

**INTERVIEW WITH FRANCIE HAMMOND**

3 September 2000

**Timecode refers to tape 71\_BC\_SP**

**Topics in Bold**

TF = Trish FH = Francie

**TF OK. So this is um Tape 71, time code 23. This is still DAT 26 and we're up to 33.20 on the DAT and this is the second Betacam interviewing Francie Hammond at her home in Cleveland and it's the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2000.**

**71\_BC\_SP**

TF And – oh I think I was going to ask like you just elided about 30 or 40 or 50 years of your life –

FH 23:01:12:14 Yeah, well nothing interesting happened in between really.

TF So paint a picture of your daily life for me. You, you mentioned the religious instruction classes.

FH Mmm.

TF But, paint a picture. Mayfield. It's. it's the 1970s, just for instance. What –

FH Yes.

TF What would your daily routine have been?

FH Oh nothing much really. I, you know I helped in the house and, and that sort of – no. That's quite boring. I, you know, I didn't do anything very interesting.

TF No. I'm interested in it.

FH Yeah.

TF Paint a – what time would you get up? Like paint a picture of a day.

FH Yes.

TF From a picture in your mind.

FH 23:01:51:04 Now I'll be giving pernicious nostalgia. Um, oh well, um I'd get up I suppose and, and um – ooh, well we'd have breakfast and I'd make the beds and, and you know, help around the place. Sometimes I'd water the garden and sometimes I'd do some of the cooking. We'd just talk or visitors would come. People were always coming and going. And um oh then there'd be the Flying Doctor. I haven't gone – would you want to hear about the Flying Doctor?

TF Yes.

FH **Health/Class**

23:02:22:18 Because it, it was one of the things that sort of, you're talking about women's lives, it was what, probably one of the things that made the biggest difference in our lives. I remember, it started up when I was still at boarding school, for our district you know. It was in other districts that they came first to Charleville and there was - the first Flying Doctor out there was Dr Vicars who was a wonderful man and they used to come then, every month and for a start they used to land on the plain. There was a big wide plain just away from the homestead you see and they'd land there and come across to the house, then the – Jim or one of the girls would drive him into the town and he'd see the patients there and he'd generally stay the night with us and leave the next day. And then um sometimes there'd be a flood and they'd have to ride, ride across from the plane, the aeroplane on the plain, across the channel to the house and then stay the night so it was decided that we'd build an airstrip and Jim - ah Tom was at the war then. This was while the war was still on. The first – the Second World War rather. And Jim and the girls and all of us went out but Jim did the main work, clearing the, the scrub, the mulga and trees and bushes and that off that airstrip that you see there in the picture. And um it made quite a good airstrip and they used to land there. And then as time went by, they made a proper airstrip in Windorah and he'd land in Windorah and then they still used to stay at our place at Mayfield, the night, and ah it, it was great, you know. It made all the difference. They'd have the clinic, the people would come that needed to see him and a lot of others would come to the house er you know, the – at Mayfield. Our

- friends – they'd come and see him there, which made a bit of ill-feeling but that's another story you know, but they sort of thought that ah you know, it was exclusively for our friends but it wasn't really. The people would come and well you couldn't say oh don't come and stay which would make them feel unwelcome. So he used to see them there. 23:04:24:04
- TF So he'd have like a, a public clinic in Windorah –
- FH Yeah.
- TF And then see some people –
- FH Yes.
- TF At Mayfield.
- FH 23:04:30:00 And, and so other people, you know, that didn't understand the situation, felt that it was a, a you know, snobby sort of thing or something – you know, there was a little bit of ill-feeling about it and it was one of those things that you couldn't explain about because you couldn't say to the people, don't come. That'd make them feel unwelcome and it would have been better for the Doctor to have just gone straight back and you know, had a rest and had his tea and all that but –
- TF And did you basically keep house whilst your cousins were running the property?
- FH Ah –
- TF Because there weren't really any men in the picture, were there?
- FH 23:05:05:18 Oh, there were actually. See there was, there was Tom, the youngest brother. He was – worked around the place. Then he went to the Second World War and came back quite well but four years later he was killed in a riding accident and then Jim, his brother, he was running the place too but Bub was helping him and then he had a heart attack so that he couldn't do as much and

Bub was doing a lot of the work and Meg, well she wasn't as strong then, but she, she and Jim and then when Sandy grew up, he was helping to run the place too.

