

INTERVIEW WITH KRISTINA PLANT

25 June 2000

Timecode refers to tape 61_BC_SP

Topics in Bold

TF = Trish KP = Kristina Plant

TF **So this is camera take 61. It's still DAT tape 21. This is the second camera tape of an interview with Kristina Plant and we're at the Chinchilla Showgrounds, 25th June, 2000. 61_BC_SP**

OK, you right? So um did you talk to your Mum about what had happened with this bloke?

KP No, because of Mum would've spoken to Dad so I just kept it to myself and dealt with it.

TF How about to your sister? Did you talk to your sister?

KP 13:01:19:00 No. I just dealt with it. It's sorta, it was something that's gunna happen. Like there was getting a bit of tension between us and that and I, I knew it was gunna happen so I guess in a way I was a bit prepared for it.

TF This was tension between you and this bloke?

KP Mmm.

TF And was he a jackaroo or a stockman?

KP Jackaroo, yeah.

TF What's actually the difference between jackaroo and stockman?

KP 13:01:43:06 I dunno. Um jackaroos are meant to be the polished fellows that come out and they're well groomed and that. That's the old jackaroo but the new jackaroos are the ones that aren't as handy as a stockman. They're –

TF So is it like -?

KP 13:02:02:16 Sort of more new chums. We call the new chums jackaroos and that.

TF Is it a class difference? Is it that jackaroos might go on to be managers but stockmen will usually stay stockmen?

KP Yeah. That's how like it is in the old days. But now we've got different terminology. Different meaning for the same terminology.

TF So in the terminology now, what does stockman mean and what does jackaroo mean?

KP 13:02:27:10 Um jackaroo are sort of the greener people that have just come in and are just learning and the stockmen are the ones that know what they're doing and have been doing it for a while.

TF So jackaroos might come out from the city for a year –

KP Yeah.

TF Before they start university. That sort of thing?

KP Yep. That sort of thing.

TF And how about jillaroo? Is that – what does that term mean?

KP A girl. Basically a girl coming out to work in, work in the stock camps and that.

TF So, did you come back, did you – when did you finish school and what – did you come back then to work on Sandringham? Like just fill me in your

KP 13:03:07:12 Yeah. I um I did Year 10. I did Year 9 at Mt Isa and then I said to Mum I had to come home and wanted to get my marks up so I did School of Air at home for Year 10 and then um Dad told me I was too young to go out and work in the paddock so I had to go away to Longreach Pastoral College and did two years there and then I came home and did two years at home and then moved down to the city.

TF So the two years at home, you were employed by, by the Kidman Company?

KP Mmm.

TF What was your, your sort of, what were you called?

KP **Women/Work: Jillaroo**

Jillaroo. I was a jillaroo, yep.

TF So that's confusing isn't it because you weren't a new chum?

KP 13:03:49:16 Mmm. I – um you see the jillaroos are jillaroos and the blokes get new chums and all that and the girls get called new chums too but – and I, I guess I've been working at home all the time on holidays and that so I just sort of fitted in because I was there all the time.

TF So as a jillaroo, do you remember how much you were paid as a jillaroo and what exactly your job entailed?

KP 13:04:19:06 Um I think I got \$300, a bit under \$350 a week and it was mustering, working around the yard, breaking in, shoeing horses, driving around and fixing fences, checking bores and um basically seeing if the water holes had enough water, checking that the cattle are alright and that.

TF And would you, was the camp drafting, was that something you'd be going off and doing weekends?

KP Yeah.

TF Like how did that fit in?

KP 13:04:54:00 Um we'd just like work through the week and maybe take a Friday off and get up at 1 o'clock in the morning and head off to a draft that was a long way away. No that was, that was sort of the social life that I had, was the drafts and Dad was into racing and um it was in the first year that I was home I took out a jockey's license and I did a bit of that while I was working at home jillarooing and then I got told that I had to be working on a race track for my license to go through so I went and did that for a bit but living in town and that um it didn't interest me.

TF Would –

KP 13:05:37:00 I liked the jockey while I was at home working too but to sit around in town and get up early in the morning and then just pick up horse manure for most of the day wasn't me.

TF So what was town? Mt Isa?

KP Yeah, Mt Isa, yeah. It was a big town. Bedourie was like the little town that we went into for, I think we went to Bingo a couple of times and that's it, yeah.

TF And we've been told by some of the women working as like managers' wives that there's quite a lot of, I guess you'd call it sexual tension between, that the managers' wives to have women in the stock camps. They kind of, they feel afraid for their husbands. That sort of thing. Did you have to deal with, with that? I mean I guess it was different working on your parents property but –

KP Yeah. I found it um different because I've like worked at home and Dad was the boss but I have heard of things like that.

TF Can you tell me a bit, like what you'd, what you hear around the traps, around that issue? Does that strike you as a big issue?

KP **Female Conflict**

13:06:46:02 No, not really. Um I find that most of the managers' wives that have that problem, they're looking into things that aren't really there and managers' wives can be as hard on the jillaroos as what the ringers can be. It's um a bit of friction's there but it's mainly brought on because of the jealous wife that's very insecure and should give the girl a go like I think you should give the girl go.

