INTERVIEW WITH PATRICIA HODGKINSON

Refers to tapes 75_BC_DV

P = Patricia Hodgkinson T = Trish Fitzsimons E = Erica Addis

Side A

T **This is Camera Tape No 75, DAT No 75 – it's an audio visual interview with Patricia Hodgkinson for the Channels of History Project. It's the 10th January 2002. Trish Fitzsimons on sound. Erica Addis on camera.**

T Patricia, I'd like you to tell me your name – where you were – your name now, and your name when you were born and where and when you were born please?

P So what did you say? My name now.

T Yep.

P Is ah Patricia Joan Hodgkinson and I was born Patricia Joan Scott Richards and my family name is Richards. The Scott bit of it was an add-on by a grandmother.

T And so where and when were you born?

P I was born on the 18th of November, 1920, at the Cottage Hospital at Wilcannia, New South Wales.

T And I'm interested in just a little bit about your father's family. I mean, were your – I know you're going to talk to me about your father as a pastoralist. Was your father the first pastoralist of his family?

P No way. We go back to ah about 1792 when the first Richards, William Richards – and there are about four Richards in a row from then on – the first William Richards, his father and his forebears had all been ship builders, and William Richards' father in England, built ah one of the ships that came out in the Second Fleet. And I've got a wonderful piece of literature about that. William Richards. Because the Second Fleet, as of course you will know, was absolutely horrifying in the treatment of the convicts on it and the number, I think vaguely 202 or so, who died on the way out. On William Richards' ship, I think it says two people died, because he had the ship built to his specifications so that the convicts could travel as comfortably and humanely

as possible, and the ship arrived here in ah 1792, the Second Fleet, and this William Richards, whose father had built the ship, he had a grant in his pocket ah so he left the sea in 1792 and he took up this grant of land in what we now call Campbelltown in Sydney. It went from there that his ah in his son, another William Richards, he started going up, up, up the coast. We get to New England where he had a property there, Winterborn, which the remains of Winterborn are still there, but he became wealthy and a squatter in the New England region, but again his sons got itchy feet and they had to go further up, where as my grandfather, Henry Richards, he and Landsborough, the explorer, they explored Central Queensland together and they created the town – the settlement of Springsure. And they ah have the documents about the exploration they did in Central Queensland. But that – my grandfather Henry, his feet took him further up again – up to the next port of call was Mackay, Queensland. My dear little grannie, I knew her when she was 84 years of old and she was like eggshell – tiniest, dainty little lady, and she told me, she said anytime that grandfather founded a station and it was just getting halfway comfortable, grandfather would say into the drays. Into the drays would go the family Bible, the family silver, the piano – the piano didn't make it past Mackay because the white ants got to it, and the ball gowns. Well even as a 10 year old, it seemed to me that the ball gowns were a little bit unnecessary. You know, when he's going pioneering her. But I didn't – grandma said that and I didn't question it at all, but in later years and family members have – have – who ….. told me the ball gowns were the last memory – the last remnant of the life that grandma once led. She left Henry, her husband, at Port Macquarie at …… Port Macquarie, where her father was – I thought he was the first Presbyterian Minister there. He wasn't. He was the third, and he …. 1843 he was there, and she met her husband there and then they ah took off as soon as – after they were married. But grandma herself was born in, in Jamaica.

T Can I just interrupt. Um so Patricia, can you tell me a little bit about your paternal grandmother's life?

P Yes. Because um her father or her father to be, he was a ah Henry too. He ah went to um Theological College in Ireland, ah under the auspices of the

London Missionary Society, and his best friend at that Theological College was um Mr Livingstone. Call me Mr Livingstone fame there. And ah at the end of the course, ah grand – ah grandfather was directed to Jamaica and Mr Livingstone, as we know, went to Africa, and when – grannie was born in ah in Jamaica. She was the fourth child I think but she was the first born in Jamaica. And when grannie was only six months old ah grandfather got the um direction to take up his next ministry at Port Macquarie, Australia, and they came and with them they ca – with them came ah grannie's ah black um nursemaid called um Min, and she was the talk of Port Macquarie at the time with the curly black hair and strange –you know, very, very strange. Anyway, grandma grew up in Port Macquarie which – and grandfather couldn't have picked a worse time really – or a better time ah to go there, because he took up his ministry in 1843 and when Port Macquarie and the whole State of New South Wales were suffering a shocking drought. People were dying of starvation. Um, grandfather put aside his ministry to an extent and he was struck by the fact that Port Macquarie was so similar in climate and temperature to Jamaica, he thought well surely coffee, oranges, corn – things like that – ought to be able to grow there. So he gathered the folk of – able bodied folk of Port Macquarie around and they planted ah sugar cane and coffee and oranges and anything that grew similarly in Jamaica. Unfortunately, none of them succeeded at all, except the ah sugar cane, when the emergency was over, looked as if it was going to take hold and it did. But grandfather then ah was posted from Port Macquarie to um Dubbo in New South Wales, where he died and grandma retired then with her daughters back in Sydney, which is where I came on the scene.

