INTERVIEW WITH JEAN SMITH
6 June 2000

I = Interviewer R = Respondent

SIDE A

I **… for camera, Tape 9 for DAT, both at the beginning. It's 6 June 2000, Trish FitzSimons recording, Erica Addis on camera, and we're recording Jean Smith in the kitchen of the Bedourie Hotel and Post Office.**

So Jean, I'd like you to tell me where and when you were born and whatever you know about the circumstances of your birth, and what your name was when you were born.

R Yes, well, I was the last one of seven. My sister's 92. She lives in Charters Towers. She went to Adelaide the other day. And two brothers, the older ones have passed on. There's three boys left now and I was born in Adelaide. I think it was Queen Victoria Hospital. It's ummm, the racecourse there, there's a racecourse out, one of my sons was born there too, Donny. Anyway, Jean Lois Scobie was my name, Scobie from the Marree-Birdsville Track. And I was the only one, only one born in Adelaide, and Mum wasn't very well. She nearly died, I think, and lucky I'm still alive because the old sister said, 'Oh, it's a girl, we'll save it', so they saved me. My sister Ethel, she was looking after the rest of the children, you know, with Dad up at Ooroowilanie, 120 miles north of Marree it was. But she was 18 then when I was born.

I Your elder sister?

R Mmmm. Yes. She was looking after the family. Gordon was only three years and three months when I was born and the others, of course, he was next to me. He's over at Hammond Downs now and he went to Windorah with one of my sons and daughter-in-law.

I So how old would your mother have been when you were born?

R Mother was 40. Dad was … me Mum was 40, Dad was just on 50, about nine years, you know, in those days the men always married the younger women, didn't they? 'Cause they do now, too, I suppose, if men have got money, they figure the women will cotton to it. Oh, although Dad didn't. His father opened up the Track as far as Ooroowilanie, oh and out on the Kelly Cooper, too, with Welsh who was a well sinker and he was a stonemason. Some of those houses that he built are still there, parts of them, you know, with the roof off

them and the place Dad built, it's been pulled down to stone one of the sand hills there. They're all only sand hill and, well, they don't use that road now so they pulled the house down for nothing. There's still the pile of stones there, yet, that he didn't … you know, he cut all the stone and … neatly, and made built the house.

I So your father, your son was living in [Coorabillannie?]

R Oora … Ooroowilanie.

I Oora …

R Ooroowilanie. It's just the other side of Mungaranie. 18 miles. Mungaranie Service Station there. It's 18 miles the other side.

I So was your Dad sinking wells and …?

R No, not my Dad, my grandad. I never knew my grandad. I knew both my grannies but not my grandfathers. They were dead before I can remember, you know, I can't remember them. My Dad wasn't a well sinker but he was … although I think he had his brother and his father to help him build the house, you know, their stone house was good too. But to begin with, they lived in a bush shed, me Mum and them. Ethel said she could still remember the grass shed and that. Yeah. 'Cause I can't.

I Had your Mum come from Adelaide to Ooroowilanie?

R No. Mum didn't. Mum's father was Frank Booth. He was a wonderful horseman, Frank Booth, yeah. And his son was, too. I didn't know Grandfather, of course, but I knew one of Mum's brothers, Mum's favourite brother was Frank. She had younger brothers and that. But, oh gee, he was a wonderful horseman. I saw him one day, he was riding this race horse and leading two, and I had to stop and watch him. They were dancing everywhere and he was smoking a cigarette and, oh, you know. Yeah. He was a marvellous horseman. He stayed up at Anna Creek until he was about, oh he was over 80. Then he went down to Port Augusta with one of his granddaughters, I think, looked after him there.

I So what do you reckon is your earliest memory from Ooroowilanie?

R Ooroowilanie. Oh, I don't know, really, running around the sand hills after the rain, and beautiful flowers. See, we were on the edge of the, edge of the Stony Desert, Sturt's Stony Desert, on the southern edge and the eastern edge of the Simpson. We had swings under the trees, just down at the sand hill there, about, I suppose it'd be 100 yards if it was that. Gordon used to get on the swings and when he'd jump off half his trousers would stay on the nail. He'd come up and Mum would always know. He'd sort of back around 'Ah, well, let me see how much you've torn them this time,' Mum'd say. Yeah, Mum's people, they had hotels. They were burnt out twice and it's a funny thing, I'm terrified of fire but yet, I think Mum might have been and she sort of told me about it.

I So where were those hotels?

R Well I'm not too sure.

I So, Jean, that's interesting. I'm interested in some of your mother's sayings. She just told me one of them, that I'd like you to tell me on tape, and tell me what else your mother told you, to guide you through the world.

R Oh, yeah, well she said, 'When you get old,' she said, 'the doctors can't be bothered with you'. She said, 'When I went to the doctor's once,' she said – she hardly ever went at all, she had her appendix out once and that's about all she was in hospital – but she said, 'He said, "Oh, you're well worn"', and she said, 'Yes, and sometimes I feel …'. He said, 'Oh, you've worn well,' and she said, 'Yes and sometimes I feel well worn'.

I What were other sayings of your mother's?

R Oh, I don't know. Dad, now they've got a tape out about Dad. He's supposed to have tilted his chair back, see, well he wouldn't dare do that because Mum would just say, 'Alec!' and he would put the chair back down again. He wouldn't have … 'Dad' she used to call him. 'See Dad.' Anything, 'Go and ask your father. If you want to ride that horse, ask your father,' she'd say straight away. Anyway, Dad … there was this tape they've got out, they've got he sat back or something, he sat back in his chair. Well, Dad never did that, you know. No, he'd never do that.

I So the Scobies were a mob to be reckoned with on the Birdsville Track, were they?

R Oh, I don't know. They were there but, you know, Gordon and I used to follow up the drovers. Sometimes when the drovers would go, you know, to see what they'd write on

the, see the bleached heads of the bullocks. They used to write poetry on them and we used to follow, so if one went down, like old he's a good old poet, we used to follow the mob down. Oh, not, you know, a couple of days after, and we'd read them. One said, 'Here I lie in Scobie's run, flogged to death by his eldest son'. Gets down to the whip see Dad was a Scobie whip, you know, he used to make that and, 'cause they never flogged bullocks at all. Then there was another one, 'Here I lie, my soul's in hell, my calf's been pinched by old Bell . Oh, that's all I can remember. There were some there, too, that you wouldn't want to remember, you know, a bit rude they were.

I Come on, tell us about them.

R No, well I can't remember those, you know. Gordon would be able to. Oh, he's … and then there was a piece of poetry made up, *The Cuff and Collar Crowd* it was called, about Dad. He took on droving after a while, you know, when I was little. I was about seven, I suppose, six or seven, he took on droving then and made this bit of poetry up about him. and Billy was in it, that's Billy Elston, he was a drover too.

I So what brought you to the Channel Country Jean?

R Oh, well, see, Mum and Dad didn't want … I was 17 and on my 17th birthday I went up to Ethel. I come up with old Tom Kruse, you know the name, used to run the mail there, and because it was, well it was too lonely there. I was 17, see we had to run round the sand hills with no boots on and I never liked wearing shoes. I had to wear them when we went to Marree about once a year but I wouldn't wear them at home, just wouldn't. That's why I've got short broad feet like a camel. Yes, ah, well Mum sent me up there. I think, I think that they wanted to take me to the war, I think. Well I would have been no good. I was innocent, I knew nothing, they'd have kidded me over it, you know. So I think that might have been the reason, they never said. I don't know but it was wartime then. And also, see, I think I was about six, I don't know how old I was when the Japanese, they, that Mum and Dad were worried about that too. See Mum was a great one on the news, see. She used to listen. And when Bob Lindsay sent all that scrap iron over to Japan, she said, 'Dad, that'll be fired back on us soon', and sure enough it was. Everything Mum said was back. It was right. She was a great one on the news 'cause she'd taught her children for years. She taught me for, oh, nine-and-a-half years, you know, educated me.

