 12 and they didn't have that facility in Winton so we packed up and went back to Brisbane. The girls finished their 11 and 12 and I went to TAFE College and did a two-year course on Aboriginal and Islander History and it got me a Diploma. It wasn't much but it was something, so from there, then, I got a job as a Liaison Officer at Cherbourg Community, Aboriginal Community, and I

spent two years there, and that was, my interest was aroused then with history, so I started doing family trees of the Aboriginal people at Cherbourg. And a friend of mine, a little white girl, she was the secretary for the Community Services, we combined our skills together and we created the Cherbourg Historical Society. Between the two of us, we did all the histories of all the people and some of their stories and we had a newsletter that we used to put out little bits and pieces of interest on history.

And then I got homesick, packed up and come back to Winton, and I couldn't get a job. By then, you know, without a job I was had it and I thought 'Here I am'. I didn't want to go back to working in hospitals and pubs. I had a degree in something better, so I ended up getting a job over here in Mt Isa and from here, I stayed there for a little while and then I become involved with government contract work then, because 1986 was the first year that the Census involved Aboriginal people. So I become involved in doing all the government work and the Electoral Commission opened up the way then for ATSIC so since then that's the only work I've ever done is government contract work for the Bureau of Statistics, and I did housing surveys with a couple of private firms that do surveys and …

I You did the Pipeline Project?

R And that came up. The Pipeline Project came up and that gave me an opportunity, then, to move back into the country and follow up on the interest that I had in history, and I've always been interested in history from my Dad, way back, and I just developed my own style and I'm a private researcher now. I don't say, I'm not skilled, I don't have any degrees or anything but a lot of people come to me for assistance, so that'll tell you something. And even the John Oxley Library send people out to me, and that's black and white.

I And you are now doing a degree, a higher degree, aren't you, with Deakin?

R Yeah, with Deakin University now. And it's been wonderful. It was cultural interpretation. Because of my land claim, in 1992 the land became available and, of course, the Mabo Decision had just came down then and awaiting the WIK Decision, so I started moving things into place to lodge a land claim. So in 1992 I lodged my very first one under the Lands Act but I was knocked back because the parks were not gazetted at that time, so I kept pushing and pushing until, finally, I just got there. And my land claims, so far, are

going ahead steadily, following the guidelines, and I do a lot of undercover stuff, too, like land protection and cultural management and history.

I Where do you reckon is the source of your passion for history? You mentioned your father.

R Yes.

I What did your Dad tell you about history?

R Well, he said it was very important to preserve it as much as we can. We have one advantage now. We have computers that we can document things and they're preserved forever. The oral history that Aboriginal people had died out, sort of thing, during his growing up time, so just using the modern techniques, I mean we're just as active as what they were. I still don't have any computer skills, only the basics, but some of the kids chip in occasionally and type things up for me that I want done, but I still do all basic writing and I'll keep all my history in books and I'll have a couple of little small pamphlets of different sections of my work that I do and surveys and the history of the Channel Country, I know everything.

I So Joslin, when you were saying that you think that computers have given Aboriginal people a way of transmitting their culture, similar to the old oral system, do you want to explain that?

R Yes. Well, it's not similar but it's a way. It's not similar. You can't do anything with a computer that comes straight from your heart, because when you're writing English, which is what we have to use, you can portray some of your feelings in the work that you do by words that you use, but it's not the same because you can't combine the oral history with your land. I tried to do it with pictures, like the book that I did, with the pipeline. I tried to portray what things I've felt, how I felt about that, by using those pictures. It didn't quite make it but it's there, you know. But it's not the same. It's just a different method, a different way of preserving history, because a lot of the people, say, during Dad's time, they held back a lot of stuff from him too, probably, because you had to follow the law and Dad was initiated but he may not have been fully initiated. You see, we come from a very high degree race of people. They were all kings, even on my mother's side, which means they were very special people. So they had very strict guidelines to follow and Dad knew that but I didn't know that at the time until I got into deeper research. And, of course, with Native Title we have to go right back now and there's been a whole lot of stuff. Alice

Duncan Kemp's work, I've always been an avid writer and reader. I love books, I have a lot of first editions. I just love them. So I've had all her books. I bought them every time they came out, the first one even I bought as soon as I was able to read and, you know, be really interested in it. And it wasn't for a few years that I begin to understand the meaning of her books. The things that she put in there all were my family.

