INTERVIEW WITH BID CAMPBELL
2 June 2000

I = Interviewer R = Respondent

SIDE A

I **We're partially in camera tape 3, it's 2 June 2000, it's Trish FitzSimons sound recording, Erica Addis on camera. We're interviewing Bid Campbell in her house in Mt Isa, and this is the Channels of History project.**

What I'd like you to start by doing, Bid, is telling me when you were born and your name when you were born, and where you were born.

R I was born in Winton in 1917, 28 February, and was called Elizabeth. It's the only name I have. Mum had run out of names, I think, so I got one name. Dad's special I was.

I So Elizabeth who?

R Just Elizabeth McGlinchy. That was my parents' surname.

I Now I've just got a moment of interruption there. Just tell me your name again.

R Elizabeth Campbell … Elizabeth McGlinchy. I'm Elizabeth Campbell now but …

I I'm just going to adjust this.

Okay, Bid, I'd love you to tell me where and when you were born and what your name was when you were born.

R I was born in Winton on 28 February 1917 and I was called Elizabeth McGlinchy, my parents' surname.

I And where did you come in the family?

R I was … my brother and sister were twins, they were the first McGlinchy family, but before that Mum had been married before and the she had three children in the Robinson family – two boys and a girl. And then she married my father and she had twins, Carrie and Brian, and then I was the third child.

I So your eldest siblings had the name of Robinson but you were from the second family?

R Yeah, second family. So then there was … well I think we came out to [Maxland?] in 1917 because I was the baby and I can't, you know, I know Mum said I was very small when they came to Maxland. And, well I grew up there more or less and, you know, in the bad years. In those years there was no money, there was nobody, there was no money, you got no money for wool. You more or less … Mum used to make butter and take it into Boulia and sell it to the hotel and with the groceries, like that. And as for schooling, well we didn't get very much of a schooling because in those days the teacher used to come out, have lessons, and then six months later he'd come back and view what you did and, of course, you only had your parents to teach you – Mum – and she had everything else, like we ended up, she ended up having seven McGlinchy children and so she had her hands full and we lived in a shed. It was a big shed, dirt floor. I think the kitchen area was uh, the kitchen was sort of made of tins. It must have been …

I Like petrol tins or something like that?

R Well, no, it was more sheets of tin, more, you know, tin. It was sheets of iron. And um but your windows were sort of, you pushed 'em out and you put a stick there, you know, held them up like that, you windows went, and then when you had … I think, I can remember our beds were made of green hide.

I What's green hide?

R That's bullock hide. Made out of bullock hide. And we used to, they were made with four, four sticks, like that, you know, on each end, and there was a big cross like that, and another one went down there and this green hide was sort of strapped over it and whatever they used in those days. And when it rained, of course, green hide would shrink, like hobbles for horses were made out of green hide. It was, you know, used for and we used to hate the rain. We used to think, 'Oh, we've got terrible hard beds', you know. That's how we lived, I mean, I can't remember ever being terribly mistful in any way, you know, we had a good life. We used to clear out, of course, when the teacher came. We'd make sure that we weren't around. He wouldn't catch us because half the time we didn't do our work. There was no work done so we'd get into trouble over that.

I You say your family moved to Maxland.

R That was the property …

I Now I think that was the soldier

R Yes, it was, yes. After the war.

I After the First World War?

R Yes, First World, yeah.

I So, had your father been in the First World War?

R No, my older brother, step-brother Charlie Robinson. He drew it. He drew the block but he drew it for Mum because Mum had the money and the stock and he was just come back from the war. So it was really her property but it was in his name and in later years they drew another block up on the Georgina and they swapped that with Charlie for Maxland, so he got the other block.

I So Charlie drew Maxland in a ballot and your parents moved onto Maxland …

R Yes.

I … but when later they got another block, they gave it to Charlie?

R Yes, as payment.

I Were you selectors? Is that what you called a selection?

R Yes. Yes. Yes, selections, that's all they were. They were only, they were really starvation blocks of, I think, 15,000 acres which isn't a living area in this country, because you're out, you know, it's not like down there in Sydney and around there, you know, on the coast you get regular rain and out here you don't, see. You might go years and get two or three inches and that would be it, like, and then you'd have a drought.

I So you mostly had comfortable beds but no rain?

R No rain. Mmmm. And there must have been about … the first I can remember was going to Boulia when I must have been about four, four-year-old or five-year-old, and that was the … June would probably know when her grandmother was married. I did have photos but I and she'd be able to tell, and I can remember Aboriginals and the corroboree down on the river.

I This was the Georgina River?

R No, this was the Burke River, the river that goes through Boulia. And they used to corroboree down on a big waterhole. They called it The One Mile. And, of course, I'd never heard that sort of noise and it sort of stuck in my mind and that was the corroboree, the blacks' corroboree. But now I see in the tourist books they used to corroboree out on the Stanley Ridges. I can't remember any Aboriginals out on Stanley Ridges.

I So when you say you'd never heard that sort of noise. Tell me what you remember about that corroboree.

R Oh, you know how they go on with the funny noises they made and, you know, well I couldn't really, it's like a sort of a sing-song sort of a noise, and crying sort of, like when the death, when anyone died they'd have that same sort of thing go on. So, you know, what the noise was I really can't remember that much, but I can remember a terrible racket, you know, that went on.

I And what would your parents have told you about that noise, or told you about …?

R They just said that was the Aboriginals' corroboree down on the river. And because Dad had been a drover, he'd heard it many times. I don't think Mum had heard it that much because I don't think there was very many Aboriginals around Winton where she came to. See, she came out to Winton from England.

I Now how did your mother land up in Winton? I'm interested in that story.

R Well, she came out from England to Townsville but we always thought she was, you know, sent out, you know, as a convict, but when we went investigating and found out that she was, she came out and paid her passage, her own passage out, and she got a job at Stanton Hill with a doctor. And she stayed, I think, about six months in Townsville and then she wanted to come out west, and she came out west. I think she was on the first train to Winton and that's how she come to Winton, out there.

I And I think there was a story, wasn't there, wasn't she going to go to a property?

R Yes, she was.

I Could you tell us that story?

R Yes. She was to go down to this property at Diamantina … I think it was Diamantina Lakes, down below Winton, on the Diamantina, and when she got, she had to go by horseback because in those days you had no buggies or anything and this mailman just had horses, so she rode a horse to the Diamantina Lakes, which was a fair way. I'm not too sure of the distance but there was a few hundred miles.

I Several hundred kilometres, yes.

R Mmmm, yes, yes, easy. And when she got there, the mailman said, 'There's only men here'. See, she didn't know that there was only men and she said, 'I'll stay overnight'. He was to leave and go back, to be on his way back, and he said, 'Well stay overnight and if you don't like it,' he said, 'I'll take you back to Winton' which because he thought, you know, she was only a young girl and all men, though probably in those days they were all gentlemen, not like today. But she went back to Winton and got a job in Winton and stayed there until she married Robinson and then, of course, he died on the Winton road. You've probably seen his, you see the sign if you go out Winton way, into his grave. And she had three children and he died and she sold the horses and, you know, the wagon and bought the 20 Mile Hotel.

I Your mother did?

R Mmmm. And that was a stop for a mail change in the old Cobb & Co days. Every twenty miles there was a mail change and she run that and that's where she met my father. It was a good hotel.

I So she would have been a very young woman …

R Very young.

I … when she was buying this hotel.

R Yes.

I What year do you think this would have been and about how old would she have been?

R Oh. She was about 18, I think. She was 17, I think, when she came out to Australia, so she was married when she was 18, and I think Charlie was nine when Robinson died. About nine or ten, I think, that's the oldest boy. So she would have been in her early twenties.

She wouldn't have been in her late twenties. And well she had to rear the children, I mean, you got no help in those days.

I I'm very interested in women in pubs out in the Channel Country because clearly the pubs were very important, weren't they. They were the banks and the mail change.

