

INTERVIEW WITH KRISTINA PLANT

25 June 2000

TF = Trish KP = Kristina Plant

SIDE A

TF **OK, so this is DAT tape 21, camera tape 60. It's the 25th? Today, I think it's the 25th June 2000 and Trish FitzSimons on sound, Julie Hornsey on camera. Channels of History project, and we're interviewing Kristina Plant and we're at the Showgrounds of Chinchilla.**

OK, you ready to rip?

JH Yep.

TF So Kristina, tell me where and when you were born and what your name was as a small child.

KD I was um born at Charleville and when I were two my folks moved out to Bedourie where Dad start managing the Kidman place. Um, me and my brother and my younger sister, we grew up there and um

TF I'll just pau – so what was your name as you were –

KD Kristina Schrader was my um maiden name.

TF And were you born in Charleville because that's where your Mum had gone just to have the baby?

KD Yep.

TF Or were your parents living in Charleville then?

KD No. Mum just went to Charleville to have me there and um then went back to Windorah and then two years later they got offered this job out at Sandringham near Bedourie.

TF And so what was your Dad's um background? Like where had your Dad grown up?

KD Dad'd um come from Kyogle down New South Wales and he left home at the age of 13 and worked on the Kidman place just out of Windorah called Morney and he'd been there ever since. Oh he worked there and then um met Mum and all that sort of stuff and then when I was 2 I would be, worked there and then Dad um went and worked for this other fellow for a couple of years and then they went out to Bedourie. Got offered the head stock ah manager's job out at the diary.

TF So how old do you reckon you were when you went to Bedourie?

KP Two.

TF Two.

KP Yeah.

TF And what do you reckon are your earliest memories?

KP Um at Bedourie. Out at Sandringham and that like mucking around with the dogs and the horses and with my brother and sister. Yeah. It was, it was a good childhood. I enjoyed it.

TF Tell me like, go back to say when you were 4 or 5. Paint a picture of your Mother's day for me.

KP Um would get up and she'd, if one of us kids were up, she'd have to take us down the kitchen and occupy us and then do breakfast for the men and she would serve in the kitchen cooking for the men because there were so many.

TF Mmm.

KP Us kids well, there was just my brother and I for a while then my sister came when I was 4 so the two she could manage alright but with the extra one, the older ones used to run away and hide and all that sort of stuff.

TF Is that 'cos your Mum would be so busy looking after the –

KP Mmm.

TF How many men would she have been cooking for?

KP She got up to 15 there. That was sort of from 12 to 15 a lot of time in those days. Like there's not that many there now but that's how it used to be and with Mum being busy cooking and that, she just had a bit of trouble keeping up to us kids because we were always on the go and that so.

TF So what did that mean for you kids? Did it mean you became quite independent?

KP Mmm.

TF Like what would you be doing while your Mum was busy cooking?

KP We'd be outside playing with the toys or we'd helping Dad feeding the horses or feeding the dogs or taking the dogs for a walk to entertain ourselves and we used to have a sand hill. Oh well there still is a sand hill at the back of the station which is a 'k' and a half and we'd take the dogs for a walk up there so they'd let about 10 dogs off and off we'd go and we'd have to have a stock whip so the dogs wouldn't chase after Mum's pet pigs because we got into a lot of trouble and that was a no-no.

TF You Mum was pretty keen on her pigs?

KP Yeah. She liked her pigs. Mmm.

TF And how about, did your Mum, when she wasn't cooking or looking after you kids, did she work outside on the property or was she always home-based?

KP Mum was always home-based. She's um when they, we had a gardener who was a camp cook and when he went out on the camp, Mum'd have to do all the gardening and that and feeding the chooks and the pigs and the horses and everything and doing fire wood and all that for the old stove yeah.

TF So from what kind of age do you reckon, well, were you involved, growing up, were you involved in the work of the property at all or were you?

KP Yeah. We used to always go out um before I started school like I used to be out trotting along behind Dad and like there's a couple of people who used to say they, all they could remember was two little kids bobbing along behind Dad and they were chasing the cows and being asleep on the horses riding along and that an um then when school started, like Mum had a battle keeping us in the school.

- We just always had to go out and help Dad. Like that was it. Dad was our role model I guess you'd say. Mmm.
- TF And did either your Dad or your, or the company ever pay you for the work you did on the place?
- KP When I turned about 12, they put me on the payroll when I, for the work I did on the holidays and that and around the place. Because whenever they got cattle into the yards and like come 3 o'clock when we'd be out and gone and down the yards and helping and that. About 12 they put me on the payroll. Yeah. Then I thought it was really good because I was getting paid for doing something I loved.
- TF Do you remember what your first pay cheque was? Like I remember my first pay cheque was \$2.00 a day.
- KP Yeah, no I can't say I remember because we just like got put on the books and you'd just, whenever you wanted money Dad'd give you a cheque and that so, yeah, I can't remember that far back.
- TF So when did you first go to a city Kristina? Do you remember? Your first view of a city.
- KP Um in, to Brisbane was the first time. It was in '88, when I went down the school camp with Bedourie and that was a bit of a highlight but – it's fun but it's a bit scary too.
- TF What did you make of Brisbane? Like, what did you like about it and what scared you about it?
- KP I can't say I liked a whole lot about it. There's too many people and the lights are good. Like at night it looked real pretty and that but um it was too scary for me.