I So Alice's first book came out, I think, in 1932.

R Yes.

I So that would have been before you were born.

R That's right, yeah.

I So when do you remember first being aware of Alice's books?

R Oh, I'd say about, probably about 10 years ago, that I … because I look for everything to do with history. So I combine the stuff that I've got and build it … you build history by what other people write. One good thing that English language and books have given people like me is their history and that gives me an opportunity to dissect them, because they only tell you the good things but they do tell you locations. They tell you where they were, what years they were there and on the other side of the Aboriginal histories, you get all the other stuff, and you can put them together very simply. If he was the father of that child, there he was, the year that that child was born. It's a bit difficult doing Aboriginal history but I've developed a very good style that works very well and probably because the interest has always been there anyway, and I like the truth. If nothing else, I go for truths and facts and always have on the sideline something to back it up, so you have their books that they write about their histories.

I So you're saying that for you to read the history written by white people gives you a way to understand their perspectives?

R Oh, yeah, definitely. And how I found my family in Alice's books was one name. It was Poperara, King of the Diamantina River, and Moses. Well Moses was my grandfather's cousin. They were first cousins, by blood, too. So I just tracked them all back and there they were. They were all in her books. Even my grandfather's name is there. My Dad's name wasn't. It could have been one of the young boys that she mentions in there, young boys, but I don't know for sure. But Mick, you can't mistake that. There was only ever

one Mick in that area and that was Michael McCabe. There's never, ever, been another one.

I And Michael McCabe was your grandfather?

R Grandfather, yeah. And plus he was tall. He was handsome. Very handsome.

I So you probably told me and I've missed the connection somewhere but Moraberry is a long way from Springvale.

R That's right.

I It's probably what, three or four hundred kilometres?

R Yeah, probably round about that.

I So how had your … you said your Dad was Kurrawalli and your Mum was …

R No, my Dad's Murrawalli, my grandfather is Kurrawalli on his Mum's side. Because she is Kurrawalli.

I Right. So your Dad was from the lower Channel Country.

R His mother, no my Dad is from the top. The Murrawalli. His mother was Murrawalli person. That was their clan group. And my grandfather's mother was Kurrawalli and they linked up and Poperara, King of the Diamantina, that's in and throughout her books, he was born at Poperara which is in the middle, and he has both connections. Now, that was the name that tore me back to her books and I thought 'My God. How would she ever know that?' and I researched and found all Native Affairs records and my Dad's and grandfather's certificates, everything I could find on them, and they were there.

I Now it's interesting, I've interviewed a number of people, well a couple I suppose, so far, and talked to some others on the phone. White people from around Windorah, Jundah, don't necessarily give great credence to Alice Duncan Kemp's books …

R Of course they don't.

I … partly because they say that Alice left Moraberry when she was 20 and she was writing the books …

R You see Alice didn't … Alice wrote the books but it wasn't her words. They were written by an Aboriginal person. That is why her books are different.

I Do you want to explain that?

R Yeah, Moses wrote them. And Mary Ann helped. They were both educated. Alice only just wrote them. And if you've seen any copies, and Pam will tell you the same thing, so will Yvette, there's no way in the world that that white woman could write the way she did. And that would only come from a blackfella's heart, not from hers. And she tried so hard, she's like Yvette, she tried so hard to get that feeling of belonging but she never, ever reached it. Right throughout her life, Alice never reached it. But she tried so hard. It would be like Yvette, it'd be the same thing. And she'll never get there because they're not Aboriginal. Simple. But they can get close. I mean, it's not what they want but it's close and maybe they're going to have to be … and I'm sure Alice was the same, although they reckon even before Alice died she was moody, she was quiet, she was very secretive, and she used to lock herself up in her rooms and she was weird. So she searched probably most of her life and still never got what they had. The feeling of freedom and love for the land, the culture, the true spirit of everything. The honesty, the truthfulness and the deep religious feelings of everything that grew, the land, the trees, the water, the birds, everything.

I So Alice left Moraberry, I think in 1923, something like that. When she wrote the first of the books, she would have been I think married, travelling round with her husband …

R Yeah.