R Oh, yes. That was the mail change. Yeah, yeah. Plus where people stayed. That's the only accommodation you had. And she had her first child, I think, at … it was a mail change. She sold that, this was before she bought the pub, when Charlie was born. He was born at Creek on the Winton road, and I think that was a mail change, but it's not there now. But probably if you look through some of the archives in Winton, it probably was a mail change. And she had her first child there. She, I think she was three days in labour with just a midwife, you know, but Charles was born anyway and she survived. Then she had a daughter.

I So if she was running the pub after her first husband had died, she must have been quite a tough character, your mother?

R Oh, she was. My word. She had plenty of backbone. Nobody would
Very fair, very fair woman, but no, she wouldn't stand anyone … she'd stand up for her rights.

I Am I right that women and Aboriginal people couldn't go into pubs but that the pubs were often run by women?

R Run by women. Yes, that's right. Oh, no, even when I was a girl, you didn't go into a hotel. The first person I ever saw sittin' at the bar in Boulia was a matron, Matron Faulkner, Ellie Faulkner. She used to go in. She was an English matron and she'd been in Australia a long time, but oh, she was as tough as anything old Ellie, you know. She'd do anything and go anywhere. And she'd go in there and line up with the men and drink with 'em. And we used to think, 'Fancy Ellie going into that pub' but now everyone goes into a pub.

I So with your Mum, as a young woman running this pub, how do you think she handled that because as an 18-year-old, if she'd run away from a station full of men, in the pub … ?

R Yes. I suppose she got toughened. See, she was only a young English girl when she came out, you know, she wouldn't be very wise, would she? But she learnt, you know, how to look after herself after that, I think. No, she managed. She managed.

I I've heard stories about a Mrs Craigie who used to run a pub in Boulia.

R I can't find a Craigie ever running a pub in Boulia. I can't find a Craigie. I've got my brother's book that was written on Boulia, the early days of Boulia. I'll let you take that and have a look at it.

I I'd be very interested to have a look and I'll have to go obviously and do some more research but one of the stories about that Mrs Craigie was …

R Who would that be?

I Well I heard about Mrs Craigie from her niece Patricia Hodgkinson who's about your age now. And what Patricia said is that the men would come back from droving and have a cheque and they would give the cheque to her aunt to sort of drink and eat at the pub and when the cheque was gone, she'd say, 'See you'.

R Mmmm. They used to do that too. True.

I What did your mother tell you about that?

R Well, she was more in the mail change, I think, see. There wasn't such a great stream of drovers that would go through Boulia. Like, see, all the big mobs of cattle would come down from the Territory, come through Boulia, that was the, where you went through like. That was the … they'd come down the Georgina, or they'd come down the Burke, into Boulia, and then go whichever, like down Adelaide way or Winton way, and that was the main place for the drovers. Like when I was at Strath---- at Maxland there'd be, you know, mobs of 1,500 in a mob droving, being droving with one drovers, so those days are all gone, of course. And then I suppose the men would just drink, get finished their jobs and drink their money. But a lot of them wouldn't. A lot of them were just drunkards, like, that's the way they lived.

I So this 20 Mile Pub that your Mum ran, what was the closest town, do you know?

R Winton. Winton.

I Winton. So it was 20 miles out from Winton?

R Out from Winton, along the Winton road, yes. 20 Mile. It was there … I can remember it was still remains of it when my children were going to school, because once we were going into Winton and putting them on the train and it was, you could still see part of the dam, where they'd built a dam, still was there so … but everything else was gone. It's like the Min Min Hotel, see, that's another hotel, what they call the Min Min Light, there's the Min Min Hotel.

I So your Mum must have had a bit of money from her first husband.

R Oh, she did after she sold the horses and wagon and everything, she had a bit of money. And then Charlie, she sent Charlie had a fair education. He went away to Nudgee. Mum was a great believer in education and there was a man, he was running the Borbridge Hotel, no store, in Middleton, and he gave Charlie a job when he came back from the what's-a-name, the …

I First World War?

R No, when he came back from school, from …

I Nudgee.

R Nudgee College. And he worked for Borbridge in Winton, in Middleton, and then he got a job in Winton, and that's where he met his wife, in Winton. She was an English girl too.

I So going back to your childhood, then, you were on Maxland, which was this selection.

R Mmmm.

I Had it been part of a big station?

R Yes. Yes, Winton. And Woorinda. Woorinda was from the Hamilton, oh well right the other side of the Hamilton, right out as far as Min Min Hotel, I think, where the old Min Min Hotel was. Right back to Boulia. And that was all part of Woorinda.

I I know in some parts of Australia that the squatters who were on the stations resented the people …

R Oh, they did.

I … that were on the selections. They didn't want to sell that land.

R Yes.

I Do you want to just talk to me a little bit about that?

R Yeah, there was one incident with my mother. They took up Maxland and the overseer on one of the outstations of Woorinda, Goodwin, which they ended up owning in later years, and he … there was a waterhole on Maxland and Mum was trying to keep it there for her own stock and he was sort of, he was letting the cattle all come in onto it, and she would hunt them away and chase them on, and he cracked his whip around her and said, 'I'll see you carry your swag, you ground life' and she said, 'I'll see you carry your swag, Lily' and she sure did see him when the Depression came. He did carry his swag and she was still on Maxland, so she had her revenge. And, no, they resented, yes, they didn't like that country being taken off them.

I So it sounds, as you're describing your mother here, it doesn't sound at all like that the land was just your father's business and she was just in the house.

R No, no.

I It sound like she was …

R She was the boss. Dad was Irish. Says everything, doesn't it? Yes, he was Irish, Dad. Dad would take … Dad trusted everyone. He thought everyone was good. Mum didn't. Mum used to say, 'You've got to know people before you know them'.

I What else did your Mum say? I'm interested in mothers' sayings. What were the things your mother told you to guide you in the world?

R Oh, she told, she used to always say there was no such thing as 'can't'. No such word. She'd say it didn't matter what you were doing, you did your best. And that was it. You couldn't get, you couldn't slack off, you just had to keep trying.

I And so it was sheep that you ran on Maxland?

R Mmmm. She used to ride to Winton to do business. She used to get on her horse and ride to Winton. Now that was three hundred and something miles. I don't know what it is in kilometres but that was miles in her days and she'd be away a week. She'd ride the first

horse to ahhh Min Min, not Min Min, Lucknow Station, and then she'd get a fresh horse there and ride on to Middleton, and then get a fresh horse at Middleton and then on to the next station, get a fresh horse there and she'd bring those horses back, see, and eventually come back to her own horse.

I And who would look after you while your mother was away?

R Well, once my brother Charlie looked after us, and we were very pleased to see Mum coming back because I think the only thing Charlie could make was spotted rice pudding. I don't know what that is today. I can't say I ever want to see it or know it after Charlie finished. We were so pleased to see Mum come back because Charlie, that's the only thing he could make, was this sort of, it was a rice, boiled rice and put currants in it, I think, and sugar and whatever. It was terrible stuff anyway.

I And that'd be dinner?

R That'd be our meal. Mum cooked up a lot of food, you know, bread and stuff that would keep, but we ran out, of course, before she got back.

I And how about your Dad? What would he be doing while this was going on?

R Oh, well now where was Dad once? He also had, he had a wagon he used to cart wool to Selwyn. That was the big mining town in those days. He used to go up there and bring loading back from Selwyn. He must have been away because Dad wasn't there. He probably was away on one of these, with his wagon. That's how, you know, we got money. Otherwise there would be no money.

I Come the late twenties there was a big drought, wasn't there…

R Yes.

I … and then that fed into the Depression.

R Mmmm.

I How did your family get on there?

[break]

Now I've lost my train of thought.

R There was the big drought.

I Oh, yes. How your family … it was about 1925, was it, when the drought came through?

R Ahhh, ’26 I think. ’26 it started. Just when my sister was born, the youngest sister was born in the old stone house in Boulia. You know the old stone house is still there. And then we went back to Maxland after she was born and the drought came really bad. So we all went on the road and took the sheep on the road and we went right up the Georgina to the oh what do they call it there? Nearly on to the Flinders River, you know, across the …

I Gregory Downs?

