

INTERVIEW WITH GLADYS CROSS

22 June 2000

Refers to tape 56_BVC_SP

Topics in Bold

TF = Trish GC = Gladys

TF Some scared teachers over the years.

GC 08:11:02:22 Yeah. Well as he said he when he come on the boat and then he got here and nothing to work with and they told him would he open it up and he said he was really – but it was a good letter. I've got it there somewhere.

TF So how many kids do you think started school with you in '44?

GC **Education**

08:11:19:12 Oh there'd have been only about 7 or 8 I think. Just enough to open the school. We had to have 7 to open the school.

TF And – do you – did the Second World War make any impact on your young life? Like, are your – what do you think are your earliest memories and did they have anything to do with the war?

GC **WWII**

08:11:39:00 Well when we first moved into town here ah my mother used to give her clothes coupons for food or they'd swap 'em around with the other ladies that didn't need 'em and we swapped around like that but ah that's the most I can remember about it.

TF So did your Mum move into town with you kids –

GC Yeah.

TF Leaving your Father out on the station?

GC 08:12:04:10 No. He got a job – they, really the Cross's got him a job on the bridge when they were building the bridge at ah here. And ah Dad and Mum both moved in and then we lived in town.

TF And so do you remember the day the bridge opened?

GC Yeah. Yeah, and we just had a big celebration for the bridge opening.

TF So what happened that day that the bridge opened?

GC 08:12:31:04 Oh it wouldn't have been a lot in those days. I think the celebration they had for it was the biggest one. Everything sort of happened those days without any big ah do about it.

TF And so when you moved into Windorah, who was living here? Paint a picture for me of, of what that community you moved into was like.

GC **Windorah**

08:12:53:00 There was only oh there was a hotel and um there was um oh only be a man and his wife and what there was Wilson and them were in the pub and his son. There was ah Cross's at the shop. Mr and Mrs Cross and Reg. Well he was away at boarding school. There was the McCulloughs down at one house down there and ah oh, the post office and the police station and there was a big tall house here and the hall and um oh there was, we moved up here. There was us and the Costellos was next to us and we had the Catholic Church and that's about it.

TF And was the Catholic Church important in this town?

GC Yes it was.

TF So tell me, tell me how. Like tell me how, how the Catholic Church functioned in the community.

GC **Religion**

08:14:01:00 Well most of the people that were here were Catholics and like ah Sunday was a big day when the Priest came and that. It was always a big going thing. And a lot, you know a lot going to it from, come in from off the properties and that.

TF And do you think, I know in Australia at the time when you were young, in lots of parts of Australia Catholic and Protestant were a bit like this, you know. Not wanting their children to marry each other and not thinking much of each other. Do you remember that kind of –

GC 08:14:36:10 Yes I do because I married ah um a Church of England and I was a Catholic and there was a bit of that going, you know, quite a bit really. But I think if you love someone, well you go the way you – and now it's all not the – gone out hasn't it?

TF So we might come back to that actually when we talk about marriage.

GC Mmm.

TF Um but that's interesting. So how long did you spend at school then Gladys?

GC **Education/Childhood**

I was ah Grade 5 when I finished school. I didn't go away to boarding school or anything.

TF And do you remember discussions in the family about that?

GC Going –

TF Or was it just assumed that Grade 5 was enough?

GF **Education**

08:15:25:00 Oh I think my parents weren't in the position to send us and there was a Priest here that wanted me to go and that but Mum, I don't think, you know, she had goats and all and thought we all should stay home and work and help around the place.

TF So when do you, what age do you think you were when you started to work and what were the first jobs you remember doing?

GC 08:15:50:18 Oh I was 15 when I started but I was working ah part-time at the hotel through younger than that. Helping out when things were busy and I really left school at ah 15 and I was working.

TF So hang on, if you'd started school at 7, then Grade 5 you would have been 11 or 12?

GC Yeah, but we only started when we came in here. I was only 15. I went to Grade 5.

TF Right. Right. So maybe you were a bit older when you'd come to here?

GC Yeah.

TF Yeah. Yeah. And, and so what was it like to start work in the pub? Can you remember what that was like.

GC **Drovers/Alcohol**

08:16:35:16 Oh I enjoyed it 'cos there was a lot working around here and there was a lot of young, you know, the town with the drovers going through, there was always a lot at the hotel. And ah when the drovers went through, that's when the town really sort of had people around. There was always 15 around the hotel most of the time and there was always three girls working there but when it was busy, well I'd help out.

TF And who was the proprietor of the hotel at that time?