I … and as I understand it, because there was bad blood between, I'm not sure whether between Alice and Laura or which of the Lauras, you know, Alice and her Mum or Alice and her sister.

R Probably the sisters, I think, because Alice remarried, see, and none of them knew.

I You mean Laura remarried.

R Laura remarried, yeah, and none of them knew. She kept it a secret. And then when he died, well she had an affair with the other bloke. And they never knew that either.

I Are you talking about Arthur Churches?

R Yeah. Yeah. He was her boyfriend, he was the last one. And he only came there as a, he was just a rabbit shooter. He was a nobody, a nothing, and she, well there was limited men out there in them times and the whitefellas would have had their own wives, you know, and there were plenty of black women so why would they want another white one? They usually only had one white one and a lot of other Aboriginal women. So Laura was fair. I still think there's, I haven't found it yet but I will.

I You haven't found what?

R Laura's identity.

I You're talking about Laura the daughter?

R No, Laura the mother.

I Laura the mother?

R Laura the mother, yeah, when old William Duncan died, she remarried and then when he died, she lived with the other bloke, so as I said, that's all been, even the family never knew a lot of that. So it was probably kept secret because you're not supposed to do them things, see.

I I know Robyn said that her Mum, yeah, didn't tell her a lot about the first Laura, Laura the mother.

R No, no, that's right. Very rarely is anything spoken of her and if you go through all her books, she only mentions one or two sisters' names, so they couldn't have been close at all. And none of them were involved with Alice's thing.

I So what I want to understand, Joslin, is exactly what you believe, because Alice left Moraberry in the, say, early twenties …

R About the twenties, I think, yeah.

I … and I think only came back about three times so would barely have seen Moses and …

R Well Moses didn't go very far. He only went as far as Windorah and that was only briefly. He stayed around Mornay for most of his life. He was on Mt Leonard as a black tracker for a while and then he retired then, and died in 1952. And that's where he's buried, on

Mornay station. And Mary Ann's buried a bit further down at Pitoota. That was his sister. So they never left the place, and plus the fact he could write, you know. And have you seen that handwriting? Oh, you wouldn't have seen any of the notes, eh? That's been left. Yeah. Some is very good writing and the rest is real illiterate looking. Alice, from what I can gather, some of the stuff, I can't even find her listed in any of those private schools that she was supposed to have gone to. So maybe she didn't have any education. I shouldn't be talking about her like this. As I said, she left me something that nobody could ever leave. She left our people, and she was probably just a pawn, a person, or someone to relay something on for someone else. I think a lot of us, maybe not a lot of us but some of us, are probably meant to do those things anyway. There's always something in someone's life that you benefit someone else. I don't know, it's just things that I can see sometimes, and I think she left that for us. Because what she did, she put all the tribes on Moraberry Station. She put every tribe on Moraberry Station. Now common sense is going to tell you that that could never have happened. Never. Never, ever, could happen. All those people in one station? No.

I Because traditionally they would have had …

R Rights. Even if they were hunted off their lands from Kurrawalli or Diamantina Gates or any of the stations round there, Mont Kyra, there's no way in the world, even Debney, he's had Aboriginal descendants, too.

I Debney?

R Yeah. He was on Kyra. So, no, but she put everybody on Moraberry Station. Everybody. And they did not all come from Moraberry. Even Clara, there's a lady she mentions, Clara, in her books. Clara comes from Springvale Station. She was there during my Dad's time and I have a picture of her and how she says she, what's the word she used? 'With her heart, she gave me her son'. Now that's a lot of crap. He was sent there by the Native Affairs and I found the reference to it, too, through Native Affairs records. So a lot of it's lies. I've dissected her books. I've dissected them that much, there's not much left of them. There's not much left of Alice Duncan Kemp, and her dream. What she did leave, as I said, she left what she wrote, yeah of course, but the rest I've dissected it.

I So is what you're saying that Alice didn't actually write the books?

R No. She wrote the books alright, because she had the typewriter to do it. I couldn't imagine a blackfella having a typewriter. But she wrote them, but it weren't her words, they were all Aboriginal words. And what she did, she just put them all in, on one station. She's got history there of Wonkamara people. She's got history of Doori people. She's got history of Pitta Pitta people. She's got history of Murrawalli Kurrawalli people. She's got history of that many people. Wonkamatla people. She's even got history of the Kullalli and Boothamara people from over the Cooper's Creek. Now that's not hers, that's come from McKenzie. Because McKenzie …

I Who's McKenzie?