I So all your education had come from your mother?

R Yeah, well we did have a teacher, a man teacher, from , and we had him for a while but, see, they never stayed. Oh they'd stay twelve months and that but it's a lonely place. Saw the mail every fortnight, that's all, and drovers, of course, but there was a lot of them in those days.

I Tell us about Tom Kruse. What was he like?

R Oh, Tom. Oh, he was a great old fellow. He's still down there in Adelaide. He was up in Birdsville not long ago. He came up here to see us and then he'd come to town for a while. Yeah. Oh, he was a wonderful fellow, old Tom. Always joking, you know. Everything was a joke to him. Yeah.

I Tell us a Tom Kruse joke.

R Oh, no, not really, but he was always smiling, you know. Yeah. And Dad, Dad went up with him once and they were away for a fortnight and we didn't know where they were. Mum thought Dad was dead and all, but Tom was that strong, he could lift a 44-gallon of petrol up onto the truck, you know, it was terrific strength. Yeah. He was a great fellow, Tom. His brother Curly was killed opening a gate at night, I think it was, and the car, truck ran back on him and squashed him. He was 21 then.

I So when you say your parents sent you to the Channel Country maybe because they wanted you to go to the war …

R No, they didn't want me to go to the war. That was the point, they didn't want me to go. No. I would have been no use at all. I knew nothing. Even now, I think that kids of twelve know more than I do, you know. You're reared in the bush. All you have in the bush is old drovers and they were all gentlemen, you know, all very respectable.

I So do you think your parents were afraid that manpower would …?

R Yeah, probably. It might have been, I don't know, see, why, but it might have been that. Mmmm. They sent me up there to Ethel then. Oh, to help Ethel, too, I suppose. She was working up there, cooking and that, on the station.

I So Ethel was your elder sister who was eighteen years older?

R Mmmm. She's 92. On 17 March, she was 92. Still drives her car, yet she's thinking of giving it up, though, she said, because it costs too much, she reckons.

I So where was Ethel, exactly?

R Davenport Downs, over there. Frank managed there, her husband.

I Now I can't picture Davenport Downs on the map. Tell me what town it's closest to.

R Ummm. Oh, well, I think it'd be closest to Winton, or this place, it's fairly close to. It's a fair way away. It's over the other side of the Diamantina, Davenport.

I So between Diamantina Lakes and Winton?

R Yes. No, no. It's between Diamantina Lakes and Monkira. It's about 80 miles straight up the river from, oh straight down the river, to Monkira, from Davenport to Monkira.

I So tell me what your first image of the Channel Country was.

R Oh, when I came up here. Well, I was 21 then, when I came up here to this but over there, see, it was safer. We were pretty safe there but up here, I had to come up here to work at the hotel and we came to Clooney and we had to boat across. It was night time, dark and I was frightened of the water too. Jack Clancy and the two, the old black couple from here, Nora and Jack, he was the, you know the Aboriginal sort of, was the policeman. He used to …

I Native police?

R Yeah, he was with the white police but he used to live up there with old Nora. And they come over and Jack Clancy, and Cameron went up there and he didn't but he was working it, leasing it then, but he owned it after. Anyway, we had to get in the boat then and go across this river at night. Gawd, I made out I wasn't frightened. I tell you what, I was terrified. Then we got across the river and they gave me this horse to ride and I was right then, until we got here, until we got to this river, and we had to boat across again. Oh, that was no good. No, I don't like the rivers. They're not … I don't like them at all. I can swim, though, good.

I So as a child, had you seen the sea ever?

R Ah, yes, I did. I went down to the Inland Mission camp once. Australian Inland Mission camp. I don't know how old I was, about 11 I think. I wouldn't go in it, though. I used, I got into such a lot of trouble for not going swimming in the sea. I just wouldn't. I was too frightened. I'm still afraid of a big stretch of water, you never know what's going to come out of that water. See. But I could swim really good, and float and everything, but I learnt that in the dam at home. In the big dam there. They sunk it with horses and bullocks, oh before I was born, of course, a long time.

I So what had made you leave Davenport and come here to Bedourie?

R Well I left Davenport because, I don't know really. I went down … oh, I know, I went down home and Ethel said I could go and have a change, you know, somewhere, and when I came back Ron and Sue Michel, they said they wanted me at Betoota, see, and we knew Ron and Sue really well so I got as far as Birdsville with old Tom Kruse again, got as far as Birdsville and couldn't get up there because of the rivers, see, the big rain. Couldn't get up to Betoota so then I stayed in Birdsville then. And then after I had my 21st birthday there in the hotel in Birdsville, Phil Morton and, she was Phil Speech then but she married Lionel but they were all there and Mr Gumpton and Mrs Gumpton and they were partying there and I went to sleep. I didn't drink, I never did. I never did drink, never, ever.

I So what year would this have been when you were turning 21?

R Oh, goodness, I don't know what year it was but I'm 74 now so …

I So you must have been …

R In May. In May, I don't know what year it was. I forget now. I don't sort of follow the years much. Usually old people do, you know, they know all the years, what happened a certain year, but I don't. I think it's because I was in the hotel here for so long and, you know, about twenty years, over twenty years, you know. Not now couldn't be bothered thinking after that. Then I came up here before I was 22.

I So when you got to Birdsville, then, I think it would have been about 1945, war just ending. Does that make sense?

R Yeah. I think so, '45.

I Did the Second World War make much impact on your life? Like, was the fact that this war was going on …?

R Oh, yeah, it's so unnecessary, isn't it? All the fighting. Look at that overseas now, it's disgusting. Absolutely … and that fellow over there, there's one man like Hitler, one man can say that all the rest have got to die, you may as well say. Well, why don't they just pot him over and be done with it? He knows he's safe, that's why he's so cheeky. It's terrible. I think war is a dreadful thing. So many people died. Uncle Mick was at the war. He was at Gallipoli. He came home but, of course, he was no good, you know. I remember seeing him once and he couldn't walk any more, any further than, oh just a little way, hardly from here to the bar. That was after the First World War that must have been, mustn't it, after that?

I So this was about '45, you came up with Tom Kruse to Birdsville …

R Mmmm, again, yes.

I … and the rivers were up that year.

R When I was 22. Yes. Yeah, the rivers were up then.

I So what was Birdsville like in 1945?

R Oh, well I think it was a nicer place than it is now. Mmmm, it was just a few … it was a bush town, you know, and Dorothy, I think she had the Post Office then, when I came up when I was 17, Dorothy, David Brooks' mother. She had the Post Office. She was a lovely woman, Dorothy. See, the two sisters, they were Smiths too. There was Ella in Birdsville and Rose here. Well, they married two brothers, Jack in Birdsville and George here. Gafneys, you know. And Barry's in Birdsville now. That is, George and Rose Gafney's son, grandson. He lives in Birdsville, Barry, at the Post Office there. He's married.

I And was that around the time that you met Linda Condon?