T I'd love you to tell me the bit about 'into the drays', about your old grannie.

P Yes. When my dear little grannie, who was a little eggshell person with a gorgeous mop of still auburn hair and with a knot on top there, real grannie-type grannie, and she was telling me the tales of her – how – where grandfather founded a settlement with Landsborough at ah Springsure in Central Queensland, which didn't involve grannie ah but then he got the wanderlust to go further up the coast, and he founded not one, but two stations, at Nebo, which is about 90 miles over the Eungella Range I'm told in

Mackay, and then ah that wasn't enough for him, because once again he got the call. Into the drays – again, and as I said, grandf – grandmother insisted on having packed the family Bible, the family silver, the piano which didn't make it any further because the white ants had got to it, and the ball gowns. And I didn't want to question grannie about the ball gowns because it seemed to me so unnecessary, when they're going further wise, why the ball gowns? Anyway grannie said that any time grandfather founded a station that was getting halfway comfortable, grandfather said right. Get to the drays. And that's how it was. Later on in life, my sister and I were talking about this ball gown thing and then we worked it out for ourselves. The ball gowns were the last vestige, the last reminder grannie had of the days at Port Macquarie when she was young and it was a military town, and there was dancing and parties and balls, and she had clung on to them through the wilds, wild wild country that grandpa just led her to there. And I thought that was very touching.

T And your mum? I'd like to – you to tell me a little bit about your mother's background before she met your father.

P She was born in Clifton Hills, Melbourne, and I can't give you the year because I'd have to look it up somewhere or other. And she was born there, and she – ah she was the third of four sisters, and they were um – she – her maiden name was um Ruby Marguerite de Courcy-Talbert. And her father Henry de Coorsie-Talbert, he was the um the grandson of aristocrats in Ireland and their – the – I did have a picture of 'our castle'. That is, they went over from England. They kicked the Irish out and took all the, the land, so they'd been nothing ….. aristocrats who – things, but he ah came – went first to New York. I think he was educated largely in New York, and by some means got to Australia. And he was ah as far as – the only source I had was an aunt who died long ago and she just said that grandfather was a professional aristocrat. He was also a Mason. Fairly high up in the Masons apparently in Melbourne. And the only vignette I have ah of my mother and her father was um he was getting dressed and putting on all his Masonic regalia and she feeling naughty and sportive, picked up his Masonic case and she started to run round the garden in it and ah mother said that her father turned absolutely white and said no, no, no – that's sacred. And of course she says come catch me – and the,

the reason why she wouldn't say one word about her father was that um I think it was somewhere about ah 1894, in that period, their mother was dying of cancer, the four girls there, and ah she was dying that terrible death of cancer, whereupon grandfather took off. Never to be seen or heard about again. He couldn't cope. He didn't want to cope, whichever it was, an ah when um their mother died, the girls were stranded. He would not speak to his wife's relations and they were absolutely stranded. They'd been privately educated and were very versed in oil and painting and the elegant arts. But no practical things at all. At this stage, my mother's aunt, my great aunt, Mrs Creggie**(?)** – and I do not know what her first name was but I only knew her later on as Mrs Creggie - she was the owner of a, the Bedourie pub out in south-west Queensland, and she was a rough and tumble sort of woman but she knew how to run pubs out in the wilds of south-west Queensland. And she was also known as a very big-hearted person. So she got the ah four bereft girls, the four stranded girls, two by two. I think my mother was only about 18 at the time she went up. Two by two. She had them up. And it was my mother who suffered most over that because she couldn't bear her aunt who was so rough and uncultured, because ah Mrs Creggie's idea undoubtedly was her kindness of heart again – but again, having four good looking nieces, and having them two by two behind the bar, wasn't going to do trade any harm either. But it's so horrified my mother at what she'd actually come to, she couldn't get along with her aunt for one and – but into the pub came the men – who were stockmen on the station – they'd worked for 12 months flogging cattle under a hot Queensland sky, and they came in and they put their cheques over the bar and said to her, let's know when it's cut out Missus. Missus let them know when it was cut out by opening the pub door and saying 'nice day for travelling boys'. At that time also, there was no cha – in the pub they'd put their cheques over and any change, Mrs Creggie and all other pub keepers, they had their own ah pieces of paper. Mrs ah Creggie's got known later on as Mrs Creggie's shin plasters. The stockmen put them in – down their sock or something or other. But if they put them in their pockets, they found to their horror that they disintegrated, because great aunt Creggie had taken the precaution of baking them in the oven. So that's as I, and she ah I won't go on about her wonderful victory over Sydney Kidman because it doesn't fit at the