- There was too many people and they were different from what I was used to so. I guess equivalent to about 20 people on the station you could say it was scary.
- TF And was there anything as a child that you weren't allowed to or weren't encouraged to do as a girl? You know, is there any obvious differences?
- KP No. No, Dad was really good. He sort of I guess um my sister and I were tomboys. We went out and did everything that the boys, that my brother did and we were allowed to do everything. We weren't – say oh no, you're a girl. Probably lifting heavy things is the only thing we were allowed to say oh we can't do because other than that we just did everything.
- TF So it's interesting looking at your Grandmother, Sylvia Geiger, and meeting your Aunt, Gladys Cross. It looks like they were women that were right into outside stuff as well. Do you think your Mum would have, given the opportunity? Or was she somebody that was, was and is happier to be kind of inside focussed?
- KP Oh no. Mum doesn't mind going outside. It just turned out that when Mum, I can't remember how old she was, about 16 or something, she went working and got a cooking job and at that age that's what she did so she's just been the cook ever since, as in putting it in a nice way.
- TF And it's a huge role isn't it?
- KP Mmm. It's a full-time job cooking. Like for 15 people there's a lot to do and one thing Mum, she does cook a fair bit of food for you so you never go low on food.
- TF Were there any Aboriginal men or women on the station when you arrived there?
- KP Mmm. There was an old dark camp cook that was there and like he was really good. He looked after us kids when Mum was busy and we'd be outside and he

always seemed to be poking around the corner to see if we were alright and they're helping us and I'd go out on a camp with Dad and if I got a sore bum and didn't have to ride, I'd hop in the car with old Hoddie who was the cook and we'd go up and he'd start cooking and I'd be his little offsider. He um Dad and offsider a fair bit when I was a kid. They –

TF How about, were there any Aboriginal women on the station or just the?

KP No. Just, just our camp cook was all we had, yeah.

TF And would Hoddie be connected to an Aboriginal community in town somewhere or was he?

KP He was more Mt Isa. He was connected at Mt Isa, yeah. No, he was good quality.

TF How about in Bedourie? Were there many Murriss in Bedourie when, was Bedourie was like town for you?

KP Yep. Yeah, sure was. It was, there was a lot of dark – we mingled with dark kids. There was only about 4 white kids out of 15 in Bedourie when we went in there and there was no such thing as he's white and you're dark or anything. It sort of, we all were one. There was no discrimination or anything. It was great. And we're still really good mates with 'em now so.

TF And so what happened when it was time for you to go to school? How, how did school happen for you?

KP The high school?

TF Well, you did mention School of the Air but I want you just to tell me just a tiny bit more about primary school, yeah.

KP Ah we um did school there at home and we got governesses out and that and they got a bit of a shock, from Brisbane to out home and that. It was a bit of culture shock but no, it was good. We enjoyed School of the Air and getting on and talking to other kids and that and it was sort of the only way we really communicated with other kids away so it was pretty exciting. Big competition on who could call in the fastest and the earliest and all that but no, it was really good.

TF Do you ever remember feeling lonely as a kid?

KP Oh I never got that way. I guess um I was always sort of a loner so if I ever had a barney with my brother or sister, I'd just go and let a couple of dogs off and go up the hill and play with them. Like I never experienced that and a lot of people have asked me that but um I was always sort of a bit of a loner anyway. I'd just walk off or go for a ride on my horse and that was good enough for me but later on I sort of craved for a friend but um not in primary school. No, I had too much fun.

TF And you described kind of the sand hill being important. Was the actual land and the way the land looked and fishing, was that sort of stuff an important part of? Like how would you have described your feeling for the land as a kid?

KP Oh I loved it. I thought it was great, like um it was home. I think that's the only way I can really describe it. It was home, yeah.

TF Yeah it's interesting your parents being managers because I know in some of the pastoral companies, the managers always get moved round um –

KP Yeah.

TF A lot. Do you think that your experience of that land and your feeling for it would have changed at all had your parents owned it? Do you know what I'm saying, like?

KP Yeah. I – I used to think about that a bit, about oh if we owned it, how would I feel, but then it sort of felt like we owned it anyway. Like we called it our home, say it was ours and we never went into detail but, whether if we owned it or not if it'd be different because in our minds we did own it. Like it was ours. And those were just people who come and see it and that but yeah.

TF So your parents are still there now?

KP Yep. Yep. They've been there 21 years January just gone.

TF And how would the kind of the Kidman Company, as a child, where, where and when would you be aware of, of the owners.

KP Oh I guess when I had to help Mum do the boss's table up. That brought me aware to it and I would've been about, I dunno, 10 or 11, when I was in helping and it sort of, then it was really brought to your attention that you couldn't go and do that because you had to go and see the boss and that so.

TF So just describe that. Like what would happen when the Kidman bosses would come to visit?