R Yes, when I … yes, then when I was about twenty … no, yeah, oh I was about twenty I was, yeah, then. And all the family was shocked that I went to work at a hotel but I was pleased I did because I learnt a lot there. They had parties and you had to, and I'd be waiting inside for the tea. I thought they only had a party race time, see, because we used

to go sometimes to the races. Bland Oldfield, he was … two of his brothers married two of my cousins, the Scobie girls from Mulcha. Anyway, old Mulcha, he came out, he said, 'What are you doin' here?' I said, 'I'm waiting for you to come and have tea'. It was about 11 o'clock. 'Oh,' he said, 'girl, go to bed,' he said. 'We're having a party in there.' 'But,' I said, 'I thought you only had parties when you were race time,' and he said, 'Oh, no, don't be silly'. I liked old Bland, you know.

I So what was it like to work in the pub as a 21-year-old girl that didn't drink at all?

R Oh, it was good. Oh, good. No, I wouldn't drink, no. No, I worked for one of those Oldfields, Jim, married Ida, my cousin. Well, his sister, see, was there. She had the … she was in the hotel there and she was good. She taught me to make paper roses and all, and I used to get up at 3 o'clock in the morning and go and train Billy Brook's race mare, oh ride her, you know, not training her but … 'cause he used to take her, sometimes Billy Brook would go out and he'd be away for a full day, you know, and she'd be straight out of the stable, too, and, you know, no exercise, so I asked them and they said, 'Yeah, you can take her out,' so I used to take her out. Alert, beautiful big mare, she was. Yeah.

I So had you grown up riding?

R Yeah. Mmmm. Oh, yes, we did a fair bit, yeah. Yes, I wouldn't take her near the racecourse, though. She won the Cup once or twice. I wouldn't take her near the racecourse. I couldn't hold her if I did. All horses, I could hold 'em, but not her. I couldn't. So I kept her away from the racecourse.

I Somebody told me recently that in Birdsville there was much more mixing, black and white, lots of intermarriages between Aboriginal people and white people. Is that how you found Birdsville?

R Oh, now.

I No …

R No, no, no, not then. When I was up there, I liked them all, because they used to come past down home, you know. See, it was, we never had permanent water at home. There was a bore at [Mungaranie?] and then 18 miles to home, and then 9 miles to the other bore, the Mulcha bore. New well it was called. But Mulcha bore. And they used to always walk down home and they'd have dinner or something there and Mum used to say, 'Come in the

verandah and have it,' and 'No, missus, if you don't mind, we'll go out on the wood heap and can we use some of your chips to make a smoke?' Mum would say, 'Yes' because there were hundreds of, oh big piles, chips, you know, there. Mum said, 'Well, all right then,' and they used to go out and make a smoke and Mum would give them dinner, and dinner there, and talk. Oh, happy people. God, they were happy people, you know. And they used to be on the stations here too, round here, and you'd hear music and singing and everything, you know, until someone took 'em grog. And then it was no good. But, oh, they were nice people. They used to come past home and I'd go and talk. So kind, you know, black ones, to children. Still are too. Yeah. But they were really good people. It's spoilt a bit now.

I Were they going past your place droving or …?

R No, no, just walking. Walkabout, you know. Walkabout from one station to the relations down at the other place. Yeah, just goin' walkabout, that's all. I was always curious, there was one white one, and I could never find out. She spoke like a real lady. From the Mission, you know, [Kalalpaninna?]. I've often wondered who she was. I forget what they called her now. I don't know. But she was quite white. She had white hair, perhaps that made her look whiter, eh? Grey hair, I think. Yeah. See [Kalalpaninna?] Mission, that was finished before, I can't remember it even. I can remember going there once when I was about three and it was all sanded up then. I was three or four. The sand was there. The [Bogulseins?] had that. Old Mr Bogulsein from Germany, he's buried there.

I And in Birdsville, I think you said before we turned on the tape that you and Linda became friends.

R Oh, yes. Yeah, we used to ride round together there. Mmmm. Yeah. I had two young black girls down home used to be … there was one was, one was called Bessie. Bessie is Donald Rolands's mother. You know Donald Rolands in Birdsville? Bessie, his mother, we used to play together. Then there was Ivy, another one too, we used to play together. Those are the two friends I had and then after I grew up I met Linda, see, in Birdsville. Linda and Clara, Linda's sister Clara, we used to ride round, oh go out to the Bluff to see Mrs Morton and back again, you know. 36 miles is nothing.

I And would anybody have frowned upon you, having Aboriginal friends?

R Oh, no. No. It wouldn't worry me if they had have. Oh, no. They were all right there. They were friends with them, you know, yeah. I've never known when we weren't friends with the black people. Never known it.

I So how did you end up here in Bedourie then?

R Well, that's how I … oh, Mrs Nixon must have sold the pub, I think, in Birdsville and I shifted out up here then. They wanted me up here so I came up. I think so, I'm not sure. I think she did. Anyway she went to Marree after and she was hemming tea towels, poor old soul, and she died. She's Jimmy Dunn's mother, you know. Jimmy Dunn owned this oh [Kalamirna?] down here, years ago, Jimmy and Joan. They had two sons. I think that's all the children they had was two, Peter and I think. And then they owned this other place up here now, the other side of Mt Isa, but I think Jimmy's retired in Adelaide now, Jimmy and Joan. The boys are up there.

I So in your knowledge, Jean, has it mostly been women that have run the pub out here?

R Well, they've done their fare share of work in them, I know that. Jimmy's running this one. He's working hard in it, too. But he's getting improvements done, you know. He got those units built over there. He's done a lot to it since he had to give up the trucking. He was truck driving for over twenty years, truck driving.

I Last night we were talking to a woman who knew about the Royal Australian Hotels in Boulia …

R Oh yes.

I … and she was describing …

R Oh, that'd be Jean. Jean Locke. Granny Locke.

I No, it was June …

R Jackson. Oh, yes. Yeah, June would know.

I And she was describing the shed up the back where the men would come in and just hoist their mattresses …

R Yeah, throw their swags down.

I Can you describe how that worked in Birdsville?

R Oh, yeah, they used to come in. Oh, they'd camp anywhere, you know. They wouldn't stay at the hotel. Only race time there'd be the women and their husbands stay at the hotel. Oh, no, they used … sometimes they'd be down the creek or something, you know.

I These would be the white stockmen or drovers?

R Yeah, mmmm. Old Teddy Sheehan, he was a drover and he had this little chestnut horse called Sandy and he used to ride into Birdsville, see, but he'd have … well, not with the cattle. When he was going up for cattle. He wouldn't drink while he had cattle in hand but when he was going up there, he'd ride Sandy into Birdsville and then he'd be a day or so there and someone would say, 'Well, we'll catch up to plant in the motor car', you know those old wooden spoke … all right, I'd say let Sandy go and Sandy would go down to where he last saw the horses and then he'd track 'em up. A couple of days, he could track the plant up with the little horse. Little pony. I used to ride him every time I'd finish. He'd come past Ooroowilanie.

I So you said you left Birdsville when, was it Mrs Burke sold the pub?

R No. What's her name? Linda. Oh, crikey.

I Don't worry.

R Oldfield, yeah. Linda her name was. I'm sure. Jim Oldfield's sister anyway.

I So that pub got sold.

R She was Mrs Dixon then. She was Mrs Dixon then.

I So what brought you to Bedourie? You were looking for work?

R Oh, yeah, I just wanted to come. I'd never been to Bedourie. I wanted to see what it was like, mmmm, so I come up here.

I And what did you discover when you came up here?