moment, but my father and the beginning of his story is that like his father before him and his grandfather before him and oh, this is a wonderful bit about grandpa. When each of his sons got to be 17, 18 years of age and knew more than their father knew about raising cattle and how to run a station, he gave them a horse and two blankets. He smacked the horse on the rump and said 'see you in two years boy'. And he did that with each son in turn. So when my father took off, he went north as far as he could go. He was on um it's a huge station.

T Elsie?

P He was on the Elsie. Yes, that was one. Just after the Malouka **(?)** had died, he was on the Elsie. Victoria River Downs. It was, at the time, bigger than the whole of England and Ireland put together. He was on the Elsie. And ah he was working there and it was at a terrible time, you know, all that area – top end – was ridden with malaria, and there was a millionaire um down in Sydney called Bluey Buchanan, and he had a mob of cattle that was due to come down from um Victoria River Downs station, that far from Darwin, ah to come down, but couldn't move. The drover had malaria. The whole camp was down. There was nobody to shift these cattle. Except my ah 18 year father to be and a 14 year old blackbody. And when ah Bluey Buchanan in Sydney finally got a telegram to say what had happened to his cattle, he clapped his hand to his head and he said by God, that's the end of that mob. Seven months and five days later, my father to be got the mob down to Bourke, New South Wales, and he sent a ah telegram to Sydney to this millionaire owner of the cattle and he said 'Arrived in Bourke. What do I do next?' and the telegram came back smartly 'Get the first – hand the cattle over to the agent and get the first train down to Sydney'. So when he – an 18 year old to be father ah had - met up with this millionaire, he couldn't believe – Blue Buchanan could not believe it. There was no tracks, no roads, no nothing. But they got the mob of cattle down. And they'd lost 14 of the whole mob, so Bluey Buchanan said right, you're good enough for me son. When you're 21, come back and I'll give you a station. By 'give', give him the management of a station. So my father to be popped up duly when he was 21 and he got the management of Cluny Station, which was the crack station

in the area then. This day – these day and age, the only way you can enter Cluny Station is by the last bit of the chimney that's sticking up the sand from the Gibson Desert. It's come in and covered it all, all over. But there was this young ah station owner and very handsome. Very good looking fellow. And he came into the pub when he had business to do for Bedourie. He was not, never was, a drinker. He went in, had a drink, shouted for the bar, went out. Got on with it, whatever he had to do. But when he went in and my mother was behind the bar, he just fell, absolutely, for my mother and he pursued her and she would not have a bar of him. If it was his choice to live out in this Godforsaken country, he could get on with it. But nothing – she was going to get back to Melbourne as quick as she could get, and she did it. But my father to be pursued her and they were married in ah 1912, in 1912 in Adelaide, and then we came back to this Queensland saga, so the pastoral bit is still going on, up to the 5th generation that we're up to.

T So what would your mother actually say about her first impression of the Channel Country? Did she ever talk about that?

P Oh, my goodness, yes. It was such a startling contrast that, as I said, they were married in ah 1912. When it was 1915 and the war came along, my father was the – he had – there were four boys and two girls in his family, and four stockmen, and ah two of them had their own stations by this time. And when the war came along, father was the only one married with children. So the two brothers said they were going off to war and it was up to Poppa to manage both their stations because the ah Army wanted beef more than it wanted soldiers. Anyway, that's what happened, that – ah in the early days of their marriage, my father was at one of the brother's stations, at Hillawong Station near Mackay, and he did that until the brothers returned and – returned their stations. Then he got a job with um a crack station – Mount Murchison, out on the Darling, um the ah Kidman property, where I was born. That was where I was born.

T What do you reckon are your earliest memories Patricia?