TF But, but was it that you were basically – were you keeping house for Bub and Kitty?

FH 23:05:49:00 No, no. We all, we all did some, you know. I did some and I didn't do an awful lot because um well we sort of we were all falling over, would have been all falling over each other's feet and I didn't do much when I was young but I'd, I came into you know, and I helped in the house and did some of the cooking. That sort of thing. We all did a bit.

TF And Jeannie Reynolds? Did she – do you want to tell me about Jeannie?

FH **Accidents: Fire/Jeannie Reynolds**

23:06:09:08 Oh yes, well that was very sad. She was a little girl and ah they were – her father was our cousin and he was, he was married and his wife and they had um one, Jeannie ah Lau – ah Jeannie, Lillian – Lillian was the eldest. And ah Jocelyn and Saura ? and then there were two boys, um Chas and um – ooh, what's the kid's name? Ah George – and, and they were ah ohh, you know they were, they were, they were a nice happy family. And then one night they, they brought the two girls back from boarding school. Lillian the eldest was nursing and Jeannie was a little thing of about four then and they – the girls had come back from boarding school and they'd just arrived about midnight, with their old grandfather too. And um he was - they went to bed and in a night, in the night, a fire broke out. They think it was the fridge. The kerosene fridge blew up. And two of the girls were trapped and their mother tried to go in to rescue them but she was trapped too and they were all burnt to death and so was the old grandfather. And Jeannie started to run away and the mother said go after – to the husband, to George. And he went after her and she went into the house to try and rescue the girls but she never came out. So it was a dreadful thing.

TF And, you – did you help to bring up Jeannie?

FH 23:07:43:08 Well, no. She stayed, she lived with her father but they went, you know, back to the place. They rebuilt and she and her father and the two boys were there, but she often came over to stay with us and then she stayed with other friends that the ah the folk in the Post Office in Windorah – the O'Brien's, they were a lovely family. And she used to stay with them and go to school there. You know, she was – when she was school age. And um then – yeah, she went to school and you know, she grew up. Well, she was. She must've you know, talked a lot about us but yeah, she was. She was a dear little girl and she used to stay with us quite often. Yeah.

TF So you and Jeannie were both effectively motherless.

FH That's right.

TF Did you know many – were there other motherless children that you knew?

FH No, not around the district that I can think of. No. No.

TF And how about – did you know people like Nelly Parker and the Gorrings? Like how would you picture – how would you portray relations between white and black in the Channel Country?

FH **Race Relations**

23:08:45:14 Mmm. Well, good in Windorah, but they improved – ooh, well um when I was young, the um – this is going to sound awful but I'll have to tell you the facts. They were sort of, as the saying, lesser beings without the law, you know? And people in those days, made the mistake, I think, of thinking they were dumb – the Aborigines. You know? And they weren't. They were intelligent but – I think now – but in a different way. That's the full-blooded ones and the others, sort of you could see sort of how they improved, you know? I can remember when they were, when I was young, they'd be er that, you know, hang their heads and giggle and, and um then they would be – there'd be a dance, say, and the ones that were there, they'd be sort of just hanging out about on the

verandah. And they'd have their supper, you know, when every – after everybody else had had theirs. And in these days that sounds dreadful but that was how it was. And then gradually they, they sort of – I can remember the time going by, they moved in and they, they'd dance and for a start they'd be kind of gawky. You'd see – you know, they'd be in what – in those days er the girls used to have silver evening shoes they were called. And they'd wear, wear there's with bobby socks. But that dropped and then you know, they, they sort of just moved in and became steadily more sophisticated and you know, they were, they were accepted out there, you know? They danced with the people and had supper with them and the kids mixed and all, you know? 23:10:22:04

TF So that's very interesting Francie. What kind of time travel would you give to that? Like when you're talking about them say, you know, gawky and having –

FH Yes.