GC 08:17:05:08 It was May McGrath when I was working there. And they were only local girls from Jundah and there that came down. Mary Murphy and ah, well she was Mary ah, oh I can't think of her maiden name. But they were there and they were always good, you know, to us 'cause we were boarding there for a little while before our parents moved in.

- TF And would women come into the bar when you were first working there?
- GC 08:17:32:16 Not a lot. No. It wasn't the thing. And as I said, you never heard swearing. If the men swore, they would always apologise. But now I think the women swear more than the men at times.
- TF So wasn't that curious that adult woman, women wouldn't be allowed into the pub but you as a young girl were working there? How did –
- GC 08:17:56:00 I was working in the dining room. I never worked in the bar. Only ah Frank McGrath and May would help and ah they didn't have many behind the bar apart from themselves running it.
- TF And so who would eat in the dining room?
- GC **Health/Leisure/Races/Pubs**
- 08:18:15:06 Well ah all the ones um like Doctor's day, those days, it was like a day's race is today. Everybody would come in because the Doctor didn't go to all the properties so they'd all come to town for the day and that was a very big day at the hotel and they'd all have lunch and that there and, in the dining room and that, and our races. Well, they were a lot bigger than what they are now. 'Cause we used to set up ah what er 40 at a sitting and up to 10 sittings and it was always tablecloths and napkins and yeah, you name it you know. Plenty of washing to do. White tablecloths and all that which now it's completely the opposite.
- TF And people dressed up for the races?
- GC 08:19:04:10 Very much, yeah. And you had to have a new dress every day for the dance. It was three night's dancing and then they'd dance 'til 5 o'clock in the morning and then we'd go to work. But when Sunday came, we were looking forward to Sunday 'cause we were pretty exhausted, but loved it, you know. And they'd get the band and that to come.
- TF So where would the bands come from?
- GC Oh, Longreach. And there.
- TF So that would have taken them what? A couple of days for the band to get here?
- GC 08:19:37:16 Ahh, no I think they'd come down in a day. The dirt roads, there were dirt roads long as they were, you'd get down from Longreach in a day. But see our mail truck and that from Quilpie, that used to take a couple

of days to get out here and then go back and that and now, it's ah we get two mails a week and two planes a week.

TF And were there many Aboriginal people in the town when you were here as a kid?

GC **Pastoral Industry**

08:20:10:02 Not many. Er when we first came here there was very few really. I don't think there was any. And then the Gorringer family moved in and they lived here and they had ah what, there was – Mrs Gorringer had about 14 in her family. And then the town sort of grew and grew and more people came and started to ah build a bit, but the families were fairly large. Like there was 7 in my family and on the stations there was 7. And when we had a Christmas tree here at the end of the year, well there used to be about 300 kids or more at the Christmas tree 'cause every family at Galway Downs out here which now just has one family on it, there was ah about six families out there because there were out stations and they had sheep.

TF So what's caused the stations – lots of people have talked to us about the station – how the stations have come to have fewer and fewer families. What's driven that do you reckon?

GC 08:21:13:10 Oh, I think wages and that and ah they've gone out of sheep and cut back on labour you know as um when you look at it now, if you had the labour that you had those days, well you would never make any money yourself paying it all out wages. But they all had their families out on the properties and taught 'em and that.

TF And were there Aboriginal families out on the properties?

GC Yeah. Yeah, when we were out at Galway there was sort of some Aboriginals and some white families.

TF Were the Aboriginal people out on Galway single men or were they there with their families?

GC No, they had their families.

TF So when do you think that started to shift? You know, when, when did there start to be many fewer families out on the stations?

GC 08:22:09:00 Well I think when we moved to town, maybe they all had the same as us, you know. As kids got bigger, older, they had to move in for education and that. And ah some moved away and then that was it. They sort

of started to close the out stations down. Which was a shame. But you can see their point, you know. Motors at every um out station. It costs a lot of money doesn't it?

TF Like a generator?

GC **Facilities**

08:22:41:00 Yeah. Well they had to have power and that but in our time even when we lived here in Windorah, we didn't have the power so we had I'll never forget 'em, those ah carbide lights. Yeah. Carbide lights and just kerosene lights for a long time.

TF So there was no power, no generators at all here?

GC No. It was when my ah Narelle was born really is when they opened the power here in Windorah.

TF So what year would that have been?

GC Well she's ah, that would've been '72.

TF So how did you have a dance? You know, like if you have the races and you have three dances without electricity.

GC 08:23:25:06 Well they had their own little motors. The hotel had its own and the hall had its own and like private homes, well they couldn't afford 'em so they just had the kerosene lanterns and the carbide lights.

