

INTERVIEW WITH BEV MAUNSELL

21 June 2000

Timecode refers to tape 50_BC_SP

Topics in Bold

I = Interviewer

R = Respondent

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

R Education/Correspondence

02:11:22:04 Ummm I think once again the peace and quiet ummm for me was one of the stronger factors. Having so much time to spend with your children. There were down sides, of course, with the education of your children, especially when we were moving into the time when our children were ready to start school. Our son Geoffrey was in Grade 1 and we were looking at two more children coming on for the primary schooling. But, as I said earlier, I had done primary correspondence school so I was familiar with that way of educating children, so I don't think that was really even an issue for me, or I wasn't deterred by it. My husband loved to work with stock, foremost horses I'm sure, but also the cattle work. I think men with their cattle work is a little like an addiction too, as it may be with a truck driver or whatever else, where they ummm that's what they feel that they need to do and that's what he was happiest doing. And so I think it was all a combination of all of those things. Ummm it's really hard to sum it up just into words and say exactly what it is. I miss it still because there are times when I think how wonderful it would be just to get up in the morning and hear nothing but the birds and the motor running and whatever else, you know, the noises of the property working which, of course, are quite different to the noises associated with living in a town. I think that's why I have ummm kept the block next door here and I sort of go out the back door still today and can look at the bush, so that was an enticement for both of us, and I think for our children to be able to also ride horses and be a part of the life that ... not the life that Graham had had as a child because he was reared in

Toowoomba but the life that I'd had as a child. It was just the preferred way to go for us, I think. 02:14:08:14

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

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

R Women/Land

02:14:59:20 Yes, we both decided, you know, during the years that we had in Brisbane and we were both busy and it was sort of consumed by babies, I guess, race horses and a very busy time, ummm I think we were lured by the peace and the opportunity to once again be a family, to have more time together, more time with the children. Ummm you know, we'd go camping on weekends. We'd pack up the vehicle and take the children out to a waterhole and spend the whole weekend with them. Other friends, if they wanted to come, you know, would come with their children or, you know, as well, so ummm we'd have fishing trips and just got to do a lot more things with the kids together than we'd probably ever done – or definitely ever done.

I So Graham was no longer jockeying every weekend?

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

I And you were glad about that?

R 02:16:02:20 I didn't mind the western ... I enjoyed the western racing circuit. As I said before, you know, we have a lot of memories of those trips, a lot of special friends that remain friends today and that travelled with us, but certainly pleased to see the end of the Brisbane racing time.

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

R **Laura Duncan**

02:16:30:22 Yes, I did know her. I didn't know her really well as some people do. I heard a lot about her before I did meet her and the first time I saw her she came flashing into Windorah, you know, in ... I think she was driving a Mercedes and I thought, 'Oh, who's that?' That was quite a rare sight for Windorah then and my father said that that was who she was. He knew her very well.

I Can you give me her name?

R Laura Duncan.

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

R When she came over the sand hill?

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

R 02:17:20:22 Oh, yes. Miss Duncan, because of course we all called her Miss Duncan and only now would we say 'Laura Duncan'. Miss Duncan, she was Miss Duncan to anybody that spoke to me about her anyway. I didn't hear anybody refer to her as Laura or to speak to her, call her Laura when they were actually speaking to her. Mostly behind her back you would say Laura Duncan. But, yeah, she was Miss Duncan to most people.

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

R **Laura Duncan**

02:17:57:06 Oh, right. Oh, okay. When ... yes, and a Mercedes came up over the hill and entered Windorah and we sort of really looked because it wasn't a sight you saw in Windorah every day, driven by a woman, silk head scarf, and I said to my father, 'Oh, who is that?' and he said, 'That's Laura Duncan'. Miss Duncan. She had passed as quick as she arrived so I didn't

really meet her or get to speak to her. Ummm my second ... the second time ... I went to say the second sighting ... the second time I saw her, she arrived at Currawilla and up over the sand hill she came – I think she was driving a Land Rover or Jeep or something – and the same thing again, silk shirt, silk scarf, and of course by then I guessed who she was because she was living just next door, and she was the same lady that had flashed through Windorah in a Mercedes so, yeah, wonderful lady.

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

R **Racing Industry/Leisure/Gender Relations**

02:19:02:18 I don't have lots to tell. I mean, they were ummm I knew her to speak to briefly. My understanding is that she was a very hardworking woman and that she was the first 'lady' who dared attend the Betoota Races with the gentlemen. And not only attended but stood up there with them to have her photo taken doing the same. So ummm I think that she's probably worked hard most of her life. I admire her for, you know, working that place by herself and yet still remained a lady and ummm, yeah, I don't infer that others don't either, you know. I don't really know as much about her as probably the older generation.

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

R **Maude Schaffer**

02:20:17:20 I knew her much better than I knew Laura Duncan. She owned Waverney, owned Waverney Station, which was a lot closer to Windorah. My husband worked on Paraguay which was nearby. I saw a lot of her. My sister-in-law actually worked on that property for six months, my husband's sister, and so yes, she I think was a tough lady, ummm quite tough. I met her husband as well. He appeared to be a much quieter man. Ummm the thing that caught my attention about her the most was the amount of opal rings she managed to fit on all fingers. Yeah, I don't sort of have a lot to say about her really. I guess ...