TF Then dinner – supper later. What –

FH Yes. That was –

TF Sort of year would be talking?

FH 23:10:35:18 Ahh, let me see. Up until ohhh, probably up until after the First, Second World War and then gradually the, the, they began to pick things, you know? Well it was a surprise. One girl was there. She'd been away or she'd came from somewhere else and she was a smart girl, you know? Good looking, smart, able to dance. And you know, it was a surprise to see her and a part-Aboriginal girl could be smart and um poised as a white one.

TF Do you know who that was?

FH No, I don't remember.

TF Because now there's the Gorrings and –

**FH Gorrings/Race Relations**

23:11:17:10 Ah yes. Well they, yes well they came a bit after that and um although the Gorrings – you know, they were a nice family. Everybody liked the Gorrings. And there was Mrs Gorrings. Mrs Ivy Gorrings. She was a – you know, a lovely lady. As a matter of fact she came down here to see us you know and stayed here the night. And she was that sort of person you know? And ah and the, the children – as I say, when I taught the religion class, they were, ah several of the kids were ah part-Aboriginal and – they, they were good kids, you know. I never had a bit of trouble with them. But I often did with the white ones.

TF And what caused those barriers to break down do you think?

FH 23:12:00:16 I don't know. Well I think it was the, the, the – probably the Gorrings and their family. They were, they were good type Aborigines and you know, they were able to mix with us and, and ah you know, probably taught us.

TF Do you know Alice? We interviewed Alice Gorrings in um in Mt Isa. Do you know Alice?

FH 23:12:22:00 No, I don't know Alice. I knew Mrs Ivy Gorrings and her sister, um Mrs Monnigan, and then there were the, the Monnigan and Gorrings children that were in the religion class and they were – as I say, they were all nice children. And um various ones. There was one – Bubby Gorrings, who had a heart of gold, and ah I think you know, the other ones I can't remember.

TF There was John and his wife Dot –

FH Oh yes.

TF Still ..... ..

FH Ooh yes. They're still the ..... Well Dot, you know, she, she was ah they used to be out at Ourdel and, and you know, visit Sandy and those. We saw them there.

TF And what led to you leaving the Channel Country Francie?

FH 23:13:06:08 Oh well, my cousins – um, Meg had a stroke and Kitty – she had had a big operation for cancer about eight years before and she was, she got on well but sort of began to feel that she should be near a doctor and um Meg had – we were down here. We had another house at, at Thornlands, and we were there. And one night, one morning she had a stroke so she went into the hospital and sort of ah realised that we'd have to move down here and we went out west and packed everything up. Ah and ah, while that was going on, our – our um, the cousin – another cousin that was living down here and the Estate Agent were looking about for a house. They found this one. They rang up about it on the phone and described it to the girls and they thought it was just what they wanted and by a great stroke of good luck, a, a new Police family had moved to the town and they – all their stuff had been brought out on one of those great big removal vans, so all our stuff came down on it. Otherwise it would probably have – it'd still be out there. 23:14:14:04

TF So you would've been about 60 when you came to Brisbane?

FH Probably. Yes. Yes. It was '84. It would have been. Yes.

TF And how did you find life in Brisbane after all those years?

FH 23:14:24:08 Yeah. Well, OK. Not too bad. See I'd been um used to come down here for holidays so we'd be – you know, used to the city, but not sort of permanently. And well, we expected it – well I expected it to be much worse than it was. It was – seemed like, it seemed like a bad dream to be moving out, you know? But ah –

TF So how often do you get to the Channel Country now?

FH 23:14:50:06 I've never been back. It was so awful when we left, you know. We thought oh no. We can never go back. It was just – you know, you'd feel, you'd feel like a ghost if you went back. I'd hate it. Couldn't do it.



TF Why not?