KP They'd um come in an aeroplane and they always sat at a different table as to the workmen and us and um they'd come in for smoko and that and they'd say hello to us and were polite. Weren't snobby or anything towards us. And um go out and have their meal and have a bit of chat to us and then go off and Dad would

just drive 'em around the place and show 'em things that are progressing and things that Dad reckons needs improving and that.

TF Some of the company wives I've spoken to um feel dissatisfied that they don't get a separate wage, you know, that, or that, that they and their husbands are not considered managers. Is that? Were you ever aware of those kind of feelings from your parents or, or were they –

KP No.

TF They were happy and

KP They were happy. They, my folks would have never brought us into that sort of thing. They just let us be kids and they don't discuss those sort of things around us. That's adult things and they let us be kids and we didn't bring us into that. Mum and Dad are sort of um it's probably a way that some people won't understand it, but kids are to be seen and heard and we didn't need to be listening to adult stuff. But when we became adults, we are in there now but they just let us be kids and didn't bring any of that to our attention.

TF So going on then, what happened for you in high schooling?

KP Oh that was scary. I went to Mt Isa and stayed with some friends and went to school at an Aboriginal school in Mt Isa and it was very different. Um I cried for the first 12 months every time I got dropped off and I was alright talking to Mum but just when I talked to Dad and he mentioned about going mustering or something, that was it. I was just a ball of tears and couldn't handle it but the people I was staying with, they had horses so it wasn't that I was missing out on horses. It was the mustering and camping out and all that. That was a bit sad having to not do that.

TF So what made you, I mean from some people's perspective to kind of, to muster and to be working as an adolescent and so on would sound like um a tough life. What did you miss being in Mt Isa?

KP Just going out and um like going out and working and um sitting down at night round a campfire and having billy tea, like I still miss that now. Like I hang for a billy tea and people say well tea's tea but until you've had both, you sort of know what the difference is. And just sittin' round the camp fire, laughing about what happened that day and who got chased by this beast or that. It's sorta – a friendship gets built between the works out there.

TF You would have been, presumably like you and your sister, the only, the only women in the stock camp. Is that right?

KP Yep. Yep.

TF So how did that feel? Was that ever difficult or that was just your, what was usual for you?

KP Mmm. As we got older and um I think when I left college and came home, I had a bit of a oh you're a girl. You know, you can't do this and you can't do that and rah rah but they weren't that bad. They were pretty good and I guess I had the advantage that Dad was there and that but I've heard that things can get worse for girls but um I always found that if they're going to be like that to me, I can do the same to them and if they treated me a way, I did it back and I earnt more respect from them than sittin' there and cringin' and thinking oh no, boys don't – and I can't do that because I'm a girl. Where it just mad me more determined to prove to them that I could do it and being a girl I had to do everything twice as good or twice as hard to say like hey, I'm at your level now. But it was always twice the amount of work I had to do. But I enjoyed it. It was sort of – I guess it's all I knew really.

TF So tell me a bit more then about this school. How was it you went to an Aboriginal school? Do you know how your parents chose that?

KP Oh it was just closest, just the closest school to where I was staying. There was two different schools and this one was just the closest school.

TF And when you say Aboriginal school, what, what do you actually mean? Like what was the school called and who ran it and who went there?

KP I can't even think of the name of the school now. Um both schools had um Aboriginal kids at 'em but that was just known more as Aboriginal because of the name and I can't think of it. Ah Kalkadoon. That's the name of it, yes. And the reason why I say that was I guess because it just seemed to be that I could mix with the Aboriginals better than the other girls because they were not trying to be something that they weren't where the other girls, like you'd go in the toilet and you'd die from the smell of deodorant and hairspray and I never wore that sort of stuff and I nearly choked one day I reckon on the smell. It was terrible so, and they just seemed a bit upper class and thought they were better whereas I hung around better with Aboriginal girls because, and they brought me in and I wasn't in their culture at all whereas the others, you had to oh do something to get into their culture and I didn't have it.

TF So were these Aboriginal kids that you'd known from Bedourie or just –

KP No.

TF You'd been going to Isa you felt more comfortable? Because you'd grown up with Aboriginal kids ... ?

KP Yeah. Yeah. Just, I didn't know anyone and the first day of the school was just, just a nightmare for me. I just sat in the corner and all I wanted to do was just go home and I could've run away but 6 hours is a bit far too walk and there's these um, this one white girl that came up and she was friends with the Aboriginal girls and I sort of just clinged with them really well. And they had a lot of respect for me and I had a lot of respect for them.

TF And would the Aboriginal kids in Isa, would they have grown up with horses and stuff as well?

KP No.

TF But what did you have in common? Was it kind of an appreciation of the bush or?

KP No it was just um respect for each others privacy and they were who they were and you were who you were and it was just respect. They weren't trying to impress um anyone and I wasn't and you didn't have to um do your hair and smell pretty and look pretty to be with them. You could you just go as yourself and fit in.

TF So in Mt Isa you discovered a whole way of like sort of girlhood that –

KP Yeah.

TF That Sandringham hadn't

KP It, it was different um mixing with the girls but then the boys were a different, different um I guess quality to our home too. They were all different because I'd, I'd grown up with adults and then when I was hanging around with boys and girls my age, they just seemed to be doing things that – I didn't behave that way, running around and screaming and carrying on. It sort of wasn't what I did.