R Gregory, Gregory River. And then across to the Flinders, and we came back to Julia Creek and that’s where we went to school. We were sent away to boarding school there. Mum sent us to boarding school.

I And why in drought was being on the road better than staying at home?

R Well there was no food at home, see, and there was feed up the Georgina and going across to the Gregory and up in the Gulf country there was rain but there was nothing in the Boulia district. Oh there were storms, I think, after they left, there were storms there but nothing to keep your stock alive for very long. And it was all over, all over the district, it wasn’t just an isolated area. It was everywhere. And they were away three years, I think, with those stock on the road, then. And then Mum and us kids all came back to Maxland and the boys stayed with Dad and they brought the sheep home from Julia Creek, and we were home.

I So do you remember the discussion, because you would have been about what …?

R Oh, I was about ah …

I … nine years old.

R Yeah, I was about nine or ten when we went on the road.

I Do you remember the decision to go on the road? Can you remember the build up to that?

R Uhhh, no I can't remember much about that. No. I can't remember very much about that, no. I can remember the twelve months we, or the year's school we had in Boulia. I can remember that but I can't remember much about that, only when we got on the road, you know, because we got up to all the tricks under the sun, I think, you know.

I Like what? What's your memory of life on the road?

R Ohhh, oh God, we did everything, I think. When we got out of sight of Mum and Dad we did everything with the horses.

I Give me some examples.

R We used to put hot stones under their tail to make them buck and all this sort of thing, you know. We'd have mini rodeos sort of thing. Oh, we did all these things. Chased the kangaroos and chase them across the rivers into the big waterholes to see how they swam. We did it. Oh well, I suppose, we just made our own fun sort of thing, you know.

I And was being a girl, were there particular things that you couldn't do because you were a girl?

R No. No. No, we used to drive the sheep during the day and break them at night and had to … we'd have a day off. Each one of us would have one day off which would come round, sort of okay it's and our day off was to take the horses from this camp to the next camp and hobble them out, you know, give them water so they've got water and put them out and feed and hobble them. So that was our day off. And, of course, collected the goods for cook, which Mum was, the cook. And Nell and Micky, they were the two babies, they were little ones, they didn't ride horses but Carrie, Brian and me, we had to ride the horses.

I So it was just your family doing this?

R Oh, no. No. No. There was nearly … no, there was about four other families – McDougalls and some, I think it was the McDougalls and Wells's and Gibsons, I think was the other family. No, a lot of people just left.

I And you would travel together with these other families?

R Oh, well, we might have been … no, not all together, no. No. Unless we stayed somewhere for a long time, but we were never allowed to stay very long unless you agisted, you know, country somewhere, which they did when they got …

I So unless you paid?

R Mmmm. Yes, agisted a paddock off somebody. But they didn't do that until they got to uh … and, of course, the first stop was at Urandangie which isn't there any more, but in those days it was quite a big town. It was a drovers' town and now I think it's only a hotel there, a pub there and a store, as far as I hear. And we stayed there because there was a big common, that was the common around the towns they had, you know, for drovers and their horses. We stayed there and shore there, because shearing was there, and then we went on, sort of just kept going and moving until we got up to the Flinders, across, you know, to the Flinders and …

I Flinders Crossing?

R No, the Flinders River. The big Flinders River. And we came across there and they agisted country there and we were there for about twelve months, I think, and we were away at school for those twelve months while they agisted and then, of course, the Boulia district, and they came back. And since then, after they came back, the government decided they needed more country, see, it wasn't big enough. 1,500 acres wasn't big enough so they allotted people, granted them more country.

I You said before, I think, 15,000 which I was surprised but was it 1,500?

R Yeah, 15,000 acres.

I It was 15,000 but they got an extra 1,500?

R No, they got an extra 70,000 acres I think. They ended up with over 100,000 acres.

I Wow!

R See that's only a living area in the drought areas. It's like where my daughter's living now at Creek. I think there's a million acres nearly in that country but it's a lot of waste country, you know, it's a lot of sand hills and spinifex and unusable countryside. It's not like down, you know, in the, closer to the good country.

I And was it leasehold or freehold land, do you know?

R Oh, no, it was leasehold. It was all leasehold. There was very, there's not very much freehold out in this country I don't think. Is there very much down on the coastal areas, around Sydney and those? I suppose there would be.

I Much more, yeah, closer in. So the fact that it was leasehold, did that get discussed much?

R No, I don't think so. You just paid each year and you got a thirty-year lease and that's how … that was it, I think. See, I really don't know what the difference is really with, you know, the leasehold and the other. You owned it, I suppose, if you … or Dad owned it.

I There's coming at the moment, there's some discussion because on leasehold properties there can be Native Title and on freehold there can't be. Do you remember, were there Aboriginal people living around Maxland at all, either in …?

R No. No. Not around Maxland. They only lived on the big rivers and the big waterholes and then they'd go walkabout after big rains, but they never lived in those areas. No, no. Never at Maxland.

I So say when you went to school at Boulia, were there Aboriginal kids at that school?

R No, no. Oh there might have been a few little half-caste ones that people sort of took into their homes but you must remember, you know in those days half-caste children, the blacks didn't want them. The Aboriginals didn't want them. They were half-castes, they weren't their skin so they'd just take them, leave them to die or whatever. So quite a lot of them were taken for that reason, that we knew of anyway. I mean, we never had very much to do with them but …

I So you knew white families that had half-caste Aboriginal kids?

R Mmmm, yes. Yes, half-caste children, yes. They weren't wanted, see. They were … of course nobody wants to know that today, do they? They'd say that you're a racist if you dared to say something like that. It's true. I don't know what you know about it, what your opinions are, but …

I I haven't heard those stories.

R No.

I

R Not too many people left to tell them, is there? Like, if they told the truth, a lot of them do, will tell you the truth too, that they would have died if they hadn't been taken and then, you know, you ended up with a … well, I mean, I often think if I'd have been a half-caste kid I'd have probably ended up with one of these squares on my head and a university education instead of having no education. So, I mean, they weren't terribly deprived. Like with Charlie Perkins and all those, they all ended up with a good education, didn't they, and went to uni?

I There's a few, yes. With education, it's interesting that your brother had been sent to Nudgee College. Do you think the fact that you got … so you got a year's education in Boulia and then a year at boarding school in Charters Towers, was that anything to do with you being a girl or was it more …?

R No, it was because they couldn't afford it. They couldn't afford it. There was no money. I mean, you just imagine educating seven of us, it took a lot of money in those days, even though it didn't cost that much, but still like today it costs a lot more but then again it's a different era, isn't it? Like when my kids, my children all went away to boarding school but if I had to send them now, I'd be paying a lot more money. You know, I think I had five of them once away at boarding school. It's the only way they got educated.

I So you got sent away to Charters Towers.

R Like most people are out working. My husband was out working when he was eleven years old. But, you know, they …

I So this is tape 4, camera tape 4, this is still DAT tape 2 and it's 35.53 on the counter now as I'm doing this ID. 3600 now. So it's Trish FitzSimons sound recording, Erica Addis camera. We're interviewing Bid Campbell nee McGlinchy, in her home in Mt Isa, and it's 2 June 2000.

So we were just talking about education, Bid. When you got to Charters Towers, what was at the boarding school you went to? That must have all been a bit of a shock to your system.

R It was. A terrible shock. Terrible shock. Because, you know, we weren't used to sitting down, although Mum always tried, it didn't matter where we were, she'd always try to

have a hot, you know, dinner. Sunday dinner, with a white tablecloth. But when you were on the road, of course there was no such thing as a tablecloth, and we'd got out of all that and, you know, sitting there with your cup of tea and your spoon in there and, you know. Of course, the first thing we did, we … they gave us our tea – we wanted tea – and they gave us the tea in the saucer and the cup and I put my spoon in the cup and naturally. Well, you can just imagine the old nuns. They were sitting there, you know, glowering at me, and all the children were hanging their heads. Who's this little bushie from the bush? You know. Terrible moment it was. I can still remember that, you know, and of course Carrie was trying to say, 'You should have taken your spoon out Biddie. You shouldn't have your spoon in'. And I learnt. I learnt. But I suppose it was a good experience.