R That's the second husband. Husband No.2.

I Laura's second husband.

R Second husband, yeah. Yeah, well he did a bit of exploring and a lot of that stuff that she writes in there about Aboriginal people coming over here on a land bridge, that's all a lot of crap too. That's all his stuff and plus his father was a scientist. His father was a very educated man from England and he was over in the New Hebrides and India and all them places doing all that indigenous research there. That's all his stuff that she used. She must have had access to it, probably the son kept a lot of his father's things, and you know there's a lot of stuff in there but, as I said, I don't want to tear Alice down because she left a lot for me. Stuff she'll never dream of, even in death. So no, I always give a reference to her when I'm writing any material on the history of our country down there and legends and stuff like that. I always put a little reference to Laura, not Laura, to Alice, because she kept it together. It could have been lost. See? Native Affairs could have got it and dissected that too. It would have been burnt.

TAPE 2 – SIDE A

I **This is DAT Tape 3 and camera tape 9 and both camera and DAT are starting out new and we're with Joslin Eatts.**

R Now just end her off now with what do you want to know? Native Title?

I Yeah.

R Okay.

I So just to finish off with the Alice Duncan Kemp stuff, you think that Alice has pieced together lots of different people's stories.

R Yeah, she did write about other groups but she put them all in one place. It was probably a lot easier for her.

I One way of viewing her books, it seems to me, is that just as in the way of instead of describing one particular trip, she put together all the trips she'd ever done, so you could say that instead of describing just her experience of Aboriginal people, she was putting together all the …

R What she was putting together, she was putting together other Aboriginal people's stories. Like a lot of those trips, she wouldn't have been allowed on. There's no way in the world she'd have been allowed on any of those secret journeys that she tells you she went to, unless they were forced with a gun, and I don't think Alice would have done that. I don't think she was that sort of person but maybe at that time, it was the early 1900s, it was a very bad time, a lot of the old people were dying, starving, and they were chased off their land, they weren't allowed in certain areas any more, so maybe they utilised Alice and used her too, and said 'Okay, sister, you are one of us. You come with us' because they knew they wouldn't shoot her. So they probably used her so they had access to their sacred places. That's my guess. And they would have told her what … the things that she wrote would have came from someone else, Mary Ann probably. And she was an educated girl, too. She was a half-caste because, as I said, William Watson was her father and he was the first manager on Kurrawilla Station that Costello bought, oh didn't buy, he took it off, just took the land and built a shack up there and he was the manager. He was the first manager on that place. Well, that's where they were born and actually their mother is still buried

there. Which I found her grave too. And Moses is called after Moses in the Diamantina area. Mary Ann is called after his sister. And they're on the map today. Poperara, my great-great-grandfather, my Dad's grandfather, Poperara down there, Waterhole. There's Poperara Station. Our names are spread right throughout that land and they'll never go away.

I What Pam's thesis that she puts forward, essentially, in her book is that because Alice … you know the story of the tree falling on her head as a child …

R Yeah, yeah.

I … that she was seen by Aboriginal people as being somehow different from other kids.

R She probably was. She may have been a quiet girl and maybe black people at that time had brains and they used the whites too, and they would have picked that up straight away. A way of getting access. They all did it. Probably my people did too. Because if you didn't, what would happen to you, you'd be sent to a mission. So they did have brains and they used them too. They let the whites think that they were in control but they weren't. So that's how they would have done it. Just through using their brains.

I I mean, it's interesting to me from Alice's work that I've read, one doesn't get the idea that whites were strictly in control actually. I mean, stuff like the Aboriginal people telling the Duncan Kemps where to plant and where to put their house and which parts of the place you couldn't go to. I mean, I get a strong sense of Aboriginal power, actually, from Alice's books.

R That's right. Oh, yeah. There's a lot of that in there, too, and some of it would have come from McKenzie, the second husband, because I think he's got a little question mark up there too that I haven't fully researched him yet, but I'll let you know when I do. So he's the other link.

I And were you suggesting that Alice's sister Laura may have had an Aboriginal father?

R No.