R Oh, I don't know. I thought it was all right. I used to cook. I was doing the cooking and I used to take Mona and Alan a cup of tea. Then we had Bob and Mabel Laughton, this was in the morning, and I'd take them a cup of tea, and then Alan's brother Len, sometimes I'd

take him a cup of tea but I didn't like Len. We didn't get on very well, so one day his foot was sticking out, one morning, sticking out, the rugs in the back of the bed, you know, it was right near the door, and I put his tea down and I got, I hung onto the door and I give his big toe an awful twist and ran out, and I told her, I said, 'I'm not taking him any tea any more. He's young enough to get up and get his own'. Poor old Len. Yeah.

I What had he done to you?

R Oh, nothing, really. Nothing, really, no. We just didn't get on, that's all, didn't agree. Sometimes I'd be coming out in the morning in the dark and I'd run into those posts, you know, running along, bash into those, you know those posts out there, those steel uprights on the verandah. Oh, crikey, I've hit them a few times. Cold mornings when you run, you know.

I So you've lived here in this building for 23 years?

R No, not in this building. Ah, we lived over the road in that old cottage, that old place.

I

R Yes. Yeah, we shifted over here 29 years ago this month. Mmmm. '71 we shifted over here. Was it '71? 29 years, I think. Yes, 29 years.

I And was the Post Office always a part of the pub?

R Yes. Well, as long as I can remember, the Post Office has been the pub. I think it was here right from the start. It was always here. We had an old tin Post Office there and all the tourists used to say, 'Oh, isn't it quaint?' and I used to get so annoyed. So Jimmy built another one. He said, 'For peace sake, we'll have another one built' so he built that stone one, he put that on there.

I We've heard people talk about how earlier this century pubs actually would make their own money. Like, I've heard about a Mrs Craigie who, I think, was at Boulia?

R No, she was here, Mrs Craigie. Yes.

I Oh, she was Bedourie, was she?

R Yeah, Bedourie, yeah.

I So tell me what you know about Mrs Craigie.

R Well, I don't know much. When she'd get sick of the drunks, see they'd run out of money, she'd say, 'It's a lovely moonlight night and there's water in the duck hole'. The duck hole's eight miles up, see, well that's a bit, be right, they'd pull out up there and camp and then go on. But she sold the pub. Oh, well, she had her husband, her brother, they owned [Bedolbin?] up here and, see, I think they were given [Bedolbin?]. I'm not sure of this but I think, after they came back from the war, you know, they were giving country to people, the stockmen, and they had [Bedolbin?] and she had the pub, or she ran the pub anyway, and Sir Sidney wanted [Bedolbin?] and they wouldn't sell it to him unless he bought the pub. And I think this is the only pub he ever bought. I think so, I'm not really sure. Anyway, he bought the pub off Mrs Craigie and George Gafney and Rose Gafney went into it.

I Now I've heard that when Mrs Craigie sold the pub to Sir Sidney, she managed to leave the Post Office out of the equation so that Sidney Kidman only got the pub and she could still get the money from the Post Office.

R Oh, well, I don't know. No, she didn't live here. I don't know about that. Well, I don't know. Who'd know about that now? Alan and Eileen probably would. Eileen Clancy. She married Jack Clancy. She's one of the daughters. There was Eileen, Alan and Len.

I So was Mrs Craigie still here when you arrived?

R No, goodness me, no. No, no. Gafneys had this for 50 years. Gafneys – George and Rose Gafney had it, and then Alan had it, and then after Alan had it, Len had it, his brother. Yeah.

I But you just grew up hearing stories of Mrs Craigie?

R Oh, yes. Oh, there was lots of stories they used to tell. This old … the fellow that got killed out on Sandringham about 70 or more years ago, him and one of the other fellows were coming in from Sandringham, see, and they saw a snake up there at Duck Creek and he said, one of them said, 'We'd better kill that snake'. He said, 'No, leave it, we'll kill and going home'. Going for a booze up.

I I heard about Mrs Craigie from her niece, Patricia Hodgkinson, who lived down on Mount Leonard.

R Oh, yes. Ohhh.

I Patricia, I think, said Mrs Craigie had had three husbands and at least one of them had died in odd circumstances. Did you ever hear that?

R Craigie. No, no, that was Mount Gayson. Well I heard about Mount Gayson but I've never heard about the Craigies. No.

I What was Mount Gayson?

R Oh, I don't know. It was something there, supposed to have been. This woman was supposed to have given her husband … I won't tell any names but she's supposed to have given a plate of food to the wrong one. He was an old drover. 'Oh,' she said, 'that's wrong' and she put it in front of her husband and he died shortly after he ate it. It was, oh it was the same stuff as they gave Napoleon Bonaparte. What was he – Napoleon – what was it? Now you can tell it in the hair after.

I Arsenic?

R Arsenic. That's what they reckon. They reckon it was arsenic but whether that's right or not, I wouldn't even know. It's a story I heard but you just don't know if it's right or not. I'm not really interested in it either. Let 'em look after themselves, eh?

I So when you arrived at the pub, then, the Gafneys were here?

R Yes.

I And what was your job?

R Alan Gafney was here then, Alan. He married my husband's sister, Mona, yeah. Oh, I cooked here then, yeah.

I In this very room?

R Yes, it was only … see, that was how big it was then, from there across to here, just that part of it there, and Jimmy got it fixed up after, made it bigger after.

I So how many people would you have cooked for and what …?

R Ohhh, I cooked for a married couple, Bob and Mabel Laughton. He owned Camerons, see, he was the one that was at the war and while he was at the war Jack Clancy leased Cameron, and then when he came home he managed Lakeford. Then when he came over here, Jack bought Hidden Valley up from Winton and he took 600 … no, he didn't, Bob bought Hidden Valley, that's right, and Jack swapped him then. 600 head of cattle at a hundred and whatever, I don't know, 600 head of cattle was going to be at Hidden Valley, see. Jack's cattle from Cameron. I think it's something like that, I don't know what it was but I know Jack ended up with Hidden Valley and Bob ended up with Cameron. No, Jack ended up with Cameron, that's right. Jack ended up with Cameron because he gave the 600 head of cattle. They swam them across here and I can remember they only lost about six. The river was up and they lost about six head, that's all, in the trees, poor things. But they put the horses across first and then the cattle followed them. That's the best way. It's the only way to cross. Same as if you're yardin' wild cattle, you put the horses behind the yard – not in it, behind it – and the cattle go straight in. But, yeah, that's right.

I So how did you meet your husband, then, Jean?

R Oh, he was here. I knew him. His father was droving down the road. Droving down there, old Charlie Smith. He was droving. He managed Clooney for 18 years, old Charlie Smith, and then he said … they sold it, see, and he said, 'If I'd known the job wasn't permanent I'd never have taken it'. I don't know, after 18 years and about 11 children. Funny old man he was. Yeah, well …

I So tell me about meeting your husband and …

R Oh, no, I'm not interested in that. I knew him for a good while before, like I only just saw him droving down there with his father.

I So how long did you know him before you got married and did you …?

R Oh, a long time. Oh, a long time. Oh, I don't know how long now. He was only young when he used to go through there with his father, go through the droving, it was a good life. Yeah, we had five children. Five boys. Jimmy, Donny, David, Roy and Maxie.

I Where were your kids born?

R Oh, well Jimmy was born in Birdsville. That's the first one. Donny was born in Adelaide. David was born in Longreach. Roy was born in Port Augusta and Maxie was born in Winton. Roy and Maxie are qualified mechanics. They learnt here in the Shire. They've put a few mechanics through, young people here. My two and then three more, no two more after, four young fellows and there's another fellow now learning, so it's done a fair bit of good.

I So you would stay here till two or three weeks before the babies were due and then you'd go off to a town to a hospital?