TF So electric lights all night would be pretty exciting?

GC Yeah. Yeah. No, that's all everyone had.

TF And so Gladys, tell me then about – well it sounds like you'd met your, known your husband for forever, but tell, tell me about how you and he came to get together.

GC **Romance**

08:24:02:04 Well, we were, in the end I was working at the hotel and he would come but as I said, I – and his, he was related to the woman at the hotel and they always said you know, oh you want to swing on to him. And I said oh no, I'm not interested. And I don't know how we really got together. And then I, well I was always making all these dates for other girls and I ended up with him myself 'cause there was always some around. But um and that's how we ended up together.

TF So he'd been like a mate of yours at school that you'd be fixing up with your friends or something like that?

GC 08:24:41:10 Well he was ah 9 years older than me. Reg was away at boarding school when I was there, but the girls that worked at the hotel, they were always there and you know, sort of keen on Reg and if we wanted to go anywhere, I'd have to ask him to take us and things like that and um that's how we'd go.

TF So how old were you and he when you got married?

GC I was 36. No I was 26, I'm sorry, not 36. I was 26.

TF So that would be, I mean that sounds quite old, quite young by today's standards but quite old by the standards of, of your time. Did, had most of your friends –

GC **Romance/Drought**

08:25:52:16 Yeah, but I was going with Reg for 9 years before I married him. I think it was just you know, company or enjoying ourselves too much to settle down or what. No, I think it was in the middle of a drought and he had money problems and worried and that and so we just, 'cause he used to live in town here or out on the property 'cause its only 35 miles out.

TF So what was his um what was his job then, in the time when you started going together with him and then when you married him?

GC 08:26:00:00 Well he was an only child and they owned Carranya and ah they lived ah out there. Geigers owned it before. Cross as such gone back into the family again so it's both now. Geigers and Cross's.

TF So was there a way that the Geiger family had been through hard times? Like how was it that the Geiger – because to own a station would've taken presumably a lot of money. How was it the Geigers had gone from owning the station then to um you know, your, your Dad working as a stockman?

GC 08:26:35:10 I don't know. Dad was the youngest one of his family. But I think his Father might've um you know been the one that enjoyed life a bit and, 'cause Granny Geiger was the one who stayed at home. They lost their one child there at the JC. And um I think that's how it went, you know. Grandad Geiger was the one - they all just got out and got themselves a job and went their own way.

TF So for you to go back to Carranya then with your husband, was it important to you that you were like going back to the land that your family had owned before?

GC **Women/Land**

08:27:14:00 Not really. I think I, I did enjoy going back to the land. They were all worried 'cause you know I loved life and that and entertaining like going up and playing tennis. I was always the one that, and when I was leaving they said oh, you'll be too lonely out there. But I really loved it. And I still do, you know?

TF What did you love about life out there at Carranya.

GC 08:27:39:00 Well I liked the work and I liked um the space I think. I really do like the space but then I liked it in here too, you know?

TF So what was the work? What was your work out at Carranya.

GC **Gender Relations: Women Managers**

Oh I worked beside um my husband. Done everything. Whether we were fencing, pulling bores or mustering or branding and everything and then I'd go home and get my kids. But I had it well organised 'cause if I couldn't, well I, it wasn't use of me going out. I'd always have it planned that I was cooked ahead and there, and those days, you know, you had big smokos and three meals a day on the table. It was you know, it doesn't happen as the same today.

TF So how did you do that Gladys? How did you cook –

GC **Gender Relations/Women/Work**

08:28:31:10 Well nobody knew how I'd done it but I did do it. But I think it was going from a pub life out there because you had your three meals a day at a hotel and they had to be on time and I never ever worked by a clock either but my stomach always told me when it was time and that's what they couldn't believe. But you know, they always loved to come to Carranya when they were building the roads. They all come up there for smokos but it was no effort to me. Even rearing my kids. I loved it you know, they said oh it's hard work and that but I didn't. I enjoyed every bit of it.

TF So tell me what a day would've been like. Just a, I mean I know it would have varied according – let's say a mustering day. When you, when you had your four kids and it was mustering day. What, tell me how your day would have gone? What time –

GC 08:29:18:00 Well right. You'd get up about half past five in the morning and I'd get breakfast. In those days it was ride out on horseback or they'd, or

they'd take the horses the day before to where they were going and then it was mustering and that. And I'd take 'em out ah smoko and lunch. I'd get up when they went to work. I'd do my baking and then I'd take 'em out smoko and lunch and then, and the kids loved it. And ah then I'd come home and get tea ready and bath the kids and that, and then we'd – same thing'd happen the next day.