I No. When you were saying Laura doesn't …

R Only Alice. Only Alice, I think, was the odd one. Whether she had a black father, I don't know, and it's a possibility, but don't put that down. Wipe it off, for God's sake, because otherwise all of Robyn's mob there … don't let that go, please.

I Okay.

R Just that one bit. But that's only my private view. I don't know. Alice herself, as I said, whatever her life was, however she lived it, was something that helped her through her life and no doubt because she was a quiet, isolated girl out there, and friendly with the black people, and that was a no-no in them days, you weren't supposed to be on equal basis with them, you had to keep them down on the ground all the time. And maybe Alice, and maybe even her mother, were different. They treated them equal. And, of course, they probably would have been rejected by the rest of the whites. I mean, they're all people like Milsons, the Shaws, they're all come from big places, or made out they did. They were just ordinary people, really, just with a bit of money backing, like McIlwraith. He owned the bank, the National Bank, he owned just about, he had interests in everything. Also an Aboriginal daughter, too.

I And what were you telling me about Debney?

R Debney was the same. He had an Aboriginal son and that was hid. Alice brings it up but she puts it in a different perspective, but that was his son, but I think he was killed. They all did. But I mean, if you went down, see one of them is still down there now, managing it, one of the ancestors. Oh, God, he'd probably have you arrested. But they don't want to know their history. They don't want to think that they've got Aboriginal connections and I don't know why. Why? Just because they've got different colour skins, or … they should be proud.

I I guess it's that history of rape and, you know, that's what I would say …

R That's right. That's what I reckon. And most of it was rape too. When you read authors, even Reynolds too, there's quite a few of them actually. I'm just reading that Hothouse's books, Hector Hothouse. My God, that's a lot of crap. But what he does, he does write the stories, see. But they dramatise it and make everything look good for them, like they blame the black trackers for the Hornet Bank massacre. They blame the Cullen------?? massacre, they blame the blacks for that. It wasn't their fault. They only reacted. The same as anybody would. If a bloke come up to you and pointed a gun at you, what would

you do? You'd react, wouldn't you? You wouldn't just stand there and say 'Okay, shoot me'. It's a natural human procedure. You just react to it and you try and survive and that's what most of them did. And they survived in all sorts of ways and, as I said, they befriended Alice the best way they could do it, probably the only way they could do it, where they knew the whites weren't interested and the whites had no understanding, so they used her for their own protection and their own way of getting across the country free, without being shot.

I

R Yeah, well that was their way of survival, I guess, and able to look after their places. And most of her work is all about mustering camps and their travels to different areas and checking pegs and naturally the blackfellas want to go along. They want to go see their country too. So, as I said, they just used their brains. But there could have been a genuine friendship. [knock at the door] Go away! Oh, I've got visitors love. A little mate of my grandson's.

But whatever the real reason we probably will never know. As I said, Alice did a wonderful job putting it all together. She's kept it, because if she hadn't the Native Affairs would have got it and destroyed it. But she didn't write it. She wrote it, actually, typing it out and that sort of thing. She could have changed some of the verses, but not very much.

I So you're suggesting that Moses or Mary Ann …

R Yeah, both …

I … wrote stuff and sent it to Alice.

R Both. Give it to her, yeah.

I Do you have any direct evidence for that?

R No. Just the words. The way they're written. And common sense. You've only got to read her books, they're so different than anything else anybody else has ever written.

I But you've seen handwritten notes that are part of her private papers?

R Yeah.

I With different handwriting?

R Yeah. And Yvonne picked that up too. She'll tell you.

I So who's Yvonne?

R Yvonne. Not Yvonne, Yvette.

I Yvette.

R Mmmm. She picked it up.

I Whose handwriting do you think it is?

R Moses. Have to be. Yvette picked it up and she's an educated person, so she's probably the only one but that's because of the interest that she has, see? Anybody else just reading it wouldn't. They wouldn't want to go any further than just to read the book and say 'Oh, yeah, that was a good book. Different, but good' and just put it back on the shelf. But because Yvette is interested in the history and she wants to write her own style and she's looking for that special thing that Laura put there.

I What special thing?

R Not Laura, Alice. The spiritual. The spiritual thing that gets inside a woman's, or a man, or anybody. The special thing. The spirit that is in that country.

I And you're now drawing on Alice's work …

R Not all of it.

I … in your Native Title claims?