TF Going back actually to childhood, tell me about, did you see much of your, your Aunty Gladys?

KP I used to see a fair bit of Aunty Gladys when, before I started school because I'd always get a lift to Windorah to see her and spend time with my cousins and that. Um, the best, I think the most common trip was going with the truckie. Jean Smith's son. I used to jump in with him and go into Windorah and spend a few weeks with Aunty Gladys and then go home. Yeah, I had fun in there.

TF And would that be holidays or your Mum wouldn't mind if you missed a few weeks of school? You know what's?

KP Ah that was before I started school that – oh you weren't allowed to miss school. School was very important and I can see that now but at that age it was –

TF So as a 4 year old you'd be climbing up into a truck with a bloke that you knew just a little bit and heading off three or – because it'd be what? Four hundred, five hundred kilometers from your home?

KP Yeah. Yeah, about that, yeah. Close to that. Yeah. But we had a fair bit to do with um Jimmie and that and used to see him a bit so it was, I don't know, like an Uncle I guess in a way.

TF Was there a sense like it seems to us that from kind of Boulia down through Birdsville and round to Windorah, everyone is inter-connected.

KP Yep.

TF Was that the way it felt?

KP Yep.

TF Do you want to just talk a bit about that?

KP Oh it just seemed that um everyone knew everyone and um it was like a family. Three towns would oh yeah three towns'd join together as a family and that and we um we'd have sports days and it was the only time that we got to go to Birdsville and mingle with those kids other than the gymkana and the races so three times a year we saw 'em but we um all seemed to be in a family and they just brought you in as a family even if you weren't in the family.

TF So what were those three towns?

KP Bedourie, Birdsville and Windorah. Yeah. Pretty good.

TF And so Jundah was kind of outside of that?

KP Jundah was a bit further up. We never had much to do with Jundah.

TF And do you think that kind of connection, Boulia, Boulia, Be – no hang on, Bedourie, Birdsville, Windorah, was the concept of Channel Country –

KP Yeah.

TF An important one? And if so, what was Channel Country? Like how did people use the term Channel Country as you were growing up?

KP Um I don't really know if I've got an answer for that one.

TF Maybe they didn't. I mean maybe –

KP They just never, we never um said like the Channel Country, where is Bedourie. We – and at home like we always thought that as a desert. Like that's called the desert and then the Channel Country, but we never spoke much about the Channel Country. Just when the floods come up you'd hear something but other than that it was like, it was all the same to us. We didn't – oh they're the Channel Country people and they're the Desert people and that. We never divided people. We were just all one.

TF But so Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie were a kind of a stuck together?

KP Yeah.

TF Yeah. And so describe the land at Sandringham. What's the land at Sandringham like and does it have a river, you know, like?

KP Yeah.

TF Paint a picture for me. I've been to Bedourie but not west.

KP Um it's, it's different. It hasn't got like, some areas you say they go to and they say oh it's just mulga or whatever. We've um it's gidgee. There's a lot of gidgee trees which aren't very high compared to Chinchilla so I've been informed a lot. But there's um like sand hills and the more out the back, the more into the desert you get it's just like sand hill after sand hill and um more towards Bedourie is um rock. There's rocky hills and that and we've got a bit of Channel, oh well, for out there it's a bit of Channel Country where Dad runs the bullocks and, and um that's just um black soil and when it's really dry you get big cracks in it and that and in good season it's a lot of feed and – it's a very pretty country. Very pretty country. Especially at this time of the year.

TF What's the river there?

KP

Eyers Creek. Actually it's not a river. We just – it's Eyers Creek, which comes from the young Georgina. Starts up at the Georgina and then ends up in Eyres Creek and it's the creek that goes past Bedourie so we've got a bit of land over there.

TF Because it's lovely land, that creek near Bedourie.

KP Yeah.

TF It's lush at the moment. It's just gorgeous.

KP Yep.

TF So then tell me, when did you start getting involved in um is it radio? Is that the word for?

KP Camp draft.

TF Yeah.

KP Um I've been doing that ever since I can remember with Dad. Um I think I won my first draft – beat my brother for the first time which was like a big effort when I was 11 or somethin'. A junior draft. So ever since I can remember we've been drafting and that.

TF So now drafting's not a term that people in the city understand. Can you explain to me what is a camp draft and what, what's your part in it?

KP Camp drafting is um a way for people in the bush to have something to aim their horses for and it's a competition and the whole um habit is, is that they have a mob of cattle can go from 8 to 10 in a yard and you take one out of this yard which we call a camp and you go out and you go around two pegs in a figure eight and you come up through another two which we call a gate and your score can go – the highest you can get is 26 um 75 and 4 which I think goes up to 100 doesn't it?

TF 76, 25 and 4. No, it adds up to more than 100. 105.

KP No. Oh well it all adds to 100. Was it 26, 4 – must be 70. 70 sorry. I was looking at this other thing day and it confused me.

TF So you're good at camp drafting?

KP Oh I dunno. I'd say I was average.

TF Tell me what your kind of highest achievement is with camp drafting?