FH **Women/Land**

23:15:02:04 Oh well, you'd either have to be back there permanently with everything just the way it was or not at all. It was – it would be too much. I know when we came away in the car, we all kneeled and we cried for miles.

TF So the four of you all left together?

FH Yes. Yeah.

TF Have you got a photo of you leaving?

FH 23:15:24:20 No. Ah no. And, and we were there and, and Jim's wife or widow she was then, and one of their kids, Denise, and one of Sandy's kids – and we were all at the gate – oh and Ann, yes. We all fell on each other's necks and howled and got into the car and left. Ohhhh.

TF So do you still dream of the Channel Country?

FH Not so much of the Channel Country. But of the house and of all the family, you know. They've, see they've all died and, and yes, I often dream of them and yet it doesn't hurt waking up. You know? In the dreams, they're just there as if they'd never been away.

TF And is Mayfield – who lives in Mayfield now?

FH 23:16:05:14 Well it burnt down. It's very sad. It burnt down. Not long after we came down here. And um so there's an old caretaker there now. An old man. And I think he looks after the chooks and sort of scares people away. But the – most of the house burnt down. There's just one part of it is still standing and ah but the um there's Sandy's place, you know? The, the family is there now.

TF And who was left living in Mayfield when you left?

FH 23:16:35:20 There was a couple. A caretaking couple there. And it was one night, well Sandy and another friend – a man, they'd all been there and um well they'd had dinner there and some friends of the caretakers and then this fire broke out in the night. I don't know what caused it but it broke out and, and the man that was doing the caretaking, he chopped down the – it was - the place was built in three sections, like a lot of country houses are, and he chopped down a walkway between the two places and saved the part which was where every – what we used to call the sleeping part – all the bedrooms and that were there – and the main part, the, the sort of the nicest part – the kitchen and the lounge and the dining room – that all went.

TF So is there anything I haven't asked you about Francie, that you think's important for me to understand women's lives .....

FH **Physical Hardships**

23:17:28:02 Oh yes. There was refrigeration. That was, that made a big difference because I can remem – I can remember when I was about 7 or 8 I think, there were – the country refrigerator was unknown. But I think they had them in the city. Well I think the city people had ice chests and um, yeah it was a big deal to get ice cream. They'd sometimes have it at the races and they'd, they'd bring it out in a vat you know, and all the children – they'd be hanging around. Getting as much ice cream as they could. And when you went to the city, as far as I was concerned, it was a, a you know, the time to have ice cream. But then, as I say, when I was about 7 or 8, or before that, they had what were called bag coolers or Coolgardie Safes and we had a big one. It was – ooh, the size of a standing meat safe. That big. Ah, ooh probably not as big – it probably looked bigger to me, because when you're small, things look bigger. But they had a wide flat metal tray on the top that was kept filled with water. There was a tap built – set up over it to, to drip into it or turn on when it got low. This was filled with water and then that dripped down through little holes around the edge on to hessian bags which were down the side over chicken – ah chicken netting sides, and the air blew

through there. It was on the principle of one of those things. Ah – you know, air – ah water-air conditioner. And it, it ah worked reasonably. Not, not – it was nothing really and I mean the butter'd still melt and the – things'd still go bad. And I remember my cousin saying they – whenever they killed a sheep or a bullock, there'd be a mad rush to get as much everything cooked or corned – you know salted, as they could before it went bad. That was specially in the summer and it'd still go bad sometimes over night. So then when I was about 8 I think, the first refrigerator came. Well it was about – ooh, it was on the lines of a, of a ah deep freeze, you know? It was lifted up at the top and the – do you want to hear all this? 23:19:36:00

TF Yes.