P Oh, that's wonderful because I've always been interested in when memory started, and I know that mine started at ah just – I must've just turned three or

a bit before it, because on Mount Murchison Station, which was **the** station on um the Darling out there, we got the telephone on, and it was one of those ones that was attached to the wall, and you had a big receiver piece there, and people – my niece or somebody told me there was a photo taken of us but I've never seen it, but I have a clear recollection of my sister with the – holding the telephone to the ear, and I'm just looking up at her in startled amazement because she's telling me there's somebody talking in there. That is my first memory on Mount Murchison Station.

T And how about the memory about your mum and the violets? I'd love you to tell me that one.

P Oh yes. There's a lot about Mount Murchison. It was, as I say, a crack station there and my mother and her – ah growing up days, had been used to having snowy white tablecloths and snowy white damask runners down the table and she had – there was a lovely garden at Mount Murchison and ah she had an ….. **(?)** – love that word**,** ah which had flowers in the middle of it, but she just thought it was an added touch, there were violets. So she strewed violets around the edge of the centre piece there and of course the housemaid immediately got the brush and pan and swept them all up. But the even better one and better memory that my mother had told me about that, ah said this station was owned by Sydney Kidman who was a long way from being Sir Sydney Kidman then. But anyhow, I think my father had – the men must've been away from the, the station because just at sunset – I mean she was looking out her front door, she saw this scruffy-looking creature going around, not the wood heap, but the iron heap. Where every old bit of iron that wasn't needed any more got flung out on the heap. And this scruffy creature picked up a piece of iron and he advanced on her and he said 'you didn't oughta have thrown that away. There's plenty of good left in this'. And she 'who are you vile man? Go rob the bank. Go rob the bank'. And he just looked at her as she's mad and he walked – brushed straight past there, and it was only then the ghastly truth dawned on her that this was Sidney Kidman, the owner of the station. And he'd had um as much as he wanted to hear about my mother and her elegant, ladylike ways which did not fit in with his idea of making money. That she insisted on putting damask table cloths and things like that on the

station's bill. No, a very very unhappy relationship grew immediately with Sydney Kidman and I think my mother must've made my father's life hell 'til he gave up that very, very good employment. But there was, before they gave up there – a tragic, tragic ah piece of our history there. I don't know what the year was, but the Diamantina was in flood, and it, as you know, floods for 60 miles each side, and after dinner – and my father – ah and my mother dressed for dinner, and my father had to have his starched collar on – right on there for dinner, every night. And they – Poppa took them out in a boat beside the station there. It was just a tin boat. An iron boat. And there was father and mother and there was my sister Helen and not my brother Laurie – he, he stayed home at the station. My sister Helen and my sister Lucille, and she was 18 months old I think. Yes, she was 18 months old. And I was the baby, and I was only 6 weeks old. Father is rowing across ah ah part of the river. There was no sound. No nothing, but when they turned round, Lucille had gone, and my father just dropped the oars. He went straight overboard where he nearly killed himself because with his starched collar, tight collar there, boots and whatnot, he realised that, that wasn't good business. He came to the surface. Heaved his boots into the boat and heaved his – got rid of his collar and he and three – the men from the station, dived for three days before they retrieved her little body. It'd been pinned underneath the water there. And that was the thing that completely changed my mother's life. She never, ever recovered from that. She had ah as I said, I was ah six weeks old and after me, she had three more boys, but she had no feeling or affection for me and the three younger boys at all because her life had just changed so much. It was a terrible experience. Just – Lucille was buried on Mount ah Murchison Station and my father realised there was no way she could stay there, so he left and he got a ah, he went to Broken Hill next I think, and then proceeded up to Queensland. But if the – if it weren't for that tragic happening, I think my mother might have come to terms with the bush that later she went to. But she never came to terms with Mt Leonard and south-west Queensland.

T Would she talk of Lucille's death or was it a no go?

P Never. Never. See that was one of things – now we know, don't we? If she'd been able to talk it out. If she'd had some female companion. If she'd had

some – one of her own sisters or somebody. Nobody. Nothing. And that, as I say, altered her whole existence.

T I'm just going to wait 'til this bus goes past and then I'd love you to tell me the story of coming to the Channel Country.