KP Um I got second in the Juvenile Titles three years in a row. That's all I could do. I couldn't win it. No um I never had any big major achievements. I think my Dad had the best win. Oh there's three main drafts in camp drafting. There's a gold cup and it's like Melbourne Cup to race people and um Dad had won that in the Canning Downs in '85 and he won the big Chinchilla one here last year and that was pretty good.

TF So your Dad's, would you say your Dad's been the most important person in your life?

KP Yep. Dad's my idol. Yep, he is. When I grow up I wanna be as good as him. Yep.

TF So how did you then, tell me about school and what your dreams were for the future when you were at school and, and how they have then played out.

KP Well it didn't really come to me in dreams but when I was in primary school I wanted to be the first manager, woman, the first woman to be a manager for Kidman. That was my aim and that but then I come across a few tasks when I was 18 that um sort of brought to my attention that it wasn't what I wanted.

TF So that's interesting. I want you to tell me about that.

KP I just um Dad was sort of working towards preparing me to um have males work under me and um he didn't say that anyone was in charge. They'd talked to us all and went away for this week to buy some bulls and that and just said we had to break horses in. It was no big task and anyway I had a bit of a dispute with a bloke and I almost got my head punched in. I just, I stood my ground but I just thought oh wow! What would I do if he hadda hit me.

TF So give me, tell me about, don't give me his name, but tell me about that in a bit more detail.

KP We were um breaking in and at home we don't handle the horses. They come in wild and we rope 'em and throw 'em on their side and um we put hobbles on 'em and then get 'em up. And the quicker you can get 'em up, the better it is for the horse. And anyway I said to the boys start I said you know, if youse get back Sunday from town because they were going to town, um get our hobbles ready. We can get stuck into it and in the heat we can like just rest an hour longer if we get the horses done and that's how Dad operates. You get the horses up to a stage and then in the heat you can let 'em rest and yourself cool down and everything works better. Yeah yeah! Anyway they didn't and I got mine all ready and we knew what horses we had and this young fellow got these hobbles and

they wouldn't have fitted a draught horse they were that big and he had the smallest footed horse there so, and he kept taking forever and I said look, we've gotta get this horse up. I said it's been down for 20 minutes now. He put 'em all on and the horse moved and they all fell off so threw mine to him and I said you just, you've gotta work a bit quicker and for some reason he blew up and strutted out the yard and come up to me and his face is there and I was just took a big deep breath and thought I've got a brother. I can handle it. And um the next thing there's tears in his eyes and it was like all you do is pick on me rah rah and I just went phew! I'm not gunna get hit today and if I had've had someone else that was not so much a softie but a bit more meaner, he coulda come up and hit me and um I can say I hit my sister when we were little but that's all I've hit.

TF So how did – did you talk to your Dad? Did you tell him?

KP I couldn't, because Dad would've sacked him on the spot and that wasn't dealing with it myself. I had to deal with it myself and all I did was just pull him aside and just said don't do that again. I said that wasn't nice. All I was trying to do was help you and I said and you come up and you were going to hit me and I didn't understand it and he was all apologetic and he didn't want to lose his job and I said I'm not going to dob you in. I said it's one thing I'm not is a dobber. I said but there are other people around here and if it gets out, the old fellow's going to get rid of you and not because he's my Dad but because it's his job. And it's not fair for you to come up wanting to hit a girl. And he said oh but I didn't. But anyway, those things happen.

TF And how did that experience change your dream?

KP Because um I don't, I think I got sick of having to do twice so much that the boys did and still only, only coming just below their level. Like it seemed - I don't know if it was just that crowd I was with or not but I, I worked and I worked and I

did twice what they did and that but I still, if I was at that level, it was a bonus but most of the time I was sort of a bit below.

TF So is what you're saying that no matter how hard you tried you couldn't do this stuff as well as the men or is what you're saying that you could do it as well as them but you wouldn't get recognised for doing it?

KP Didn't get recognised. Didn't um more so in the blokes eyes um like my Dad's my Dad and Dad loves all the girls but I didn't care what Dad thought. It was just like hey boys, give me a chance. I can do it as good as youse. Why keep knocking me down? But that, that's how it is I guess.

TF So there was a sense that they wanted to take you down a peg?

KP Mmm.

TF This, this girl's a bit cocky?

KP No, um I don't think it was so much that I was cocky. It just, all I wanted to do was just the same as them and they just – because I was a girl, I couldn't do it, no matter even if I did, they just kept saying that it wasn't I don't know, it wasn't the same. It just – like you're a girl so you can't be at the same level sort of thing or and that, yeah.

TF **So this is now camera take 61. It's still DAT tape –**

JH I'm not rolling.

TF Oh sorry. Sorry. Actually before you roll, I'm just going to adjust the microphone again. **So this is camera take 61. It's still DAT tape 21. This is**

the second camera tape of an interview with Kristina Plant and we're at the Chinchilla Showgrounds, 25th June, 2000.

OK, you right? So um did you talk to your Mum about what had happened with this bloke?

KP No, because of Mum would've spoken to Dad so I just kept it to myself and dealt with it.

TF How about to your sister? Did you talk to your sister?