R Oh, well, I stayed here before Jimmy was born. I went to Birdsville a week or two, I think, before he was born, and then I went to Adelaide, Donny, I was down there awhile, I don't know how long, three or four weeks I think. And then David in Longreach, I was there about three weeks. That's when Mother had her appendix operation in Adelaide. And then Roy was born in Port Augusta, I wasn't there very long. And Maxie was born in Winton. I was only in there about a day. Max was back here before he was, oh, he wasn't very old. Yeah, we had to camp out the other side of Boulia there. We got to … there was no bridge there in Boulia then, and we had to camp, we camped there and then we came around through Springvale next day and then, what's his name, Woods, Colin Milson was there then.

I So you'd go off on your own, or your husband would go with you, when the babies were due?

R No, no, I'd go by myself. He had to work.

I Would your mother, say, have come up to Birdsville for that first baby?

R No. No, I wouldn't have had that. I don't want to be pampered.

I So was that tough, giving birth on your own?

R Oh, I don't know. I don't suppose it was any worse than anything else. I wasn't on my own. Sister, there was a sister there and also a woman that helped her. Miss Rose Nuttall, she was the one that did the housework and Sister Enid Moore was the sister, and then, that was in the morning he was born. The first one to come and see me was Dorothy Brook. She was a Gafney from the pub, you know, David Brook's mother. Her and little David. David's 18 months old and here's this little round blue

eyes, too, when he was little. And he was the first one to see Jimmy. His eyes opened a bit bigger too. And then Dr Harvey Sutton, he wasn't long married, and he flew down. Little aeroplanes they had then, you know, just the wings sort of, the … oh, little aeroplanes, they'd only hold about two or three, and he flew all the way from Mt Isa, no Cloncurry he was then. He was in Cloncurry. He flew all the way from Cloncurry to Birdsville – I was all right, there was nothing wrong with me – just to see that I was all right, you know.

I So you felt pretty well looked after?

R Oh, yeah. Oh, yes, then, yes.

I Okay, so this is camera tape 19, we're still in DAT tape 9. The DAT is on 4147 so we're about half way through the DAT tape, and this is the second camera tape interview with Jean Smith in the kitchen of the Bedourie Hotel, and it's 6 June 2000.

So tell me about Edna Ziggenbine again.

R Edna? Yes, Lindsay, when they were little, I can't remember how many children Mrs Ziggenbine had there but I remember they had, they camped for dinner once just about a hundred yards from home and we ran over to see them. Mum sent us over to ask Mrs Ziggenbine to come over to the house, you know, but she was too busy to come over. Had to feed the children first and then after that she, I think she went to see Mum then, I think. She was a marvellous woman, Mrs Ziggenbine. Edna, too. And so was Kathleen. Kathleen married Dick and they used to go droving. Monty was with them, my brother. And he said that Dick and him had never been down the [Murrinjai?]. Dick was a wild man, real wild man. They'd never been down the [Murrinjai?] Track, you know up there, and Kathleen had been, and she piloted them all the way down the [Murrinjai?]. Both horsewomen, they were, oh Edna.

I Edna and Kathy?

R And Kathy, mmmm. Most of the Ziggenbine girls were, I think.

I So Edna's sister Kathy – just explain …

R Married Dick, my brother Dick.

I Can I just ask you that question again because I want you to tell it all to me. How are you related to Edna?

R Oh, well, Edna's sister was my sister-in-law. Edna's not blood related but she's sort of, you know. I like to see her every time I go to Mt Isa but I've been up there a couple of times and got my teeth done, you know, and I just didn't go up but I'll go up next time I go up there. I'll go over and see her. 'Cause Mt Isa is a bit strange to me but now I know exactly where she is. I know where she is, she lives up near the museum, up there, up on that hill. Grey Street, it is. So I intend to go and see her next time. I will go and see her next time I go up there. I haven't because I had a lot of trouble getting me teeth out. Oh, it was awful.

I And when you say that, as a child, well before your brother married Kathy, that you'd see the Ziggenbines going past and your mother would call out to her, was that kind of one woman looking out for another woman she didn't know? Was that how it went?

R Oh, yes. Well, she knew Mrs Ziggenbine, see. Harry Ziggenbine, Dad and Mum knew him and there was, oh there was a few. The Sodens too, they were a married couple. Mr and Mrs Soden, they used to drove down there and they had two kids, you know. A girl and a boy. Don't know where they are now. They should be still around because the girl was older than the boy, but they were younger than me, the children, so they should be still … I don't know where they are but I tell you where you find out a lot of people, is in that Hall of Fame paper. That's a very handy paper if you want to know, you know, where people are. And I've been going to write and ask, oh lots of times, and I haven't, you know.

I The Hall of Fame has never interviewed you, I don't think, have they?

R No.

I So were you and Edna mates as kids?

R No, no, we weren't, no. Edna, see I was too little. I didn't … I was only little. Edna and I are the same age. I think I'm a year older than Edna but she was small then when they came down and she didn't drove down the Marree-Birdsville Track. She was boss drover after her … see she was nursing. She was nursing Tennant Creek, I think it was, and her father took ill, so she went and took over the plant of horses and they reckon that she could

really handle the Aboriginals, you know, even those that never wore boots, you know, big toes in the stirrup iron. They reckon Edna … they'd do anything for Edna.

I They respected her?

R Yeah. She was droving for years.

I Do you think she would have had difficulty as a woman doing a job that was usually a man's job?

R No, I don't think so. She was brought up to it, see. She was looking after the common up there too for a long, long time. Years she was there looking after the cattle in the yard. Oh you see most of these papers, you see Edna's photo in them. But I haven't seen Edna for a few years. I'm going to see her next time, though, when I go up in November. No, September I go up again. In September I will go and see her then.

SIDE B

I So how did you and your husband come to run this pub? How did the shift come …?

R My husband never ran the pub. My son did, Jimmy. He never ran the pub.

I So your husband, you weren't with him for so long?

R Oh, yeah, a long time. I forget how long now. He's buried up there in the cemetery. I forget how long. Hang on, we were married in '48, '49 I think. '48 or '49 we were married.

I So your husband couldn't work because of the drink?

R No, he had ulcers too. He used to work. But he was very sick with ulcers. He died of cancer.

I How much older than you was your husband?

R About 18 months.

I So, Jean, did you ever have a period when you weren't working and you were looking after your kids, or was it always …?

R Oh, yes. I lived over in that old house over there and in that big house on the corner for a while. That belonged to … Jack Clancy built that house on the corner. He had an old man helping put down the floors, then he built the rest himself and just had jackaroos, young fellows who used to And then Peter's father bought it then. When he died, we went to live in it too, and then when his brother Nick came along we shifted into that old cottage.

I So when you were living with your children in the house opposite, tell me the kind of the physical conditions of your life there. You know, like did you have an electric light? What did you cook on?

R Oh we had engines, yeah. A wooden stove. And then we had a gas stove but we had, always had the washing machine there. Old, you know, washing machine, but we had to start up the engine, our own engine to wash. It wasn't so bad then, not like in Mum's day. You had to wash by hand, the old copper out the front. And even when I went to Davenport, Ethel washed by hand and she had the copper. That was a big day, the wash day, in those days. Now you can just go out and put the washing machine on.

I And so you had one of those washing machines with the wringers? Would that be the sort you had?

R Mmmm. Ethel did have one over there after. Yeah, no, no, we never. Or did we? Yes, I did. Yeah, and it was so long ago, it's over twenty years. Yeah, we had the wringer on it. Mmmm. Yes, it was only in the latter years that they had, you know, the spin dry. They had a spin dry here when I came over to the pub, though, but we never had a spin dry.