FH **Physical Hardships: Refrigeration**

Yes. There was a thing in the side, the freezing unit. The part hung down inside. That was the freezing part. And then another part came over through a pipe on the outside and that hung down on the outside. And there wasn't an awful lot of space in there. As I say, I was small. It seemed bigger to me than it was, but there couldn't have been an awful lot of space. Well to get it going, this whole thing would have to be taken out to a little tank on the verandah. Oooh, a little tank about, I suppose, a yard across and a yard deep, and they'd put the – they'd put the freezing part into the tank and light a little flame primus stove thing under it for about twenty minutes. Then they'd put that out. Take the thing out of the water. Put the freezing part on to a little stool and the other part that had been over the primus, into the water and then the freezing part would start to frost up. But I can remember I used to ride around and round the verandah on my little tricycle watching it frost up. Oooh, it was as exciting as television. Then they'd take it out and put it in the fridge and that'd stay there for another 24 hours and keep the butter cool and the milk well and the meat from going bad and then the whole performance would have to go through again the next day. And it took two women to lift it, or one man. But – I – I was small, I used to think now what

about a place where there was only one woman in the house and the men were out camping. How would they get on then? 23:20:57:14

TF And you were probably very lucky, your family, to have this contraption.

FH 23:21:02:20 That's right. Yeah. Ohhh yes. Oooh, it was a big deal. It was – oh a great excitement when it arrived and, and there was a little tray, about that big I suppose, with about a dozen little – space to make about a dozen or – maybe more – little ice cubes and we'd have some little ice cubes every day and on very special days, we had home made ice cream. Like Christmas and birthdays and things like that.

TF And so when did convention – what we now consider conventional refrigeration  
.....

FH 23:21:30:04 Just before the War. The, the, the proper sized ones. Like that one. Yes. The kerosene fridge. That was, that one came just before the War. There was another type of fridge in between that didn't have to be taken out. The, the, the tank was in the air over the fridge held up. It didn't do much for the decor of the lounge but it was a big improvement as far as the grown ups were concerned.

TF And how did these changes of refrigeration influence daily life then?

FH **Physical Hardships**

23:21:57:02 Ooh it was so good because the – I can remember when I was really small, the butter on the table was always sickly yellow oil in the summer and the, the meat. We didn't have anything much in the way of meat except corned meat and it would go bad and, you know, there was a terrific lot of waste. And then, sort of all this, this stuff, you know, got so much nicer and, and the food was able to be kept well and the butter was always hard and the, and the meat never went bad. And you know, there were so many other things that you could have. It was probably much better for people's health too. 23:22:31:16

TF I know that there were some women and it sounded like your um stepmother was among them.

FH Yeah.

TF Who never really adjusted.

FH No, well she didn't. No.

TF To life out in the Channel Country.

FH No. She didn't. No.

TF And, and kind of – what do you think divided the women that, that made a happy life there from those that couldn't wait to get away fast enough? You know, what?

FH 23:22:56:04I don't know. Maybe it was the – ohhh, yes. Maybe it was the isolation or you know, they probably couldn't take it. Or – she wasn't popular, of that one. Yeah, in that case. And others – yes, I have heard of others. The, you know, that went out there, and they couldn't take the isolation and um –

TF Patricia Hodgkinson's mother. Do you remember her? Now, she – this is Mt Leonard Station. Her father was called Pop Roberts – Pop Richards I think.

FH Pop Richards.

TF She would have been Patricia Richards.

FH Er.

TF And – it doesn't sound like you knew her. She's about 83, so she's a bit older than you.

FH Mmm.

TF But her mother was never ever happy out there.

**FH Mrs Richards/ Braided Channels**

Yeah. Now wait a minute. Mrs Richards. Yes. Yes, that's the one – was she Richards? Yes I think she was. I think she lost her marbles.

TF Yes.

FH 23:23:52:04 Mmm. Yes. I, I don't know. I was too small. I remember her coming and visiting at the place, you know. And ah to me she, you know, seemed quite alright but the others said you know, she wasn't right.

TF Yes. Yes. No, she did. She was then institutionalised.

FH Mmm. Yes.

TF So is there anything else before we finish Francie, that, that I should know.

FH Not that I can think of. Gosh, I've talked myself blue and you too. No, I can't think of another thing really. I think I've told you everything and I'll think of it after you've gone.

TF Thank you very much. It's terrific. 23:24:26:22

**END OF INTERVIEW**