KP No. I just dealt with it. It's sorta, it was something that's gunna happen. Like there was getting a bit of tension between us and that and I, I knew it was gunna happen so I guess in a way I was a bit prepared for it.

TF This was tension between you and this bloke?

KP Mmm.

TF And was he a jackaroo or a stockman?

KP Jackaroo, yeah.

TF What's actually the difference between jackaroo and stockman?

KP I dunno. Um jackaroos are meant to be the polished fellows that come out and they're well groomed and that. That's the old jackaroo but the new jackaroos are the ones that aren't as handy as a stockman. They're –

TF So is it like -?

KP Sort of more new chums. We call the new chums jackaroos and that.

TF Is it a class difference? Is it that jackaroos might go on to be managers but stockmen will usually stay stockmen?

KP Yeah. That's how like it is in the old days. But now we've got different terminology. Different meaning for the same terminology.

TF So in the terminology now, what does stockman mean and what does jackaroo mean?

KP Um jackaroo are sort of the greener people that have just come in and are just learning and the stockmen are the ones that know what they're doing and have been doing it for a while.

TF So jackaroos might come out from the city for a year –

KP Yeah.

TF Before they start university. That sort of thing?

KP Yep. That sort of thing.

TF And how about jillaroo? Is that – what does that term mean?

KP A girl. Basically a girl coming out to work in, work in the stock camps and that.

TF So, did you come back, did you – when did you finish school and what – did you come back then to work on Sandringham? Like just fill me in your

KP Yeah. I um I did Year 10. I did Year 9 at Mt Isa and then I said to Mum I had to come home and wanted to get my marks up so I did School of Air at home for Year 10 and then um Dad told me I was too young to go out and work in the paddock so I had to go away to Longreach Pastoral College and did two years there and then I came home and did two years at home and then moved down to the city.

TF So the two years at home, you were employed by, by the Kidman Company?

KP Mmm.

TF What was your, your sort of, what were you called?

KP Jillaroo. I was a jillaroo, yep.

TF So that's confusing isn't it because you weren't a new chum?

KP Mmm. I – um you see the jillaroos are jillaroos and the blokes get new chums and all that and the girls get called new chums too but – and I, I guess I've been working at home all the time on holidays and that so I just sort of fitted in because I was there all the time.

TF So as a jillaroo, do you remember how much you were paid as a jillaroo and what exactly your job entailed?

KP Um I think I got \$300, a bit under \$350 a week and it was mustering, working around the yard, breaking in, shoeing horses, driving around and fixing fences, checking bores and um basically seeing if the water holes had enough water, checking that the cattle are alright and that.

TF And would you, was the camp drafting, was that something you'd be going off and doing weekends?

KP Yeah.

TF Like how did that fit in?

KP Um we'd just like work through the week and maybe take a Friday off and get up at 1 o'clock in the morning and head off to a draft that was a long way away. No that was, that was sort of the social life that I had, was the drafts and Dad was into racing and um it was in the first year that I was home I took out a jockey's license and I did a bit of that while I was working at home jillarooing and then I got told that I had to be working on a race track for my license to go through so I went and did that for a bit but living in town and that um it didn't interest me.

TF Would –

KP I liked the jockey while I was at home working too but to sit around in town and get up early in the morning and then just pick up horse manure for most of the day wasn't me.

TF So what was town? Mt Isa?

KP Yeah, Mt Isa, yeah. It was a big town. Bedourie was like the little town that we went into for, I think we went to Bingo a couple of times and that's it, yeah.

TF And we've been told by some of the women working as like managers' wives that there's quite a lot of, I guess you'd call it sexual tension between, that the managers' wives to have women in the stock camps. They kind of, they feel afraid for their husbands. That sort of thing. Did you have to deal with, with that? I mean I guess it was different working on your parents property but –

KP Yeah. I found it um different because I've like worked at home and Dad was the boss but I have heard of things like that.

TF Can you tell me a bit, like what you'd, what you hear around the traps, around that issue? Does that strike you as a big issue?

KP No, not really. Um I find that most of the managers' wives that have that problem, they're looking into things that aren't really there and managers' wives can be as hard on the jillaroos as what the ringers can be. It's um a bit of friction's there but it's mainly brought on because of the jealous wife that's very insecure and should give the girl a go like I think you should give the girl go.

TF So in thinking about you know, you having had the dream to be the first Kidman female manager, are you saying that potentially there could have been tension with managers' wives as well or was that not really an issue in what –

KP No. That wasn't an issue. Um I guess it was a dream and then as I got closer to working up the ladder, I've, um I wanted to find something – I wanted to see another lifestyle and try that and I guess that's what I'm doing now.

TF So how did this happen, you know because you're a long way from home here aren't you?

KP Yeah I sure am. Um I got a phone call from a bloke I knew and he wanted me to go down to Toogoolawah in the Brisbane Valley to work with him for a few months and he said that he was on 250 or 70 acres and that he had this phenomenal amount of cattle that I couldn't believe it and um I said to Dad I wanted to go for a change and he wasn't real keen on the idea but I went anyway and I just ended up staying on there and I've known my husband since '92

coming down to the drafts at Chinchilla and that and we started being more than friends and I just didn't happen to go home. Now I'm married.