R Only the names because we have to show proof of things written about our ancestors, so I had to use … it actually mentions a lot of my ancestors. And Native Affair records. So that's it. No one else has ever written about our family. No one. And we were probably … there's only just a few of the older people that were sent to missions but there's no background history on them. Not a thing. All it's got on poor old great-grandmother's grave is the year she died. Buried in Taroom. And that's it. Taken away from her country and she'd never had no one with her probably. A few other old Aboriginal people from other areas. So she would have died very lonely. And my grandfather's other sister's

buried over in a police paddock in Hughenden. Her husband was with the black police. When they died of the flu epidemic, too, and they're both buried there. That's another one that I have to look into. So I've got evidence of where they're all buried and they're all from records. We have to show proof so the Native Affairs records is the closest.

I So what's the process? From your end, what's the process of going through a Native Title claim?

R Well, it's the connection to your land as well as your genealogies. Our connection to the land. Well there again, it could be a little hard for us because with us it's spiritual. I could tell you things about that country you'd never believe, so I don't tell nobody because they don't believe them. No one believes in the spiritual things any more. But they're there and they're still alive. Everything you read in Alice's books is still there.

I Yamakuno and all of that?

R Yeah. She's there more than ever and only lately it's getting stronger. So there's lots of strange things happening out there. And it's … I used to worry about it but I don't any more now. Maybe it's bigger than all of us. Just like going to church, see, finding God. Same thing.

I Now at the moment, as I understand it Joslin, and I've got what I would call the foggiest notions of this, but there's tricky politics opening up …

R Oh, yes, definitely.

I … for Aboriginal people between people with, let's say, descended relationship from the land and then people who lived in land but for whom it may not be there traditional country. How do you understand that? Do you think that the Native Title system, that's been set up by Mabo and WIK and the Native Title Tribunals, what do you think of that system?

R That system was good from the WIK and the Mabo and the WIK, and when it first came out it was good until Howard's 10-Point Plan moved in and created so much problem. So he is the blame, just one man, with a stroke of a pen in the Senate.

I So do you want to explain that, give specific examples?

R Well if you know anything about Howard, I mean look at all, if you've seen his 10-Point Plan, they're absolutely ridiculous. They're just plain ridiculous. I'm sure in any other country they'd have shot him by now because it's just way out of proportion, you see. He's still English. He's still living in the English atmosphere of their rules, regulations, their customs, their all of that hierarchy stuff from England, and you've only got to look at the man, listen to him. He's not even an Australian. He's pure English. It's simple. And not early English, I mean, late English. It's early stuff. All that royalty stuff.

I He's no … what's the word? I am no friend of Howard's.

R Right. He's … I mean, just common sense has got to tell you that his values, what he's put in the 10-Point Plan, it does not relate to now.

I Can you explain specifically Joslin? Like, in what way has the 10-Point Plan complicated your Native Title claim?

R Well, for one thing, he stopped us from using traditional boundary lines. We have to go, lodge land claims now on station boundary lines, which is way out of Aboriginal perspective altogether.

I So you can't …

R That's just one of them.

I You can't draw the line down the middle of a station and say 'That was my traditional lands, that isn't'. You have to use the station boundary lines?

R That's right, yes. So that's one of the most idiotic things. I mean, that's right against Aboriginal culture, Aboriginal history, Aboriginal anything. That, for a start, should tell you the rest of it's just crap too. But we have to go along with the guidelines and most of us are just getting through there the best way we can. I don't know the results of all my hard work in there but I'm hoping that it'll … they tell us it's okay but he's likely to go in there and add another amendment and we're gone. They'll never take the land off us and I don't really care what he says, and I don't know about other Aboriginal groups but I'm pretty sure it's right across. It doesn't matter who is there. It's always be our country. And I think you would have heard that right throughout. It doesn't matter if they say 'Okay, that's my land. That's …' you know, it's not. It'll never be theirs because they don't have the feeling that we have for our lands. And that's the way it'll be forever. Nobody will

ever own it and plus the fact, you've only got one life so you never really own it anyway, do you?

I So when you're seeking Native Title …

R Mmmm.

I … what is it that you actually want?

R The land. That's what we go for. The rights to it.

I And what rights, specifically …

R Everything. We can go there when we want to. We can do what we want to and we need to protect everything that's there.