P It won't be too long – that bit. Papa's venture in Broken Hill failed and he knew perfectly well that he was stupid ever to have got away from the land. That was where he was born and bred and that's what he knew. And so he got – he applied for and got a job – a manager on Mt Leonard Station, South-West Queensland. That was our whole address because there was nothing for 500 miles round us. Our nearest ah, ah town was – it wasn't a town. Windoorah was 156 miles, but it was a pub and nothing else. And the nearest town would have been Quilpie which was about 300 and something miles away there. Anyhow Poppa went up first with my nine year old brother. The eldest boy, Laurence. Laurence de Coorsie-Talbot. Oh, how Laurie hated that all those years. Laurence de Coorsie-Talbot and Poppa, they went up first on the train from Oodnadatta up to Maree. And in Maree, something shocking. My father got chicken pox. I knew – I've been told since – how badly it affects an adult …… And there he is. He's got a mob of horses he's supposed to be taking through to Mt Leonard, the start of his life out there. And there's nothing for it. He just had to – he said he had to lay down and die for 10 days. And so he engaged somebody in Maree, some stockman, and my nine year old brother and a buggy – in a buggy, and they got the horses through 356 miles over the Birdsville Track and to Mt Leonard. And in time Poppa recovered, though he said he wanted to die more than recover, but he – he recovered from them and he took it up. So Poppa and my brother Laurie, who's say nine-tennish then, they were there for six months until ah my father got us up from Broken Hill. We went on the train up to Maree and then Poppa had ah, he came and met us in Maree, by which time he had acquired a tin lizzie. One of the first cars that they had out there, and ah oh how well I remember. I'd never seen anything so miraculous in my life. A motor car. It's wonderful. So we got into the tin lizzie motor car and trying to get over the Birdsville Track in those days – we stayed at Mungarannie and various stations on the way, and at Mungarannie Station I remember, a huge sandstorm came up and we were put to bed on the

– on the floor with a blanket over us, but when we woke up in the morning, because of the door didn't meet the floor, our bodies were covered with three inches of sand. Only our little noses were sticking out. Well that was pretty startling you know, for a three year old. So we got going in the tin lizzie and oh, I couldn't wait to get to ah Birdsville because I'd read – heard all about this lovely lady called Dorothy Gaffney whose father – um parents ran the Bedouri – ran the Birdsville pub and everybody was full of praise of this lovely lady, Dorothy Gaffney. But I got Queensland and Gaffney all mixed up and I called her 'when are we going to see Dorothy Queensland?'. She was Dorothy Queensland forever after that. So we had a stage there and then we set off from the Birdsville pub, ah and Poppa driving the tin lizzie until we got ah up to a station oh about 40 miles from Mt Leonard, Durie**(?)** Station and their – the Cooper had been in flood and the flood had just come through Durie – it's a sight to be seen – but all er the tin lizzie did its level best to go through flood waters over the running board, and finally it conked out in Lignum's great bushes there. It's an impe – impenetrable forest, trying to see through this lignum. That's where lizzie gasped her last, and my father had to put on his um heavy boots, his blucher boots, and leave mother with myself, my sister, ah my brother Jack and the baby um Baby Peter. Baby Peter – I think he was only six months old. And there's water all around lizzie and Poppa has to get his way through the lignum up on to higher ground and he had to walk 40 miles to get to Mt Leonard. There was a pub across the way, still there, 'til he could get to that pub, so of course it took him a day and a bit. He caught a horse. Somewhere he caught a horse and he lacked**(?)** in to the pub at Bedouri. That night was sheer hell. Little baby Peter ah hadn't had his muttons. He yelled blue bloody murder and my mother couldn't light the primus stove because the matches were damp and she had no food for him whatsoever, and he, he yelled all night. The mosquitoes were the size of two shilling pieces. But at dawn was this wonderful sight when Mr Garrett, who was the postman between – between Mt Leonard and ah Windoorah, Mr Garrett with a buggy and horses and my father, sitting up beside him, relief of Mafeking, ohhhh! So we clip-clopped through the water into the pub at – across the creek from Mt Leonard, and I have a vision yet of the brother next to me, my brother Jack next to me. I was three, three coming up four, Peter