I You probably couldn't have gone into classes with other children your same age if you'd had so little formal education?

R Oh, no. That's right, you know. We had no education very much and I think we got, oh, what was it? Oh, it was something to do with the church. Oh, God.

I So this was a Catholic school?

R No, no. Church of England. But anyway I know I had to fill in a slip, you know, all the things that One was, I think, was had I ever had, oh it wasn't called sex or something else, and of course I picked everything. Yes, yes, yes, yes. I was absolutely and my older sister got it and she went 'Oh, Biddie,' she said, 'you haven't done these things'. I had no idea what they meant or anything. I just thought I'd say 'yes' to everything.

I Would you describe yourself as an innocent child or only innocent of city ways?

R Oh, no, no. I don't think that. No, innocent of city ways but I don't think I was terribly innocent. I mean, you couldn't live among animals to be innocent, could you? No. No, I wasn't innocent but I think, you know, I was innocent of a lot of written things, but as for actual things that were happening, no. No, I wasn't, no. My mother was to. We thought differently but, you know, she thought, you know, oh the words you use today, she'd be absolutely shocked, you know. And swearing, you never swore and you didn't say naughty words in any way. Of course when my boys went to school, that lad that's in there, Len, he was a bit of a larrikin and he came home one day and, of course, he was in love with this

girl, you know, and he was saying, 'Oh, she's like this Mum. Oh, she's lovely'. Mum was living in Charters Towers in that old home there. They'd retired and lived there and she pulled me aside and she said, 'Biddie, you don't want to let Lennie using those words,' she said, 'He shouldn't be using those words'. And it was 'sex'. This girl was very sexy. And now what would she say today? I often read a book and think oh poor old Mum. She burnt *East Lyn* on me but I was about, oh I was about twelve or thirteen, I think I was reading it. She took it off me, *East Lyn*.

I *East Lyn*. I don't know *East Lyn*.

R Yes, well in those days she thought it was too …

I A bit racey?

R Yes, a bit, yeah a bit racey and a bit too far advanced for my tender brain. But I was reading it and, of course, she found it and she burnt it. I wasn't allowed to read those sort of books.

I So how old were you when you went to this boarding school?

R I was about eleven.

I So that's '28. So it must have been very difficult for your family to afford to agist cattle …

R Oh, it was, yes.

I … and send you to boarding school.

R Yes, well I think wool rose a little bit and there was a bit of a, you know, they got a good wool price. Now and again, see, they'd get a bit of a price, it'd rise, and then of course it went back again afterwards. When they went back to Maxland it went right back down to bedrock almost because Dad went away looking for a job and we were looking after Maxland, Carrie and me and Brian went with Dad, I think. And they came out to take the property off us, you know, to close. Maxland was too far in debt. And, of course, the Agricultural Bank, I think Nicklin brought it in. I'm not too sure. One of the Premiers brought in that Agricultural Bank.

I I'm not sure, I'll have to check about it.

R Yes. One of them. And he, the manager of that came out and also the manager of the rural industry, you know, the … he was something to do with the, oh it was something to do with the … I just forget what he was. I know what he was but I can't think of the name of it. And he was all for you know, close, take it off her and sell it and get something, and this rural manager said, 'No,' he said. 'This lady is trying very hard,' he said, 'and the girls are trying very hard'. We'd been crutching sheep when he came along. He said, 'Those kids are crutching sheep'. You know what crutching sheep is, that's when they get And he said, 'Anyone that can get out there and do that sort of thing to try and save their land,' he said, 'they deserve another chance'. So he gave her a chance. Well, they kicked on from then, see. Prices rose after the war, went, you know wool went right through the roof.

I So when this happened, this was during the Depression?

R Yes.

I Dad was away looking for work?

R Yes. And, you know, at that time in those Depression years, they were terrible sad years, you know. I can remember people walking there to Maxland. Maxland was only a mile off the road, a mile in from Maxland, from the Winton road, they used to come in there for handouts and Mum would always try and give them something. She'd try and give them some tea, sugar, flour, meat, always tried to give them something. Some of the people wouldn't give them anything. You know, she couldn't give them work but she'd try and give them a little bit of food and they would be young doctors and everyone, you know, just young people, university degrees and everything, walking in that Depression looking for work.

I Any women walking like that?

R No, mostly men. Mostly men. Young men. And it was really sad. It was an eye-opener. I often tell my kids, you know, and the young ones today, you know, the life they lead, they've got no idea, you know, what Depression can do. I have been guilty of saying it would do us good to have one to bring us back to, you know, the real world again because we're getting a bit greedy I think, the young ones today. You know, it's all give, give, give, isn't it? The government should do this, the government should give me this, and it would do them the world of good to get out and see the real world for a while.

I So when you got back to Maxland, was it still a shelter? What did you find?

R No. Before they went away Mum had, they'd bought an old dwelling from ah Selwyn. The old mine was sort of dwindling down and they were selling homes and Dad brought it down on the wagon and they built it. So that was the home we were reared in after we'd left the shed and everything like that. So, no, their home was a two-storey house. Still dirt floor.

I So upstairs would have had a wooden floor and downstairs a dirt floor?

R Yes, wooden floor. Yes, mmmm. Yes, that's how you lived. I mean, you didn't, you had no … and the outside dunny and things like that. House of Parliament where all the newspapers were.

I And what was the place like when you came back to it? Had anybody been living there?

R No, and everything was taken. Everything was gone. All the china and she had paintings, you know, glass, paintings on glass, she had on the walls. They were taken, everything was taken. Somebody had ransacked it. Even the linen, everything they could lift, they lifted.

I Do you remember that?

R Yes, I remember Mum. You know, she was terribly … she wasn't so terribly upset about the linen and stuff. She was more upset about her paintings where somebody had given them to her in Winton when she first came to Australia. Some lady had painted them in Winton and given them to her. She was very upset about that because she said she couldn't replace them. She could replace linen and stuff like that. And how we used to get our linen and material to make clothes – Mum used to make all our clothes – she used to send a bale of wool down to the woollen mills at Ipswich. Well there's no woollen mills there now, is there?

I I don't think so.

R No. And they'd send back, for the value of the wool they'd send back material, see, and the blankets and things like that.

I So you wouldn't be getting your exact wool back, you'd just be getting the equivalent?

R No. Yes, the equivalent in money, you know, in rugs and blankets and things like that. So that's how they did it.

I And did your mother at such times ever talk about going back to England?

R Yes, she went back after the war. She went back. Mmmm. She went back. But she said it was all changed and all different. See, it was only her and her brother, and her brother went to Canada. Her brother Tom went to Canada. Well she lost touch with him in the 1900, I think 1900. She never heard from him after 1900. She don't know whether he died or what happened, so … and then she came to Australia.

I Did your mother embrace Australia as her home?

R Oh, yes. Mmmm. Yes. Australia was her home. Mmmm. No, she didn't enjoy … she went over there and she was over there for twelve months, I think, and she was glad to come back. It was all different. See she'd lost the Welsh way of talking and everything, you know how the Welsh people talk. She said she couldn't understand them, you know, when she'd go to visit some of the relations, because they still talked in the old Welsh way. But she stayed twelve months. Dad hated it. He reckoned it was too cold. But, yes, she said, you know, she had nothing. They said, 'Why did you leave England?' She said she had nothing and you know, if you were walking along the road and a carriage came along with a lady in it, you'd have to stop and bow to them and everything so, you know, she said the Australian way was the better way than what she had, her life that she would have had. Because it would only have been a life as a servant or something like that.

I Now there would still have been what I would call class distinction functioning?

R Oh, yes. Mmmm.

I How did you relate to, say, the people on the stations, living on Maxland?