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

R **Race Relations**

02:21:26:20 No, it ... no, I don't think that she was a lady, given our age difference. Ummm I don't think she was a lady that was easy to get to know. I'm not suggesting she was inhospitable but I was a teenager, or in my early twenties, during those years and she was a much, much older woman. She actually retired from Waverney, Maud Schaffer did, while we were at Currawilla and moved down near Toowoomba to live. She had an Aboriginal fellow working for her for many, many years, Johnny Costello, a lovely man who probably took on the role of carer, to some degree, when they moved down to Toowoomba. But I didn't have a lot to do with her, even though I saw her at every function that she attended in Windorah. She was more to the age group of the Miss Kidds from Mayfield, Mr and Mrs Kidd from Ourdel that older generation, so I didn't have a lot to do with her.

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

R **Class**

02:22:56:14 Never. I never ever found that to be the case and I'm sure that others would agree that you would find that to be more common with managers, some managers of properties. I don't believe, in my own mind, that owners of properties ever had a class distinction problem and yet, there have been managers in the south-west during the past years that have had an attitude towards the working class of people.

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

R 02:23:48:18 I don't know and I don't think that it's probably so common west of Windorah. As you move in closer it seems to be happening more so and it amused me at times to observe this and to have known owners of much, much bigger places who treated their workmen as equals, and then to

see managers of much smaller properties treat workmen as workmen or as a lower class citizen. I have witnessed that over the years but, as I said, I know I'm repeating ... I really do feel that it's less common the further west you go.

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

R 02:25:12:16 No, no. I felt that ummm that Miss ... my opinion is that she was a working woman and not so much a social lady. If there was a comparison to be made, I think that Laura Duncan ummm was probably more sociable than Mrs Schaffer, yes. I think that she is a lady who I probably knew for years and yet didn't know at all, whereas with Miss Duncan I did feel that, you know, I could sit and become quite chatty with her the first time that we met, but I didn't ... I can't recall a lengthy conversation that I ever had with Mrs Chaffer.

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

R **History/Alcohol/Scaffers**

02:26:17:06 Ummm Walter Schaffer passed away shortly after I moved to the area. My opinion would be that he played a quieter role in the family, or the marriage. Every time I hear his name I just associate him with the closing of the Jaycee, you know, because he actually bought that hotel and closed it down so that his ringers couldn't drink there. And so he'll always be remembered, I'm sure, each time we drive past the ruins there. I suppose I feel a little disappointed that that happened. The building was still standing when I first moved into this country and, yeah, so that was a shame I guess.

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

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

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

R **History**

02:28:04:00 Yes, yes, yes. We discussed that. Especially now that the museum is open in Windorah and we have the museum here and we've had school centenaries, so you come face to face, you meet this problem face to face, and you know we've put much emphasis on the importance of getting it right and how do we get it right because the information that we collect comes from these people and if there are two conflicting stories and the event was many years ago, we don't really know, so I guess we could probably judge that on ratio as to how many have told us story (a) and how many people have passed on story (b). It's a sad part of losing that older generation from the west and I think we are rapidly. They're either passing away or moving away. So, yeah ...

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

R 02:29:15:14 The one that we just spoke about. I can't recall one, no I'm sorry, but that's not because there aren't any. It does happen where, especially when you are collecting data for the things like a school centenary which we had here at Easter time, the Windorah Development Board with the Cooper Bridge Jubilee last year. I mean, we discussed these things. They're ongoing discussions but they pass. It's not something that I sort of have ticked up any particular story. I probably would, with a little more time, because as recently as the end of last year Jeannie and I had several discussions over conflicting stories that were told for the Cooper Bridge Jubilee too but fortunately enough there was somebody around who was actually there, you know, at the time that that story happened and they were able to say, 'Well, no, this one is correct'. So whenever that can happen, you're right, but when the older generation, you know, pass on, well I suppose it'll be very difficult then to find out fiction from non-fiction.

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

R **Childbirth/Currawilla**

02:30:41:16 Ummm that decision was a slow one. Probably ... I had a miscarriage at Currawilla. It's not the sole reason but it was a deciding factor, I think, because I was pregnant with Raelene, the youngest daughter, then and I think that both Graham and I ... we talked about it. He ummm was ready to leave, probably more so than I at the time but because I had had a miscarriage while I was there and circumstances that surrounded that, some of them hadn't changed on the property and I think that he sort of felt that perhaps it was time to come in closer, lessen the workload. Ummm I had been teaching our three children then, correspondence, or distance ed, and ... but there were a lot of factors that, you know, I probably won't discuss because I know that there are women out there that taught their children and they did cook for the station and they did ummm cope with that. I was coping too but medical reasons would probably sum that up with this second pregnancy and so as not to go through a second miscarriage and ummm ... and I was ten years older than I was when we had the other children, so for medical reasons would probably sum that up and we moved in closer, and that is why we left Currawilla when we did, and as quickly as we did. We made the decision fairly quickly and ... I think we regretted that move a lot of times during later years.

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

R 02:32:47:14 Well, I think that that can be a misconception too. You know, having had the years ... the years during which I had the first three children, we did live in Toowoomba and Brisbane ummm and I honestly believe that I could wait for as long to see even a private doctor in Brisbane as I've ever waited over the years out here for the Flying Doctor plane to land. So I'm not ... I think medical isolation can be exaggerated in that respect ummm yet sometimes if you do have a life-threatening case, it may make the difference if you did have, and of course it would make the difference at times. I can't recall an incident, though, fortunately ... 02:32:47:14