TF So –

GC And it didn't worry me, the time I got up and that.

TF So in that example you just gave, you were going out to the men's camps but not actually kind of mustering, but on days when you were joining in with mustering or branding or whatever, what would happen to your children?

GC **Women/Work:Childcare**

08:30:18:10 Well my kids would ah sit in the car or there but we always seemed to get 'em up the rails when we were branding or that. We seemed to be able to, you know, if one calf got out or that, or looked like getting out, we'd tell the kids to get up and they were just trained to get up the rails and get out of the road and they loved it. Or the littler ones would stay in the car and just hang out and watch everything that was going on.

TF So that was pretty much what happened today, wasn't it? You know like –

GC 08:30:48:02 Yeah, everybody was involved and Kevin and them've worked for me for years. Their kids were born – reared really at Carranya with my kids. They got two girls and a boy. And whatever we done, the kids were involved in. And when they went to boarding school, we used to leave our mustering most of the time 'til they come home 'cause they just loved it. And while ah my husband was going up to Longreach and getting them 'cause I moved in here for 'em to go to school, but then we'd pack up and go back to Carranya for the holidays and ah Reg'd go and pick the kids up in Longreach when they were at boarding school and we'd pack up and then when he came home, we just went back out to Carranya and lived for the holidays. And they loved it. 08:31:36:20

TF And so what help did you have on the station? So we're talking now the fif - 1950s aren't we? 50s and 60s.

GC Yeah. No, there was only Reg, Kevin and myself that done all the mustering, branding and that. We just worked side by side all the time.

TF And so how old's Maudie? She – approximately?

GC Ah I dunno what she is. I mean Kevin's about five years younger than me.

TF So Maudie wouldn't be in her 50s, would she?

GC No.

TF No. She's much younger.

GC Yeah.

TF Mmm. And would a marriage between a white person and an Aboriginal person, like Maudie and Kevin, would that have been in any way unusual or that was just how things went

GC **Race Relations**

08:32:27:00 No. Kevin has got a bit of colour in him but ah, no, they're very good mates. Yeah. Very good mates. And as I said, you know, Kevin's worked for us for years and he worked for my husband before – no he worked for my, ah Reg's Uncle before we got married and then he come to work for us but Reg – Kevin was always treated like one of the family the whole time. And Maudie and that, they lived out there in the men's quarters out at Carranya and their kids grew up there until they all had to move in to school.

TF And so your kids and their kids work together?

GC Yeah. Yeah. They are always very close really. They miss it a lot, the younger ones, because you know, living out there and that but everybody's gotta go to work haven't they? There's not enough work out at Carranya for everybody.

TF So were there any jobs that you didn't do? You know, any jobs that, that you said that's men's work and you didn't participate in?

GC **Gender Relations/Fear**

08:33:30:16 No 'cause if my husband went to a um, to attend a muster. Those days you had to go. It was all horseback. Well if he went to that, well I had to do the motor and, and ah I lived there by myself with the kids. Sometimes someone would come out and stay with me but it didn't worry me. They, I think everybody else worried for me. But I, with the motor going, I didn't like that, worrying about someone coming. But once I turned the motor off I was quite happy.

TF Because of what, you would fear that –

GC Someone might come you know. But ah apart from that I really enjoyed it.

TF So how long might your husband be away mustering?

GC 08:34:12:14 Oh it could be a week or a fortnight. Depended on whose muster he went to you know? Some of the properties. 'Cause it was all horseback those days and you just didn't move as fast.

TF And so different properties would work together to muster, would they?

GC 08:34:30:20 Well ah we'd go and attend their muster and they'd come over, someone from their properties would come and attend to ours. But now you just muster and you return the cattle to each other.

TF So why has that changed do you think?

GC Oh well, I think there's a lot more trust in people and they just um, it's easier for them to get their cattle back that way and to send a man over and you don't do it all sort of at once. Once when you started you kept going.

TF So you're saying that all the properties mustering together was to do with not being sure whether your neighbours might have a few of yours and you wanted to check it out?

GC 08:35:09:10 Yeah, well they all, I think mainly is that ah they all felt they should go and help 'cause the fences were pretty bad those days and it was only fair they sent someone over to help you muster. As I've said, there was only Reg and I and Kevin and if they sent a man over to attend, well you got extra help. And if um the same with them. They got an extra help off you. 'Cause um you know, the men were, well you got a man and you got your cattle back and there was no trucking 'em home 'cause you had to walk 'em back when they got 'em so you really had to be there to bring your cattle home. 08:35:45:10

TF And –

JH Change tapes.