R Well, I think the people who owned their land weren't as big a snobs as a lot of the station managers. I found during life, people who owned their own properties weren't as snobbish as the, you know, station managers and their wives. I don't know if anyone else noticed that but I've always noticed that.

I That's really interesting. Nobody said that to me before but it's interesting. That snobbery, I mean your family owned land but it was to do with people who owned more land feeling better than those who owned less land?

R No, no, I never ever found that, no. No, I've never found that. The only snobbery I've ever encountered is people who were managing somebody's property, and especially their wives, and that was the only snobbery I ever came across. The rest of the people were just normal people.

I But if you're saying they were snobbish towards you, but your family actually was leasing its land, but they might have been snobbish because they were from the bigger holdings?

R Well, I think Mum encountered that a bit when she first came to Maxland, especially with one family who'd … they were from oh, from Sydney I think, you know, the Schofields or something. They were a big and they … her first wool clip, she was so excited about it, and he said, 'That wouldn't even pay my shearers' wages'. Mum never ever forgave him. Never ever forgave him.

I So your Mum was proud of what she was doing with the land?

R Yes, she was very proud.

I And how do you think you were brought up to regard the land? Like the land of Maxland.

R Oh, it was just a way of life, I think. It was never meant that much. You know, it was just … it was just home, I suppose, like everyone's home. Wouldn't matter what it was, if it's yours, you know, you think it's great, don't you? No, I don't think there was such a thing as loving the land because we … no, I don't think so.

I Were your family farmers at all? Was the land ever cultivated?

R No, no, no. No, you don't cultivate any land around this area, no. This is just free range. If it rains, well, there's grass in the paddocks. If there's no rain, well there's no grass. Because there's no water, see. You couldn't cultivate. You've got to have water, you know.

I And over your lifetime of knowing Maxland, Bid, has the land changed a lot? Has it degraded or improved or …?

R I think it's improved. I think there's more kangaroos and that because there's been more water You just take it now. If you go back many years, when a waterhole dried up, where would the kangaroos have to go? They'd have to go to running water, wouldn't they?

I And is this because of the artesian water?

R Yes, the artesian more waters made and that's like when my daughter's place at Creek, like when they first went out there, there was no water, only the river, and now they've got bores everywhere and there's kangaroos everywhere, so naturally, you know, you've improved it, I think, for the animals. Because they couldn't go out there without water.

I Just fill me in a bit on your later adolescence and your adult life after you … you had that year at Charters Towers, and what ended that?

R Well we went back to Maxland and I just grew up there then, I suppose. I went back and I just filled in then until I married. I was married when I was 17 and then we went out on our own sort of thing. My husband, he went working on stations and that and I just sort of tagged along, I think.

I Where did you meet your husband?

R At Maxland.

I So he was one of the workers?

R No, no. He just came there one day and then I got to know him in Boulia and race meetings and things like that. No, he was just working around, working around, and then he just … then we went, after I think I had three, four children, I think, and we went on the road. He got a droving trip and we saved our money and he bought a property. He bought sheep first and he brought them down from on one side about a hundred mile down the river and he agisted them for about six months on a paddock. Then he went … his brother drew a block, or bought a and he went onto and then we went on to Werriana.

I Now I don't know these properties. Can you tell me what the town is?

R Boulia. Boulia.

I Boulia. So you were all starting to be lots of McGlinchys all around Boulia?

R Mmmm. Yes. And then we went to Werriana and then we saved our money and had a couple of more trips and bought Weetalaba that was the block alongside of Strathalbert and then we bought Strathalbert.

I And as you were buying this land, you were adding on or you were selling some land and buying new land?

R No, no. Just agisting.

I Oh, right.

R Just agisting.

I So Strathalbert was the first place you bought?

R No, Weetalaba.

I Weetalaba.

R Mmmm. Weetalaba. It joined, two blocks together. So that's where, how we ended up there.

I And did you ever have dreams of any life other than living in the country?

R No, not really. No. I don't think so. We used to go away for holidays but I was always glad to come home. Go down to Brisbane and places like that but I was pleased to come home. No, I can't say that I ever pined for anywhere different.

I So tell me about your married life then, Bid. You and your husband had Weetalaba and then Strathalbert?

R Strathalbert.

I Properties out from Boulia. What was the work of that property and how did you and your husband divide that work?

R Shared. I ran the house and he ran the property. It was a woman's place with the home and the man was the provider, and that was it.

I It's interesting that your mother, it wouldn't seem like your mother would have had the woman's place is the home …

R Oh, no. She had to take the reins because Dad was a bit easygoing. He was too easygoing. So Mum took over.

I So you think that your Mum mightn't have minded looking after the house but that she needed to do the other?

R Yeah, she had to. When I got married, she told me never to learn … my sister used to say, 'I don't know who was your mother because she never told me never to chop a sheep down or chop wood or anything'. But she did me. She told me, she said, 'Don't ever learn to chop a sheep down', you know, after they kill it they hang it in the wood shed. But, oh I could chop wood. I never ever did.

I And what did you make of that? What do you think your mother was saying to you then?

R Don't do it because once you start doing it you keep doing it. So that's what she used to. They usually just killed a sheep, put it in the wood shed and Mum would have to chop it all up and chop it down, which she could do. Oh no, she was very capable. Very capable woman.

I And you would have grown up very capable as well?

R Oh yes. Mmmm. No such thing as this running and getting counselled every time something went wrong. We never had time for that. So yeah, if something went wrong you just had to just put up with it.

I So what would be the kind of problems that you remember solving?

R Ahhhh. Well, I suppose one was the tragedy when I lost my little granddaughter, poisoned. Three-year-old. I suppose that was the worst moment that I can remember.

I Unmarked bottle?

R No, it was strychnine. Up in a tree and she climbed up, got it. But we couldn't save her. That's about the only tragedy I'd say that, you know, we had, really, out of all the years we lived in the bush. Because we were always Mum always taught us to be very, very careful of snakes and things like that. Like, I often look back now and think, you know, Mum would yell 'snake' and we'd go for our lives up to the horse rails and up the horse rails and sit up there until the 'all clear' sign came. And I suppose, in a way, she had to do that.

I So would your Mum be down there killing the snake?

R Yes. She'd see the kids, you know, we could get bit, see. Well, you wouldn't be able to get to a doctor because it was too far. You only had horse transport so Boulia was, I suppose it was about 15 mile or 16 mile. By the time you got in there well it was too late so, you know, we always were very careful with things like that.

I So did you become a snake killer?

R No, no, no. I'm always terrified, have been all my life, I've been terrified. And, you know, my daughter always tells me now she's terrified too. She says, 'You did that to me' and I suppose I did too because I am terrified of snakes. Probably, you know, because Mum always was so careful, see.

I And did you actually see snakes a lot?

R Oh, yes. Mmmm. Mmmm yes you'd see snakes all right, yes. But there is deadly snakes around the Boulia district.

I Taipans?

R Well, I don't know whether there are taipans but they are very deadly. They're a black snake and that, they're deadly. So no, we were always very careful. That's the only tragedy that we couldn't overcome. And that was just something that happened so you and then as somebody once said, 'What happened to you when you got sick?' and I said, 'You either died or got better'. You know, you had two options, didn't you? There was no such thing as screaming and yelling. Then, of course, in later years, you know, people out in the west they got the Flying Doctor which was the big boom, but before that there wasn't much.

I Could you tell me one of the stories of the worst medical emergency that you dealt with when your kids were little?

R No, I don't think there was any. No.

I So you became a bit of a bush nurse, did you?

R Oh yes, you had to. Yes. Oh yes, if they got sick or anything, like colds or anything like that, yes, I could just put them to bed and looked after them and that was it, see. I mean, in that line, yes. But I think the old castor oil was the biggest cure we had. Now they say you can't use castor oil but I think that was the main thing, you know, if they were sick in the stomach or something you gave them a dose of castor oil.

I That just cleans your system out.

R Yes, yes. And sulphur, and syrup and sulphur. Old syrup and sulphur. You know, we used to take that.