I Is it ownership in the way that whites understand it, that you're seeking? Like the right to …

R No, no. Whites' ownership, standard of ownership, is nothing compared to Aboriginal ownership. Never will be either, because Aboriginal people don't need Deeds. They don't need documents. They don't need nothing written either. It's all up here and in there, and that's the difference. As I said, it doesn't matter who says they own it, they'll never own it. It's not their land anyway. Never will be.

I I know, for instance, that when Moraberry got sold three years ago, I think it was Sylvie, Alice's daughter, and one of them got the right for them to be able to go and visit the graves and look after them, and visit Moraberry when they want. Does that describe the kind of thing that you're seeking in Native Title?

R No, we go deeper than that. We go deeper than that. But we won't tell them. We keep a lot of things secret and it'll never come out because you can't push one another's culture onto another. It can't be done. Even though we live in standard things like this is modern culture here now. We mightn't have posh homes but they're still homes. We live in modern society, we drive cars, TV, mobile phones, phones, and we eat from the grocery shops, we don't have to kill any more, and all that sort of stuff. But we're just here. The rest of us are all out there in our lands and they'll always be there. And the only thing that

I can do is to protect what's there now and that's what I do, and document them, because down the track somebody'll read about it later.

I As I understand it, there's quite a lot of conflict between Aboriginal people who have the capacity to put in a Native Title claim …

R Oh, yeah.

I … because they have descended from people who had traditional connection …

R Yeah.

I … and Aboriginal people that might live in that same area but not have that traditional connection.

R Yeah. Oh, yeah, well there is, and that's because they don't have a culture, or they have a culture but they're not aware of their cultures. It's like some of the people in Boulia, there are very few really traditional Pitta Pitta people down there. Most of them live here. Mum lives in Brisbane. I live anywhere and the rest of my family live anywhere. Oh, no, they've got homes. They're not like me. But most of the people are the same. They don't go far away from … I'm never far away from my country.

I I guess what I'm interested in is whether you think this system that both … I mean, both the Labor and the Liberal government have set up in a certain way the system that gives potentially Native Title rights to Aboriginal people with traditional connections and doesn't give Native Title rights to Aboriginal people who, for a whole complex of reasons, lost that traditional connection to land somewhere along the way.

R Yeah, well I think they're problems that's going to be faced for a while, simply because a lot of people don't know their culture. They were taken away from their lands. They grew up in a different area, had no idea of where they came from, and later in life when you do get older, you start looking for your roots because your whole body and your soul craves for it. You crave to want to know where you come from. And I don't know about European people but I think deep down everyone's the same. They crave for that feeling of belonging somewhere, their ancestors. Must be. And we're all human, we must all have that same thing there, that's inside, and we're the same. We know where our lands are. It's just that we can't get on a bus or get on a plane and go out to our land when we want to. But other people can. So I guess that's probably it but in all of our minds, Aboriginal

people, it's up here and we're always there. I'm always there. My Dad was the same. He was always there. And he used to tell us, you know, my brother used to get Stanley and Grandfather to 'Oh, come on, I want to go and see this place', but it wasn't that, it was going back. And in his mind he would have seen his the whole area in just one brief trip. But I was unaware of these things that went through my Dad's head and Stanley would have been the same. Because we didn't know the deepness that they felt because they were there. We're only the kids. We didn't go through what they went through and we didn't live on the land as long as they lived there, so we have to try and reach into their minds and hearts, and that's why they tell you stories. That's why oral history is so important in Aboriginal structure.

I And that's why digging out the history …

R Yes.

I … for you, presumably, is important.

R That's right. Yeah. It's so I can latch onto it and I can spread it out in a different way to my kids, by writing, and computer use or typewriter, or whatever. And probably later down the track, they'll have videos to watch, or something. Who knows? But it's an advancement, has been right from the very beginning. We just had to grow with the country, it's as simple as that. If we didn't grow, we were just left like the river bed mob down here. They're lost. And some of the smaller groups in different areas, they're lost. But people like us, I guess, we're just always one step ahead to survive. My Dad did it, my grandfather did it and I'm doing it and probably my kids will too. It's something just a little bit better but never forget where you come from. So that's basically it.

I I've got no more questions. Do you?

R How's that?

END OF TAPE