TF So how long ago did you come to Chinchilla? Like what year was it?

KP Um came as in to live down here or?

TF Yeah.

KP Yeah. Um '96 I went, October, November '96 I went to Brisbane Valley to work and then I came here in '98 to live with Robert and work with him which I'm doing basically the same stuff as that I do at home. It's just we're not camping out in the camps and that but I'm still working on the land doing what I love and doing everything else but ah I couldn't imagine sitting behind a desk all day moving a pen.

TF And so what's the context is – do Robert's, are Robert's parents managers or what's the situation here?

KP They own the little place and um Robert's buying, buying a quarter share in that and we work contract mustering at a bloke's three quarters of an hour away from us and we're sort of semi-permanent there at the moment so it's pretty good and he's a good boss.

TF And so how are those kind of issues around being a woman doing a job that's mainly done by men? How are those issues for you now here?

KP ! Pretty much the same. I guess you'd have to say I've got it easier down here because the blokes don't let you lift heavy things and if they think that something's too tough for you, they'll just step in and do it. And I have to admit sometimes it sort of raises the hair on my neck and it's like well I can do it, so

they're sort of, they're in a way different down here because they're trying to do more to help you in some areas and then in other areas they're the same. It's – it's funny but it all works. Like some days you just think ohhh, some days, but then other days you can, everyone gets along. It's just they get this little male chauvinist thing going and if you can handle it, you survive, but if you can't – and it's more tests down here. They just throw little tests at you for fun and that so you sort of work it out.

TF Give me an example.

KP Um I can't think of one lately. Um yes we were in cleaning out the crush because it had dirt in it and we had to clean it out and I was in there and I was poking along and I think doing a girl's job instead of just rush, rush doing a boy's and getting on with it and the boss jumped in and said here Shortie, I'll do it. And I get called Shortie because all the boys are over six foot so explains it. Yeah but I sort of stood back and I looked at him and thought well I'm going and doing just as much but – yeah, just little things like that. They're not that bad. It's just that some days you think well what's the purpose of me being here if you're going to come in and take it and go.

TF And do those issues –

JH I just have to change batteries. OK

TF So you're rolling?

JH Yep.

TF Um how about with your husband? Are those kind of issues about your role and his role, are those big for you and he to work out?

KP No. Um Rob and I've got a really good friendship. Um I don't shoe horses any more which I reckon's just great because it kills your back. Um I do things that he doesn't like which, like cleaning up in the house or you know, something like that, and he does the jobs like the heavy lifting and that for me. Um he's really good because he understands that and he knows that I do try and if I say look, I can't because my back's aching, he knows I'm not having a go at him and um we've just, we've got a really good friendship that understands those things. And we lived together for um nearly two years before we got married and working and we haven't had a big barney yet. Like we have little huffs and puffs but yeah, everyone reckons now we're married that we're gunna have 'em but no, we've got, we've got an understanding of each other and I, I think that's a good thing.

TF And has he, has his Mum grown up being active outside as well or is this –

KP No.

TF A new pattern for the women of his family?

KP I'm the new pattern. Sort of an alien of the pattern. No um Rob's Mum comes from Brisbane. Yes, so it's - she doesn't do the outside stuff and that and she's like behind me all the way and just thinks it's good and that but yeah. I'm sort of lack in my cooking and all those sort of stuff that she does but I work outside. It'll be fun when the breeding programme comes and I get stuck in the house but I think I'll have to start a garden or somethin'.

TF The breeding programme. You mean your breeding programme?

KP Yep. When I have to have kids.

TF And why would you have to have kids?

KP Oh because we want 'em. We, we want kids. Like you've got to have something to live for I guess when we get old and take over Rob's place and all that so carry on the traditional name and send 'em out to my folks so they can terrorise them and all that. There's one thing I think of I'll really emphasise on is my kids going out west and um really appreciating that there is somewhere behind Roma because I was in Toowoomba one day and just talking to these people and they said oh we're going out west and I got real excited and said oh where are you going and they said Dalby and I stood there and I just was stunned that that's where west was and that they were too small minded to look beyond – that there were people living out there and it's like, it's the Never Never is how I was put one time. That's nice.

TF What do you think is special about the Channel Country of Queensland? Like what strikes you?

KP The people. The people are overly friendly and um they'll stop and give you a hand and like they'd go back a hundred k's to help you instead of just – they're not selfish out there. Like they're out to help each other and that and it's like a family.

TF Something that one person said to us out west was that, that kind of class differences were less she thought out west than here and she was giving examples about who sat at whose table and that kind of thing. What do you think about that?