I And Bid, if as a child there wasn't really any difference between what girls could do and what boys could do, how was that for you as a mother? It's interesting that your Mum said, 'Don't learn to chop wood and don't learn to cut a beast down'. Did you bring up your daughters differently in any way than your son?

R Well I suppose you do bring your daughters up differently because they … I was in the position where I never had much to do with them, really. See, they'd go away to school and they'd come home at Christmas time and then they'd come home during the year, about July for about a month, and that was all you'd see of them until they were almost grown up. So you sort of didn't … so you spoilt them a bit, I think, you know, you didn't say, 'Well that's your job, you do this' like we had to. We had to take our week in the kitchen to cook and all that sort of thing. I didn't do that. But they grew up all right, I think.

I So from what age did your children go off to school then?

R Well Terry the youngest, and Lyn, Terry went when he was six and Lyn went when she was six. But Bill and the older ones, they were a bit older.

I And they went off to Brisbane?

R They went off to Charters Towers, to All Souls. Yeah, no, they went fairly young.

I So All Souls, is that a Catholic …?

R No, Church of England.

I Church of England. Some people have told me, Bid, that there was very great division between Catholic and Protestant.

R Well, I don't think so. They used to all compete against each other at the sports, at the sports thing, you know, every September I think used to be the great sports carnival with all the schools. No, I don't think there was a terrible lot of …

I So a Catholic marrying an Anglican wasn't …?

R Oh, that used to be in the older days. Oh yes, I think that was, yes. That was in the olden days, yes. I think there was a bit but I don't think they're like that now. They're more lenient now. See my brother married a Catholic. Ben, that's Nina's husband. So he's a Catholic and I don't think Nina was but she might have changed now. Her children go to the Catholic No, I don't think so. I think that people have got more broad-minded about it. I'm just reading that *Angela's Ashes* there and it's all hatred of the poor old Methodists, like they …

I Presbyterians?

R Presbyterians and Methodists. They just hate them, don't they?

I I went to see that film with two Irish Catholic friends and I'm of Presbyterian Irish background so we laughed about it.

R Yes, they laugh about it now, don't they. You know, it's not like it used to … what was the movie like?

I I loved it. Yeah, I think it …

R I'm reading the book. I rather like the book because, you know, he's sort of telling it as it really happened eh and how they lived.

I Could you, the kind of poverty, say, in *Angela's Ashes*, could you relate to at all?

R Yes, because I know what it is to have nothing, to have no money, yes.

I Do you know what it is to be hungry?

R No, I don't think we were ever hungry. No, I was never hungry. No. No, we always seemed to have plenty of food but, because Mum always grew a good garden. Then we've always had meat, we've always had milk, so you know, there was, the only thing you had to more or less buy was flour and sugar.

I Speaking of gardening, what did you grow at Maxland?

R Well in the winter months she used to grow all the vegetables, see, all the carrots and turnips and all those things, cabbages and lettuce and everything like that, and in the summer months she'd grow the cucumbers and water melons and pumpkins and things like that, see, and you always seemed to have plenty of food in that line. She always had a good garden and I did the same at Strathalbert. We always had a good garden, though we never had fruit or anything like that.

I Not even an orange tree?

SIDE B

R No, no. No, there was bad water at Maxland, you couldn't grow orange trees, but I can remember the first pear I ever tasted. I think, oh God, it's manna from heaven. I didn't think anything like this existed. You know, we never ever saw fruit because it had to come such a long way. It'd come out by train and then it had to come on a coach from Winton out and by the time it got out there it'd be

I So how old do you think you were when you first tasted fruit?

R I was about six year old, I think. Mmmm.

I Maybe when you went into Boulia for that year?

R No, it was at Maxland. It was at Maxland, I can remember this beautiful fruit. I was oh gee.

I It sounds like if you were sending your kids away to boarding school, you had pretty good years for wool in the forties and fifties.

R Oh, yes. Well see, they fixed the price on it, didn't they? They fixed the price and that sort of stayed after the war years. No, it was a different ball game altogether.

I The Korean War, I think, meant that Australian wool was in great demand.

R Yes. Mmmm. Well, it's like the, you know, in Europe and that, you know, Merino was sort of your wool status symbol, wasn't it? It sort of opened up the world a bit, wool. It's not so good now, I don't think. My niece is on a property over there near Winton and she said that wool's not very good.

I In your married life, then, at Strathalbert, where would you run across Aboriginal people, Bid?

R We used to employ them. We employed them. They were very good people.

I Men or women?

R The women and men, yes. I had an old lady, Dolly, she was a washer, she used to do the washing for me and she lived in a little hut there and she used to do the washing. She never used to do any housework and that. She used to do the washing and she was very good with the children. They were full blood, full blood Aboriginals, they weren't half-castes. And then there was another couple we had there, Lardy and Moonlight, they'd been sent to the island and they didn't want to live in the island.

I This was Palm Island?

R Palm Island. And they wanted to come back and the policeman came out and saw my husband and he said, 'Oh well,' he said, 'if you can let them live out here,' he said, 'I'll get them back'. So we said yes, they could live here, but Lardy used to wash for me now and again and old Moonlight used to, sometimes he'd go riding with them and that, but he was too old.

I You provided food but not wages? Was that how it went?

R Yes. Well, they weren't on wages then, they were sort of retired. They were on a … I don't know how they got on. They just used to go into the office in Boulia, the police station, they used to get their clothes and their food vouchers, and that's how they lived, like that. And we used to give them food too, and they used to get their clothes.

I So what sort of food would you …?

R The same as we ate. Yes, exactly. No, they were very good and the kids used to love them. My children used to love them. Used to go walkabout with them and catching grubs and all sorts of things.

I I know in some families it sounds like Aboriginal and white kids played together very closely but in other areas there was taboos about that. Because you hadn't grown up with Aboriginal people …?

R No, no, no. No, we never found … I never found that. I thought they were very good people, the old, old Aboriginals. Very good. I couldn't say anything against them. Decent people.

I If they were full-blooded Aboriginal people, was this their traditional land?

R Well I don't know what's their traditional land today. I think they … wherever there's mining found or something seems to be their traditional land.

I But I'm talking about Lardy and Moonlight. Would they have corroborees and ceremonies and things sometimes?

R In Boulia? No, I think old Moonlight came from around Selwyn area so I don't think that was his land and I think Lardy came from up there too, but they'd more or less been down round the Boulia area. I don't know why they went down there. He was King of the Burke. He used to wear a thing around his chest, you know, this thing. 'I'm King of the Burke.' And he used to parade around and say he was the king.

I So their children lived on your property as well?

R No, had no children, no. They were all grown up. They were old.

I The other woman, I've forgotten her name, not Lardy and Moonlight, the other woman that washed with you.

R Dolly.

I Dolly.

R Yeah. No, she stayed there for about two years and then she went. I don't know where Dolly went. She went into Boulia I think, went away somewhere. I've never heard of Dolly after that but I know she didn't like you to touch the children. They didn't like you to smack them or anything. She'd get most upset about that.

I You're saying that if you smacked an Aboriginal child …

R No, my children.

I Oh, your kids would get very upset if an Aboriginal person smacked them?

R No, they'd get upset, the Aboriginal ladies, if I smacked my kids.

I Oh, I see, if you smacked your kids.

R Yes.

I Right. And how would they let you know that they were upset?

R Oh, the lips would come out here like this. Really angry. Once Terry, the youngest son, was swearing. They were down at the horse yards breaking horses and men and they were swearing, see, and he came up swearing and I'd warned him the day before. I said, 'Don't let me hear you using those words'. Anyway the next day he did the same so I grabbed him and took him upstairs and said, 'I'm going to wash your mouth out with soap' and as I was passing Dolly, she was washing, and she's got a lather of, you know, soap suds . I said, 'Have you got any soap, Dolly?' She said, 'No, no soap'. She wouldn't give me any. 'Poor little boy,' she was saying as I was dragging him upstairs. 'Poor little boy.' It stopped him swearing. He don't even swear today. So I stopped that. No. There was no such swearing or anything like that in my day. Men swore when they were working but you never, that was nothing to do with me.