I So while your kids were young, then, your husband was earning enough money to keep you and the children?

R Oh, yes, he kept us. He managed [Clifton Hills?]. We were there for about three years, I think it was. Took our horses, some of our horses there, and then we took some of them down, left them at the gate and the kids and I, or he trucked them to [Mungaranie?] and then the kids and I took 'em down to the [Clayton?]. We lived 30 miles this side of Marree and we left them there for a while, then we picked them up and the kids and I brought 'em up. I wouldn't drive in the motor car but Pete reckoned that he made me drive the horses. He never made me drive the horses at all. I wouldn't drive, ride in the motor car, I wanted to ride the horses and I did. That was before Maxie was born. And then a lot of people,

you know, 'Oh, yes, he made her drive'. He never at all. Nobody could make me do what I didn't want to do. I didn't want to drive the motor car and I wouldn't drive it.

I And that was not about being afraid of the car, it was about you wanted to ride?

R No, I wanted to ride.

I So have you ever owned a car, Jean?

R Yes. Yeah, I owned a little Morris, second-hand Morris. And I've reared calves for year, you know. Years and years and years I've bred calves for 25-30 years or something. Here. I home too. But then I bought a Suzuki, there's the cattle money, and Danny used to help me a lot. If it was too dry here they'd take the cattle over there and then when they mustered, they'd muster mine with theirs and send them away for me, see, and Gordon Reid bought the lot that I sold to buy this Suzuki. Good little car, I had it for a few years, and then twenty years ago I sold some more and bought a Hi-Lux. I've got it here, still here, the old Hi-Lux. I wouldn't part with it for anything.

I So when did you buy the pub, then? And did you buy the pub and …?

R Oh, well Jimmy was the one. He was the youngest publican in Queensland at the time. He was just 21, I think it was, and he did all the business. I didn't. And even when he was trucking, he did all the ordering and paying for things. But if, he'd ring me up and tell me to pay an account. I wouldn't pay anything unless he rung me up and told me and then I'd pay it, see. But if he didn't come home, he used to come home every, oh, sometimes he'd be away a fortnight trucking, but not too long, be back for a couple of days and then he'd go again. But he did all the ordering and most of the paying for things but if he wanted anything paid before he got home, he'd just tell me to pay it, see, and I used to.

I So you and your son went into business to buy this pub here?

R Yeah, mmmm. Yeah, there was … oh, the other boys were in it, too, I think. Yeah, they were, but it's a good while ago and then they sort of … Jimmy bought them out. Donny and David, I don't know about Roy. But I know Donny and David were in it too.

I So how long ago did your family take over the pub from the Gafneys?

R Oh, it was from the Shores. Len and Margaret Shore. Ahhh, it'll be 30 years next year, 29 years. Margaret and Len Shore, they live in Toowoomba now. Margaret Shore's Sandy Kid's sister. Sandy Kid from Windorah, you know, he's well known, old Sandy. One day their father he said, 'Where's Margaret, Sandy?' 'Oh,' he said, 'she fell out a long way back'. Always casual, old Sandy.

I I've heard Margaret described as 'History Margaret' or something. She might know a lot of …

R I think she probably would, yes. Mmmm. Sandy's got an aeroplane and he's a good pilot too.

I So the Post Office was always part of the pub?

R Mmmm, far as I know. And we've got a box up there that came from one of the Post Offices up further, I just forget the name of it, but there was a young fellow lives in town and he told me that that Post Office is burnt now, that this box has been here … well, when I first come up here, it was here then, so I don't know how long it's been here. This box with the different names on it – Arcadia Valley and all those. I kept the names on it too.

I So what was the box for?

R To put the mail in. Letters and things.

I And were you like the bank for this community as well?

R Jimmy was. Jimmy was but I wasn't, no. My intelligence doesn't work to that, I don't think.

I So what would be involved in being the bank for this community? Was it like agent for the Commonwealth Bank?

R Mmmm. Agent he was, yeah. Mmmm. But it's not worth it. He's got that, oh what do they call it now? EFTPOS or something. I don't understand it but

I So if Jimmy was away and you were left running the pub, how would the banking side of things go?

R Oh, well, he used to come back in time to bank, usually. Usually he'd come back … oh, he never, once he started trucking he gave that up. It's not worth it. Not worth it. You start a new account off and you get $2.00. And that's about all you would get. It's not worth it. The Post Office isn't worth much either but I still do it because you can see how many houses there are in town now. I've been going to write and tell them too. They wouldn't want to know, of course, but …

I So how much money do you get for running the Post Office?

R Oh, you get $1,037.00 every three months, that's all I get. That's a seven-day-a-week job. see.

I So what's involved in running that Post Office? What do you do for your $1,037.00?

R Oh, well, Monday the mail goes out. Monday afternoon. I've got to miss my session. I usually miss that movie, you know, that's on, midday movie. I generally have to miss it Monday 'cause the mail goes out. But today, Tuesday, the mail comes in. All mail comes from Mt Isa. Today it comes in. I've sorted most of it. And then Wednesday, tomorrow, is the road mail. It comes and my daughter-in-law runs that from Boulia, Carol. Roy comes down sometimes on it. The little girl comes down too. Anyway, and then that's Wednesday. Thursday the mail goes out again. I can't watch my midday movie again on a … I watch scraps of it, you know. Friday the mail comes back. Saturday we don't have any mail but then I've got to do up the mail for Sunday morning. Sunday morning at half-past-nine we get the mail to South Australia. We don't get any mail from there, it just all comes round through Brisbane or somewhere. I don't know why. And once when the school children left some parcels behind, I sent them a bag and sent it straight to Brisbane so they'd get it and oh, didn't I get into trouble over it, to send that bag to Brisbane. It's supposed to all go to Mt Isa, I don't know why, because the bag goes to Brisbane, you see, the same day, but then it may be just as quick to Mt Isa, I don't know. But I would have had to wait a day or two so I sent it down and got into trouble.

I And your goats, when did you start running goats?

R Oh, goodness me, a long time ago, when I was over in the old cottage, around calves then. I've been around calves for years. The station used to give them to me when … see, on a station now, the muster, when they have a muster on the big station, they can lose up to oh 50 calves a year, something like that. It's no fault of theirs. They're born when they're

mustering, see. They've got to muster and when the calves are born when they're mustering, the mother might … if the mother feeds them once, they're right, but if she doesn't feed 'em them, then I've got no colostrum to give them. Should have now but they don't give calves away much now. I don't know why.

I So you take on the poddies?

R Yeah, goats too. Sometimes you feed the same goat with the same calf for about six weeks, some mothers and them sing out to them, run out and feed them and everything.

I So you have a herd of goats and the mother …?

R Mmmm. I did have a lot but now I've only got eleven nannies.

I And the mother goats will feed …?

R Feed the calves, yeah. Doesn't matter how big the calf is. They reckon it's cruel. It's not cruel at all. The goats will run out and feed them. And that's the trouble, see, then when the dingoes come around, that goat will go out to save that calf. The calf will stand and look at the dingo, of course the goat will run out, see, and the dingo gets the goat then. That's the trouble.

I So you've got a lot of dingoes round here?