KP I found that a lot when I came down here. Um people are really um they've got their little clans down here and they're living in a smaller radius than what I'm used to but they go and socialise with them and that whereas out west, just everyone comes and socialises and talks to everyone and um I'm getting better at it now as understanding, oh well not understanding but just um I guess I'm

- accepting their ways whereas when I first come down here I just thought oh well like, it's different. Mmm.
- TF How about race relations? How are race relations different here in Chinchilla than the ones that, that you'd experienced in Bedourie and Isa?
- KP Ah um very, very different. Very – I can't really elaborate on it. They're just – they don't communicate. They don't mix. That's all I can say on that is they just don't mix.
- TF Who doesn't mix?
- KP Both. Both – they don't, they don't wish to mix with each other. They, you know, they stick to their groups and they I guess you could say bitch and carry on about each other. They're all as bad as each other from what I can see.
- TF So where do you run across Aboriginal people living here?
- KP I guess you'd have to say um I don't really. They don't, you're different so they don't come near you and it's, it's just the same. The both cultures think the same thing so they're never going to mix. Which I think's sad. Because if they, they tried a bit, they'd see that there are good and bad in everything and everyone.
- TF And going back to, how old were you when you left Sandringham?
- KP 19.
- TF So going back to that period when you were 18, 19, living and working out at Sandringham, were, were race relations basically the same as you'd experienced as a child?

KP Yep. I think we all got along the same. Like um a lot of the kids that I grew up with were still in there and we all just mingled the same. It was very um funny when I come down here, the attitude with the different races towards each other and, and I had trouble with it at first because I, I sort of understood it but then I didn't because of the way that I'd grown up and that's how it is now.

TF So what would be kind of statements that might get made that you would find odd down here?

KP I don't think I want to answer that one.

TF OK.

KP I might pass on that question I think.

TF Yeah. But you were shocked?

KP Yeah. Just don't talk to that person because they're black sort of thing or those sort of things.

TF And do you have ever any understanding of, of the history of the Channel Country or of the out west to kind of understand why those things might be different?

KP No. No I don't. I just don't.

TF Have you ever been interested in, in history as a –

KP No. Um I used to like the um history of talking to Dad about the pack horses and how they'd just pick this horse out to carry your swag and if you were the horse tailor you'd know which was the good and bad one to put your swag on so it

didn't get torn. I used to like sitting down listening to those stories and, and that but yeah. I, I don't know. I got told I was silly for this but I would've liked to have been back in Mum and Dad's time, being the young one and growing up there because they, and someone said but oh everything was harder and you did it tougher and that and I sort of looked over and thought but yes you appreciated things more. People, the younger generation they don't appreciate things now.

TF Do you think that's true?

KP Yep.

TF Like what?

KP Like getting a ahhhh um the fact that for instance like there's people don't appreciate the fact that they're 80 ks out of town and if they run out of flour, they can just jump in the car and get it whereas it comes out on the – I can't remember, I don't know what it comes out in now at home. I haven't been home for a while but flour used to come out on the truck and that in tins and um we'd get a load of stores out and put in the store and that's what we had and Mum had to keep it up and work out how much she needed and that and um stock shopping, like and these, some people just come in and get a bit of this and a bit of that or they livin' in town and they run out of whatever. They just walk down the shop and get it.

TF How was the fact that your Mum was kind of home based and you were kind of focussed on your Dad and outside? What did that mean for your relationship with your Mum? Like how would you describe your relationship with your Mum?

KP Mum and I had a good relationship. Um I'd help her in the kitchen of a night with, with getting tea ready and um if I finished a bit early out in the paddock, I'd help her do the vegetables and that. Like we'd all, we sort of helped Dad outside with our main priorities because I guess Mum was just, seemed to be so organised

and had it going and we'd just come in and help tie up the loose ends and set the table and unset the table and help doing that way but with the cooking, Mum was pretty in control and Mum would have a bit bake day every second Saturday so we just stayed home and helped her with that.

TF To get all the smoko stuff together.

KP Yeah, all the smoko stuff. They were good because I used to eat a fair bit of the ingredients. I was, I got chased out of there one day but anyway.

TF And what's your sister's life now?

KP She's working at home with Dad, yeah. She's much the same, jillaroo and that. Loves working on the land. We sort of never ventured into the office girls. We weren't interested enough at school to get the grades, unless we weren't smart enough. I don't know what it is.

TF So why is it that you don't go home much these days?

KP Well I see my folks a lot still. Um they come down to the Chinchilla Draft and that but um we're just busy trying to get a life going here and eventually Mum and Dad are going to move down when I start having kids so I'm going to have 'em with me in the end anyway so. Someone brought it to my attention that um because I never had any of Dad's Mum, and um Nan, she died when we were young and I just, I really think that grandparents have got a very big part in kids lives and I missed out on that so someone said that I must've been working towards it not knowing about it because when I have kids, Mum and Dad will be retired and will be down here so that I can just drop them with them and go.

TF So tell me what you remember or what you know about your Grandmother, Sylvia Geiger.

KP I just remember going to drafts and um having this big tin of Leggo first to play with but the worst thing was that my brother was Grandma Geiger's angel so he could have what he wanted and I also remember going to spend a time with Grandma and the goats. Playing with the goats. That was - she gave us a goat each but Dad sort of arranged so we could never get 'em. He wasn't into goats but yeah. Grandma and goats and yeah. She was a nice lady. Really nice.

TF So is there anything I haven't asked you about that you think it's important for me to understand women, women out in the Channel County?

KP No I don't think so. I think you've covered it all.

TF You've been terrific. Thank you very much.

KP Thank you.

TF **So this will be just a Showground DAT**

End of taped interview.