I I'm now on Glen Ormiston. I think that it was around the late sixties when Aboriginal people stopped being employed because that was when the wages had to be paid. How did that work out round your family?

R Well, we just paid the wages. I mean, you paid it into the police station if you had one, see. You just paid them. It went into their whatever they had, some scheme they had, and they used to keep them in clothes and things like that. But you must remember, though, a lot of

these stations had about three hundred Aboriginals on it and they were employing about fifteen and feeding the rest so I mean they weren't really slave labour, and this is where half the city people have got the idea that they were, you know, it was slave labour. They forgot the fact that they were keeping the rest of them. They were feeding them and they were getting meat and everything like that. No, have you read that book, *Not What I Expected*?

I I don't think I have. What's that one?

R Well get it and read it.

I I'd love, yeah. *Not What I Expected*?

R *Not What I Expected* by Edna Quiltie.

I Edna Quiltie. No, I'll get it.

R Edna Quiltie.

I I'll get a pen and write that down.

R I'll write it down for you so you get it and read it.

I Good on you, Bid. I'd love to do that.

R It'll give you a good insight into …

I What area is it from?

R It's the Kimberleys.

I Right.

R Out in the Kimberleys. The Kimberleys area, but the same thing applies round here. See all these Aborigines you see here in the towns now, they're all off stations. It's not what I … *Not What I Expected*, Edna Quiltie.

I And what is it in this book that you think is particularly …?

R It's very interesting about the Aborigines.

I Right.

R Very interesting. And what happened to them.

I And so, Bid, clearly your family and you are now interested in history. You've written your own history.

R Yes, well who's teaching history today in schools? from a uni. What are they teaching …?

I Less and less is being taught.

R Yes. Half the children don't even know who Captain Cook is. So all our history's being lost.

I And if you were to describe why it's important to learn history, how would you describe that or define that?

R Well I think it's very important.

I I do too.

R Yes, because I mean, now who's to say how Australia started if we don't learn it, if we're not taught it? Like, you just talk to any average student today and ask them what history is, about history. They know nothing about history. I'm not, I don't say, you know, overseas history or Europe or something like that, but I do think they should be teaching Australian history.

I And when you were a child and a young woman, what was the history that you knew and who were some of the characters from your local area that you would hear about a lot?

R Mmmm. I can't say that I knew of that many.

I There wasn't lots of talk, because probably the explorers would have gone through your district, or …?

R Well see, they'd be all, would have been there and gone, wouldn't they, by the time, you know, I could remember. Like …

I I guess I wondered just how much history … well, you weren't at school very much but just as people were kind of talking in the area or how much history of the area you grew up with.

R No, there wouldn't be that much. See, they used to, explorers had more or less all been there and gone, hadn't they? Like, they went up that river, they went up the what's-a-name river …

I Georgina.

R Up the Georgina, and they also went up the Burke and Wills, see. Burke and Wills went through Strathalbert, both those rivers. And there was, I suppose, just above Kennedy. He's another man that sort of ventured out from round there and he was, took up properties all around above Boulia. He was Kennedy. He was more or less an explorer and he took his family. I think some of his family graves are above Strathalbert, see, where they died. And that was another booklet that's worth reading too.

I Would you have heard much about the early history of settlement in Boulia and the time when white people were settling for the first time? Was there much discussion about that?

R Well, no. Well, it's different. You never saw very many people because nobody moved around very much because the only way they got around, like you saw the mail, and it was a horse and buggy in the early days, and you wouldn't, you know, they'd just more or less give you your mail.

I You wouldn't get a newspaper very often and you didn't have radio and …?

R Oh no, no, no, no. We didn't have any of those things. I think the only newspaper we had in our day was the old *Bulletin*, the old Townsville *Bulletin*. It more or less covered everything, you know, all the news around, and you got that once a month. But as kids we weren't privileged to look at anything like that, or listen to adults' conversation either, for that matter.

I And books? Did you grow up with books or was that something you developed as an adult?

I Okay, so this is camera tape 6. This is still DAT tape 2. It's 2 June 2000, interviewing Bid Campbell at her house in Mt Isa.

Okay, so we were just talking about history and …

R The only thing that I can remember that stayed in my mind was the Min Min Light. It seemed to be the only thing people seemed to be arguing about a lot, you know. Did it happen? Didn't it happen? And I can remember sitting on my at the top part of Maxland and watching a light sort of coming from Boulia to Schofield's letter box and fading out, and then later, you know, sort of come again and fade away, and there was no cars in those days. That was say in 1926, '24. So there wasn't any motor cars in those days. Today there is motor cars everywhere but not in those days you wouldn't see any.

I And what did you make of that?

R Well, we didn't worry about that much because we thought, 'Well, it's just one of these things. It's the Min Min Light' and that's all you'd say about it. So whether it was the Min Min Light or what, there seems to be a lot of controversy about it, isn't there?

I There's going to be a documentary on SBS very soon about the Min Min Light.

R Yes.

I I haven't asked you, Bid – we'll finish very soon – but floods. Tell me about what experience you had of floods, either as a child or as an adult.

R Oh, well, at Strathalbert my husband was always terrified of floods. Every time, you know, big floods would come – the home was in, right on to the river.

I Which river?

R The Burke River. And then there was a creek come around here like that and the home was in here, and every time it rained he'd get very nervy, you know, about this flood, because it was going to come over the house or under the house or whatever, and once it rained and rained and rained. It was very heavy rain, so he decided we had to go out onto this ridge. So Len was a little fellow. He can remember it. And he walked and we put a, like a bed, and we put Lyn and Jenny and Terry which were the little ones on that, and here Frank and my cousin, my nephew, carried the bed and I hung onto Len. We had to cross this creek to get out onto the ridges and we were out there for three days, I think, in a tent. And Lindy was a baby and I had two nappies and oh it was a terrible turnout. Terrible

turnout. We had some potatoes, I think, we used to cook in the ashes and we lived out there for three days.

I And did the flood go into your house?

R No, it never went into the house at all but later years, after he died, it did come up to the house. But apparently when he was a child, his mother told me, he was around the Clermont area and that big flood that came through, and probably, you know, it's still in his mind that water will go anywhere. And, of course, I'd never seen water going
Once he was in hospital and he kept ringing up every day saying, 'How's the flood waters? Are you going to leave? Are you going to go out on the ridges?' 'Yes, we're going,' so we eventually told him we were going, took the phone off the hook, to give him peace, because he used to be terrified of water. Always afraid that the water was going to go over that …

I So do you regard Strathalbert as Channel Country?

R Yes. Yes, it is. It is the

I So it was Channel Country but the channels in your part didn't really break their banks?

R No, no, no. It was more of a river. See, as it goes down further it spreads out, doesn't it? It spreads all out into swampy areas. No, it's just a big river, and very big. Big rivers when they're in flood and they're in full flood they are.

I So is there anything I haven't asked you about, Bid? I'm wanting to learn about women of the Channel Country, past present and possibly future.

R Well, you know it's a pity that a lot of these people are gone, see. There is a name I can give you in – if he's still alive – I'll go and get that.

I Let's just finish and then I'll unplug you and then you can get it.

R There's a name the Howard family. They were in the Boulia district before Mum and Dad, like, and if you could get … well old Tim did have a lot of photos and things which Charlie put in his book, but you can take the book and go through it. See if you can find anything you need. Probably find a lot of things in there.

I How interesting. Oh is this a yellow book? Because Annette Gordon has two books about the McGlinchy's. She had the one of yours and then she did have another book.

R Yes. A red book. That's the family reunion book. No, this was one that Charlie wrote on the Boulia Centenary, I think.

I Oh, wonderful. And that was your brother Charlie?

R Yes, a stepbrother, Mum's oldest son. Yes. So that book … and there is a lot of, well there's a lot of history in it, you know, past, when Boulia first started and how it started and everything in there. It's a bit dry but, you know.

I Charlie was Shire Clerk at one stage, wasn't he?