was ah two, two and bit I think. And he sat at that table and he solemnly ate eggs. Mrs Garrett kept them up to him, and I don't know how many he eventually ate, but he just looked as if he was going to sit there forever and eat eggs. That was our arrival. ….. and Mr Garrett put us all in the buggy and then all our luggage and whatnot because they'd sent out another – some stockmen, to get our tin lizzie back again. And when we went for a grateful goodbye to Mr and Mrs Garrett who were so wonderful to us, when I – on the other side of the creek and there was Mt Leonard Station, and we were all totally exhausted, Mother told somebody to put all the luggage and all the stuff in a store room there and deal with that later. And in – on top of the whole lot, put my doll, Jean. That was a big celluloid doll. Naked of any clothes. God knows what happened to her clothes, but there was this pink doll and thrown on top of it. The next thing my mother insisted was that Poppa had to send a message down to the blacks camp where there were gins and none of them had ever worked in a white woman's you know house ever before. None of them were what you might call domesticated at all. The edict came for my mother that Poppa had to get one of those gins up to sweep out the store, sweep out all the sand in the middle of Mt Leonard and whatnot. Anyhow, then Judy came up. Judy was an elderly black – 60 – and didn't have any children, and she was given a broom. Well first of all she turned it upside down and downside up. That's what's she was doing and mother made short work of telling her what was required. To get in there and sweep out that store room. This black gin walked in. She saw my pink doll on top of it, and she screamed blue bloody murder. She'd seen my brother Peter, ah six weeks old or so, laying in his bassinette-crib thing in on the verandah, and then she sees him dead on top of all the sacks and the things there. If you've ever seen a black woman turn white, Judy turned white and she made off, back to the camp again. My father had to send for her husband – and get her back right or wrong and tell her that was what she had to do. And we had to get dear little Peter out of his cot, he was sound asleep. Get him out of his cot and he didn't like that so he started yelling, and had – Judy saw the live baby and watch it screaming out,while she screamed 'dead purdie fulia**(?)**, dead purdie fulia. Mother had killed the baby and flung it up there. So they had to get the ba – the real baby and the doll and

show her. Oh, and Judy started ah crooning with joy and delight. Grabbed my pink doll. Went back to camp, and I never saw the doll again.

T You said that Judy hadn't had any children aged 60. Were there a lot of Aboriginal kids in the camp?

P Not a lot by that time because there was ah in 1902 – yeah, there was a massacre on Mt Leonard. I think I mentioned that in my things there and I'll have to refer to that. That – ah my father's best friend who – who no, later talk, we talk about old Joe, well he was 10 year old Joe at this time. He was born on Mt Leonard and there was ah quite a tribe – a tribe then. There was a policeman across the creek in a very rough stone building. The policeman there, he was the controller of the Aboriginals. He was there because they had been quite a wild black er tribe. But the policeman ah I can remember his name but I've forgotten at the moment, he was absolutely scared witless about the blacks so his way of getting over that was he lined them on Daru Plain – a plain that went for 60 miles right in front of Mt Leonard. He lined them up on Daru Plain at sunset every Saturday night and he shot every tenth one. On this occasion, 10 year old ah young piccaninny Joe, he said – told my father in his way, he said, I figure I gammin**(?)** dead. He pretended he was dead. He dropped down and he stayed there absolutely still until night fell. He say 'star come'. You know, when star come, he got up. He ran away to the bush. Now that has been corroborated many times. This is the same old Joe who died at 105. Good job that that policeman missed wasn't it eh?

T So what was the Aboriginal community then that you found? You know, who – who did it consist of, the Aboriginal community that you –

P Yeah.

T Found at Mt Leonard.

P Well the sad remnants I would think, of that once fairly large tribe, but as they had shot so many of the men and whatnot, there were very few – I can't really remember any piccaninnies at the time we went there, but they were mostly – a couple of youngish (and I say 40s women) and a dear old ah Judy. Sixty year old Judy. But the tribe had been – you can't say decimated, can you? Yes you can, because they shot every tenth one. The tribe had been decimated

and it was a very – a terrible air of mournfulness. This is going back a long way. We're there in 1923 and this happened in 1902 but it was very recent in the minds of these Aboriginals. And my first recorded feeling about um the blacks who their ah camp was just, I would say, about 500 yards down the track – the gunyas were at the side of the creek there, and – because I do know that I was four by this time because I always was told that I was going to be four in bemba – November. So I was duly four in bemba and ah it was this very hot night and of course we were all sleeping out on the verandahs which fortunately had some gauze around them to try and keep the worst of the mosquitoes off. But I was laying there asleep in the little bed and these sounds started. These mournful sounds started. I, I was petrified. Ran into my mother and father and oh no, that's nothing to be worried about. That's the blacks and they're having a corroboree. They were having a corroboree. There'd been a death down in Birdsville or somewhere other and I had seen the message stick that came up. Ah Mr – ah Joe Hagen brought it up on the mail. The mail was a camel sometimes or it was a horse sometimes, but he'd had to – and he was complaining about having to bring up this message stick which for – told of the death of whoever it was. Well, they kept that up for three days, and their sound nearly drove you wacky. It was something so foreign to me there.

T Did you –