R Yeah, more than there should be. One day, a few years ago, I went up there. I heard the goats sing out and I ran up there. It was a hot day, too. Usually dingoes won't kill, only morning and evening, but I ran up there and here's this dingo, the calves are trying to … three calves, and they're trying to, four I think there was, they were trying to get this dingo away from the goat. Of course as soon as the dingo saw me he went, see. About a couple of hundred yards down from me. He went and the calves brought that goat home. There was one calf on each side, one behind it, and one in the lead, and they brought that goat home. It's when they get a bit bigger, I suppose, it'd be better.

I So, raising goats and poddies, is that partly to provide milk for the community or …?

R No, if there's any sick kids they can go up there any time they like. There's no milk there now. It's not right. I haven't had a Billy goat for about two or three years now. Three years, I think, and of course when I was away I don't think the goats

maybe it's not, it may be that they're going to have kids again because I've got an Anglo-Nubian Billy goat now, a thoroughbred, he's pedigreed, and I'm not going to let him out. I put him in with the goats at night, then I bring him up here or leave him up there in the yard, you know, through the day. Some time, we had him up here for a good while in the fowl house. The trouble is, he gets out of there. Gracie, that's one of my friends, she mended the fowl yard and it got out again, and she mended it again. I don't know how many times she's mended it and he gets out in a different place.

I And, Edna, you're not running the pub any more, are you? You're just doing the Post Office?

R No. That's right.

I So is that the closest to retirement that you get?

R Oh, I think it would be, yes. I don't think I'll get much help either, I'm too . I don't think I would. You know, when I do want to retire I don't think I'll get much help. When Peter was crippled up there and my sons had to look after him. They talk all this here carers and all that sort of thing, but I don't think there's very much done. My sons had to bath him. That's wrong, you know. A bushman that's worked all his life, and that's how he ends up, and they don't do much for him.

I So this was when your husband was dying of cancer?

R Yes, he was in Mt Isa for a start and Maxie and Trace, that's my youngest son, he was allowed to come down to Boulia. He was a mechanic there in the council so Peter came down to, and there was a cottage, cottage next to the house. They built a landing where he could walk across to the house, he could walk first, when he first came down there. It didn't last long, they had to bath him and everything, and where's the carers? Where are their carers? Yeah, I know about that.

I So what do you see in the future for yourself?

R Well, I don't know. I'm just not thinking about the future. Thinking about today is the best part. Today. Every day. I don't know what's going to happen. But I do know one thing, that my family is not going to keep me like that. I'll go into a home if I get too sick. I will not … here the other day, they said, 'Oh, Jimmy's caring for you'. I said, 'Oh, is he?' I'm not interested in it but they'll be … the damn government will be because we've

paid tax for years and worked hard – pioneers. And that's the way you get treated when you get my bottom teeth, I broke them off when I was 12, four of them on the bottom, and I had to put up with that all the years because of the, you know, we didn't get away to get them fixed up. Mum didn't even know they were giving me trouble. I had to put me tongue over 'em when I drank cold water and I thought, 'Well, that's all right because I was only 12 when I did it'. I thought well, you know, we've suffered enough too, but one of these days if … I might even get onto the news in Longreach. I have before, you know. Let them know a few things that won't be appreciated.

I And what would you say? If you were on the news in Longreach now, what would you want to say?

R I don't know, I'd have to put it very carefully, wouldn't I? You can't say too much, can you? When carers come to Bedourie and they don't even come down to see me, when they come here twice, and don't … from Mt Isa, and don't even come down just for five minutes to say hello. So.

I Who are these carers? These are local government community nurses?

R Ah, I won't name the carer but I've finished with that carer now anyway, because she doesn't want to come down and spend five minutes talking to me, or just hello and go again. But to come to Bedourie twice and not even come near me. That's enough for me.

I And tell me about floods, Jean. Does this area … it looks very lush between here and the creek. Does that flood?

R Yes. Oh, well, it all depends. This year it has. I think there's been water over that twice this year but, oh, you should have been here last year. Oh, my goodness, it was dry. The cattle, the poor things, you know. I used to fill mine whenever I could. I'd see the worst ones fed but the trouble was there was so much big stations' cattle were here too, see, and you can't feed the lot in there. It wouldn't feed 'em. And the poor things, their eyes used to stick out and they'd stare at you, and well you know that's sad, it's terrible to see them. I can't understand why they don't look after them better, you know. Give them a bit of feed anyway.

I Drought has been more of a problem than flood?

R Yeah. Mmmm, droughts. We've had a couple of bad droughts in the last few years. We had a flood in '91, I think it was, but see the people that are here now, there's only one person that's seen a big flood here and that's Alby Smith. He comes from up, oh way up Kywong up there, you know that station up there, and he's been in this country for a long time, though, years. He was married here and had his family but the others, they don't know what a big flood is. They reckon the '91 flood, oh, it was a big flood, blah, blah, blah. It wasn't at all. It was a very small … it wasn't a big flood. It was a good flood but it wasn't a big one.

I Was it '74 a big one here?

R Yes. There was '50. The 1950 flood was a big one too. It came up here. And the '74 flood, it was a real big one and Colin Tully was managing Clooney. He said it washed out the Aboriginal camps over there so it was a big one. But the old blackfellow, Old King Billy, he's buried just up the sand hill there, he's told George Gafney that there'd be three big floods. Now how did he know that? See, they know all right. He said there'll be three big floods but he didn't know when. He said there'll be one big one, he said, and another bigger, bigger still. Well that's '50 and '74. And then he said there's going to be a real big flood, so I'm not looking forward to a real big flood. Ooh, ooh. He was right about the other two. But still, you know, the way they fiddle with the atmosphere so much, we may not get it, see. But they always know. The old blackfellows know.

I How high did the water come in '74?

R Well I used to wear my bathers going to the goat yard. It was right up to there, between here and the fence.

I In here?

R No, no, not in here. Down there, yeah. Oh, it did start to run in up there, just started up there where they dug drains, you know, to let the water out, but only just a little bit. A bit higher, it would have really come in. It would now, I think. It would come in now if we had a because they just won't take any notice, although there is a big bank up there now which is pretty good.

I So who lives in Bedourie now, Jean?

R Oh, a lot of people here. A lot of people that have, you know, some of them have been reared here, some of the girls. A couple of them. One girl, she's … two girls now, one from … oh, they're both from round here, I suppose. They're the teacher's aides up at the school. They're doing pretty well, too, I think. They've got a teacher and two teacher's aides and an administrator, the school here now. Four. Four in the school. It might be five. Oh, and then they've got two sort of working part-time – David Parsons, he works part-time in the garden, you know. It's good too. It looks good now but before that when the summer came, when the summer came they had nobody to water the gardens and things, so David does that in the summer. Bill Knight did it too for a while. He's a carpenter, good one too. Lives in town.

I Are there many Aboriginal families in town these days?

R Oh, yeah, I suppose, but I don't know whether you'd call 'em Aboriginals. You just don't know. They're white people and they work. Bedourie, Birdsville and Windorah, their people, they look after their houses and they're the same as clean white people, the same thing. They're not dirty, oh no. They're very, very clean.

I They've been vital to the pastoral industry, haven't they?

R Yeah, oh, I suppose. Yeah. But there's been other people as well, you know. It's not only around here. They used to get jackaroos up from the city. same in Monkira and all those stations but there were a few really good stockmen. There was an old fellow there in Birdsville – Jimmy Lynch was a good stockman. I saw him in Monkira, oh a really good stockman. He was half black.

I Bill Gorrenge? Do you know Bill?

R Yeah, Bill Gorrenge, Windorah. No, I don't really know them, see, they're in Windorah, but of course I hear a lot about them. Yeah. And Spinny Mulligan, Maudie. He married a girl from Birdsville and Linda's daughter. Very good stockman. Their son's a jockey in Adelaide, Maudie and Spinny.