R Yes. He was … no, Charlie Robinson was really a wonderful man when you come to think of it. He had a family and he used to … he was shearing and he'd studied to be the Shire Clerk. He used to shear during the day and study at night.

I And he was the one that took all the photographs? Is he the one? Because I know in Boulia we're going to see a collection of photographs that were taken by the Shire Clerk – a Shire Clerk – that were very highly regarded, but I don't know the name of the photographer. Would that be your Charlie?

R Could have been.

I Did he take a lot of photographs?

R Not that I know of. Charlie was more …

I No, so it was probably another …

R Another Shire Clerk that was there. But no, Charlie was more of a … he was a dreamer more than anything. He'd walk past you, you know, and you'd say 'Hello' to him and he'd get a few steps past you and he'd swing round, 'Oh, hello. How are you?' So he was a sort of a dreamer, sort of a man, you know. His mind was way up somewhere else.

I One last question, when you look say, at your daughter or your niece Nina, when you look at men and women living on the land now, what do you think has shifted since the days of your childhood?

R Well, for a starter, they've got all these amenities that we never had, like they've got washing machines, they've got TVs, they've got a phone. We didn't have a phone. We didn't have a washing machine and, as for TV and even radio, like it was during the last war that I first heard a radio and my brother was over in Alexandra and Mum got an old wireless from somebody and it was full of static, you know, you could only hear it now and again, and that used to come over that … was it Sally Field that used to sing her songs, you know?

I Gracie Fields.

R Gracie Fields. *The White Cliffs of Dover* and all that, and that'd come on, you'd hear part of that and sometimes the soldiers, there'd be a message and we used to try and listen to that message to see if Len's name was in that message.

I So it was the First World War when you first heard a radio?

R Yes, heard the radio. Yeah, you never had any of these amenities. They've got all those now. Like, it's like my granddaughter out there at Creek, she's got a fax machine, you know, and she's got a computer. We never had those things. Never had nothing, really. If you wanted to communicate with somebody, you wrote a letter.

I And do you think that's actually shifted life and relationships between men and women a lot, those amenities?

R Oh, I think they've got them closer together, I think, you know. Once the woman's place was in the home and you just looked after the family and cooked and things like that. The women don't have to work like they did like in my day. Like washing day in my day, you'd get up, you'd start in the summer, you'd start about four o'clock because you used to have to scrub like this and then put it in the boiler and boil it, you know, and you'd try and get it done before the heat of the day came on. Otherwise it was too hot. See, they don't do that now.

I Would that be a Monday, washing day?

R Yes. A Monday or one day a week you'd have for your washing and then the next day you did the ironing. You ironed with the old iron. Well, they wouldn't iron with those today. They've got electric irons today. No, no, I think it's a big difference. They've got more leisure time. They go into the towns a lot more, which we didn't do. The only

time we went to, when I was a kid, went to Boulia, was when you got sick. If you got sick you went to Boulia.

I So it was 16 miles away but you only went there when you were sick?

R Yes. Mmmm. If you got really sick that Mum couldn't help you, you went into the hospital, but I never was sick enough. I never got to the hospital. My sister used to get in a few times because she had bronchitis bad. She used to have to go in and she'd spend a week in Boulia and I used to be so envious. I used to think, 'Why can't I get sick?'

I That sounds like *Angela's Ashes*.

R Mmmm. Yes.

I The bloke is so happy to go to hospital and have just a simple warm bed.

R Yes. You know, you look back now and think, God you were lucky you didn't get sick.

I So when did you first see cinema, Bid, and what films … did you ever see films like *Girl of the Bush* or *On Our Selection*, *Wild Daughter*?

R No. Yes, I've seen *On Our Selection*. I think that's just a lot of rot, I think. I think that's … I don't … we didn't lead that sort of a life. Like they sort of make out in those movies that you, you know, you're just a mug or something, you're uneducated, uncouth and that, don't they? I don't agree

I Especially the Ken G. Hall one, the 1930s one, yes.

R Yeah they go too far, I think, just like, you know, that play they had they made a big thing of. What was that play? Oh it was … it was with shearers anyway and it … I can't …

I Not *Dimboola*?

R No, no, not *Dimboola*. Before that. You know, he spoke with that …

I *One Day of the Year*. No, not *One Day of the Year*.

R No. That Aussie, you know, ocker language and that. Well the average Australian don't talk like that. You don't hear, you know, I've never come across them and I mean I've lived out in the west most of my life, so I don't know.

I So you didn't think that the films that were about the bush were much …?

R No, I didn't think they were true to the average bush person. No.

I Did you ever see *Girl of the Bush*?

R No, I didn't see that one.

I A very good film.

R Is it? I'd like to see that. I've seen the, what's that one, the *Seven Little Australians* is it? I liked that. Yes, that was nice. That was a good movie but I can't think of that damn but it was a play anyway.

I It'll come back to you.

R It was a play. I went and saw it in Townsville and I thought, 'Oh, God, what a terrible image to give the average person who lives in Australia'.

I So, Bid, this tape's going to run out in a minute and I'm just going to stop taping but it's been fantastic.

REMAINDER OF INTERVIEW TRANSFERRED FROM VIDEO (NOT DAT)

VHS2 05.23.50.11 TO 05.27.26.01

I So Bid, we were just talking about -

R The Corroboree Tree. Yeah. You know the, the ah tourist brochures. You know they put out a brochure. There's a galah, old galah tree out there by the school in Boulia, out in the Stony Ridge, and, and they've got a plaque on it to say this is where the Aborigines held their corroborees. Now I can remember back to 1923 and that's when I heard of corroborees and it was down on the river. Down at the One Mile. Where, you know, where they all lived. And yet the tourists have got it there. But when it comes to somebody backing me up, there's no one round to say well that is true that this happened then, not then – corroborees.

I And are there Aboriginal people in the Boulia area that are your kind of age that –

R Oh no, they're all dead. And all the younger ones have taken over the University degrees and that and they just, you know, right down. No, I don't, I honestly don't think Aborigines EVER corroboreed out on the Stony Ridge. Damned if I do. Usually around waterholes. That's where they mostly lived.

I And the One Mile that you were describing –

R That's a big water hole.

I Near Boulia.

R Below Boulia.

I Right. And was that like a reserve for Aboriginal people?

R No. Just where they camped. The, see they used to camp. They have big camps on the, on the big waterholes and that's where they lived and when it drained, of course they went walkabout down the rivers or up the rivers or whatever. Up to the Togo **?** Ranges, you know. It's only after big rains. They wouldn't go otherwise and ah, that's you know, I often think why do they want to change it? Why, why not stick to the truth? I mean, who'd want to go out in the Stony Ridge to have a party when there's a big waterhole just about a mile away?

I So what do you think is leading to those distortions?

R Dashed if I know. Money I think. Yeah, money I think. Mmm. Like anything. Once money comes into it. You know, a bit of corruption comes in too, doesn't it? So, can we make something out of this sort of thing? It's like, you know, nobody wanted the land. Nobody wanted to go out in the bush and – but now if they find a mine, suddenly it becomes sacred ground. Like when they say that's where their burials were. They never buried their Aboriginals. Get Dr Harvey Sutton's book and you'll see where they stick 'em up in the trees. And yet they're sacred burial grounds. So –

I So in history and the kind of the history of Boulia, is that important to kind of tourists in the region now?

R Oh well, I suppose it's a story isn't it? It's a story, you know. It's a tree that probably somebody was hanged out of or somebody died under or something or other and make a

big story out of it. Jazz it up. Oh we'll have to go and see that I suppose. Like all things like that.

I Did you ever see any burials in trees?

R No, I can't say that I ever but there is, there is in ah in ah that book, ah of Dr Harvey Sutton's. Have you ever read that book?

I No.

R Well - ….., – what's the Harvey Sutton's name?

? I can't remember.

I I can ….. …..

R A legend, a legend in his time is it? Harvey Sutton?

It'd be pretty hard to …… easy to find.

R It's easy to find Dr Harvey Sutton.

I OK.

END OF TAPE