I Oh and tell me the stories about the Duncans. You knew Laura Duncan and Laura's mum.

R Yeah, well, ah they were lovely people. Oh, Miss Duncan, she was nice, so was Mrs Duncan McKenzie. She was a tall, slim woman, you know. I remember I didn't see her a lot, see, because we never came up here a lot but when we went down, she came out to the

car and met us and she took us in for a meal. Midday it was. They were really nice people, you know, really bush people. Miss Duncan, I went to see her. I'm please I did now, too. I got Peter to take me round there when I had … I had all my children then, I think, and that's the last time I saw her. She was still working out in the yard, she had a thoroughbred bull in the yard, feeding it, and … Miss Duncan, yeah.

I How old would she have been then?

R Oh, I don't know but she was a real lady. She used to go out on the camp and she'd have her tent. There were tent pegs at each camp, and they just took the tent up for her. She used to go up to the camp and she was a real lady and Bob Gunther, he managed Monkira for years, he came up, Ted Pratt brought him up as a jackaroo and he was a little fellow, you know. He was cowboy, then he was stockman, then he was head stockman, then he was manager, Bob Gunther. And Mrs Gunther was there and he was the chairman here for years, see. And Miss Duncan got onto him on the wireless, see, and she said, 'Oh,' she said, 'Bob, would you mind sending me a photo of your grader, I haven't seen one here for years'. And that was Miss Duncan. She was like that. Never raised her voice, you know.

I Did you ever meet Alice Duncan? Alice Duncan Kemp?

R I don't think I did, you know, but I remember an old lady, tall, slim woman she was. Yeah, she married a McKenzie after. I don't know how many years after but a long time after and there was old Donald McKenzie, that was his brother. He was on Monkira for many years, old Donald, and then he went to Adelaide. I remember once Frank and Ethel went down and they took Donald McKenzie down, see, further down, oh and Sid Pratt too, Ted Pratt's son, but the further down we got, the drunker old, old fellow got, see. There were more, see, more pubs, and Frank never drank and he used to go past them if he could but … there was Nathan beer then or something, and you'd hear him say, 'Ha, ha, Nathan my word'. Old Donald McKenzie. Funny old man, he was.

I And you've got Alice Duncan Kemp's books?

R Yeah.

I What do you make of Alice's work?

R Oh, good, yeah. It's really, really good. Mmmm. Yes, there was a lot of places you wouldn't have known if I hadn't read the books. Rainmaker's buried on the Clooney-

Monkira road, not far from Clooney, 30 miles or something, and it always rains there. Always. Always rains there and that's where Rainmaker's buried. Funny, isn't it?

I The picture you get out of Alice Duncan Kemp's books of Aboriginal people and white people living very closely …

R Well, the one book I got from the archives, I got it, and the photos were taken out of it. And then they wrote to me and told me that they had a book there with all the photos in it. And instead of me sending for it straight away, oh I was too busy at the time and by the time I got round to sending for it, it was already sold, of course.

I But do you think that picture she paints of the Duncans on Mooraberree living very closely with Aboriginal people, do you think that was typical of …?

R Oh, yeah. Yes. Yes. They were always friends. They never, well my family never treated 'em badly. Never. See, I've never known it, so this is why I can't understand why they want John Howard to apologise. What for? See, we don't know. I've lived in this country all my life and I can't see why he should apologise to any of them. There's half black and half white, because they're white so far as I'm concerned. And another thing, like years ago, they were talking about how the white people used to kill the blacks. Well they never say how the blacks used to kill the whites, did they? And I know about that. Well, that's all in the past. I don't hold it against any dark people. Not a bit. Anyway, there was in here near, oh up here too, I've got a book in there. Up here these they were real bad. They used to tie the Chinamen up, tie 'em up and, oh break their legs so they couldn't get away. If they had plenty meat, eat the Chinamen. That's a fact. Too right. That's never mentioned, is it? No. Well, I don't see why anyone should apologise. It's nothing to apologise for because now, I think it was in near Charleville there, they used to feed them. They'd come up there and they'd feed them and this, what-his-name old fellow there, the boss of the tribe or something, they used to feed them and the men were away one day and they went in and killed all the women and the kids. There was only one, I can't understand them killing the children but one kid they were feeding to the yabbies and, of course, they went then, the men went chasing that lot but it wasn't that lot that killed them, it was the fellow sitting on the waterhole. He was the one that did it and I think they shot some of them. Well, it's retaliation, that's all it was, see, that's all it was. So I can't see that there's anything.

I mean, just let the past be the past and do the same for blacks as we do for whites now. That should have been all along. I think it was, too, with us it was anyway. We'd never let 'em, Mum and Dad never let 'em past and they still know it too, never let 'em go past without a feed. Why should we if we fed, like give the drovers tea and that, 'cause they had to camp with them but why not feed them too? We did. And I can't see that there's anything for John Howard to apologise for, and I can't see why they should be wasting money – wasting money – it's all right to help them, yes, but help them too much, as the old blacks will tell you, and they're ruining the young ones. That is what they're doing. I reckon John Howard's 100% there, there's nothing to apologise for. This lost generation, now that's a lot of damn rot. How about England? All those young boys and girls that were brought out from England, same thing. I can't see it. I think that the past is the past. This is future now. Yeah, and they're treated all right now.

I Is there anything I haven't asked you about, Jean, that you think's important for me to understand your life and, through you, something of the women of the Channel Country?

R Yeah, well see, the women up here, see we, down there I know about what a hard time we had but up here, when I came up here when I was 17, of course it wasn't so hard then because they had, like now some of the women like Shirley she works all the time. She's got a cowboy but she still works out at Sandringham. But usually now they don't have to work, but Shirley does. She cooks and, oh gee, she works all the time. Always has done, you know. She's a bush woman.

I Who's that?

R Shirley out on Sandringham, 40 miles out. And my daughter-in-law, she worked too. She worked hard. Gee whiz, she did, Paula, out at . Oh, she taught her children, taught her children, she taught two of them, no three now. They've had three but two are going away to school. As soon as the others went to school, she had to teach the little one, and now it's coming pretty close to the time the little one has to go away to school and she's very worried about it. I don't know how, they're going to miss her, you know. Don't know how they can live without her, you know.

I It's a lot women have taken on out here, isn't it?

R Oh, a lot, yes. Oh, yes, and they don't get any credit for it, it's always the man. The man does it all. He's wonderful. Of course, my son is too. He … see, they can't afford to

employ anyone. Well, she goes out and helps him as well as teach the children. The children, they go out and help too. At 12, when the daughter was 12 years old, my brother, the one that's a bit older than me, he's been a stockman all his life, and he said that when they were mustering cattle, he said he'd take orders from her because she knew what she was doing and she was 11 years old. David would be in the aeroplane, see, he's got an aeroplane he oh, he's worked hard too. They all have, anyway, all the boys. Jimmy too. All of them. They were brought up to work.

I So you think women often do their work and …?

R Oh, they do. Yeah. A lot of them. Yeah, a lot of women do, yes, yes. Shirley out there does, and Paula did, my daughter-in-law. Oh, yes, there's odd women still do, still work, you know, but most of the others are just at the station, you know, I think anyway. I don't think they … they don't go out much. They still work though, of course, I suppose, but the modern conveniences now are different than they used to be.

I So do you feel satisfied with your life?

R Oh, yes. Mmmm. Yeah. Yeah, I'm quite satisfied with my life.

I Okay, let's stop.

END OF INTERVIEW