TF So in thinking about you know, you having had the dream to be the first Kidman female manager, are you saying that potentially there could have been tension with managers' wives as well or was that not really an issue in what –

KP 13:07:31:22 No. That wasn't an issue. Um I guess it was a dream and then as I got closer to working up the ladder, I've, um I wanted to find something – I wanted to see another lifestyle and try that and I guess that's what I'm doing now.

TF So how did this happen, you know because you're a long way from home here aren't you?

KP 13:07:52:18 Yeah I sure am. Um I got a phone call from a bloke I knew and he wanted me to go down to Toogoolawah in the Brisbane Valley to work with him for a few months and he said that he was on 250 or 70 acres and that he had this phenomenal amount of cattle that I couldn't believe it and um I said to Dad I wanted to go for a change and he wasn't real keen on the idea but I went anyway and I just ended up staying on there and I've known my husband since '92 coming down to the drafts at Chinchilla and that and we started being more than friends and I just didn't happen to go home. Now I'm married.

TF So how long ago did you come to Chinchilla? Like what year was it?

KP Um came as in to live down here or?

TF Yeah.

KP 13:08:49:04 Yeah. Um '96 I went, October, November '96 I went to Brisbane Valley to work and then I came here in '98 to live with Robert and work with him which I'm doing basically the same stuff as that I do at home. It's just we're not camping out in the camps and that but I'm still working on the land doing what I love and doing everything else but ah I couldn't imagine sitting behind a desk all day moving a pen.

TF And so what's the context is – do Robert's, are Robert's parents managers or what's the situation here?

KP 13:09:27:20 They own the little place and um Robert's buying, buying a quarter share in that and we work contract mustering at a bloke's three quarters of an hour

away from us and we're sort of semi-permanent there at the moment so it's pretty good and he's a good boss.

TF And so how are those kind of issues around being a woman doing a job that's mainly done by men? How are those issues for you now here?

KP 13:09:52:20 ! Pretty much the same. I guess you'd have to say I've got it easier down here because the blokes don't let you lift heavy things and if they think that something's too tough for you, they'll just step in and do it. And I have to admit sometimes it sort of raises the hair on my neck and it's like well I can do it, so they're sort of, they're in a way different down here because they're trying to do more to help you in some areas and then in other areas they're the same. It's – it's funny but it all works. Like some days you just think ohhh, some days, but then other days you can, everyone gets along. It's just they get this little male chauvinist thing going and if you can handle it, you survive, but if you can't – and it's more tests down here. They just throw little tests at you for fun and that so you sort of work it out.

TF Give me an example.

KP 13:10:49:16 Um I can't think of one lately. Um yes we were in cleaning out the crush because it had dirt in it and we had to clean it out and I was in there and I was poking along and I think doing a girl's job instead of just rush, rush doing a boy's and getting on with it and the boss jumped in and said here Shortie, I'll do it. And I get called Shortie because all the boys are over six foot so explains it. Yeah but I sort of stood back and I looked at him and thought well I'm going and doing just as much but – yeah, just little things like that. They're not that bad. It's just that some days you think well what's the purpose of me being here if you're going to come in and take it and go.

TF And do those issues –

JH I just have to change batteries. OK

TF So you're rolling?

JH Yep.

TF Um how about with your husband? Are those kind of issues about your role and his role, are those big for you and he to work out?

KP 13:12:07:22 No. Um Rob and I've got a really good friendship. Um I don't shoe horses any more which I reckon's just great because it kills your back. Um I do things that he doesn't like which, like cleaning up in the house or you know, something like that, and he does the jobs like the heavy lifting and that for me. Um he's really good because he understands that and he knows that I do try and if I say look, I can't because my back's aching, he knows I'm not having a go at him and um we've just, we've got a really good friendship that understands those things. And we lived together for um nearly two years before we got married and working and we haven't had a big barney yet. Like we have little huffs and puffs but yeah, everyone reckons now we're married that we're gunna have 'em but no, we've got, we've got an understanding of each other and I, I think that's a good thing.

TF And has he, has his Mum grown up being active outside as well or is this –

KP No.

TF A new pattern for the women of his family?

KP 13:13:13:18 I'm the new pattern. Sort of an alien of the pattern. No um Rob's Mum comes from Brisbane. Yes, so it's - she doesn't do the outside stuff and that

and she's like behind me all the way and just thinks it's good and that but yeah. I'm sort of lack in my cooking and all those sort of stuff that she does but I work outside. It'll be fun when the breeding programme comes and I get stuck in the house but I think I'll have to start a garden or somethin'.

TF The breeding programme. You mean your breeding programme?

KP Yep. When I have to have kids.

TF And why would you have to have kids?

KP **Women/Land**

13:13:54:18 Oh because we want 'em. We, we want kids. Like you've got to have something to live for I guess when we get old and take over Rob's place and all that so carry on the traditional name and send 'em out to my folks so they can terrorise them and all that. There's one thing I think of I'll really emphasise on is my kids going out west and um really appreciating that there is somewhere behind Roma because I was in Toowoomba one day and just talking to these people and they said oh we're going out west and I got real excited and said oh where are you going and they said Dalby and I stood there and I just was stunned that that's where west was and that they were too small minded to look beyond – that there were people living out there and it's like, it's the Never Never is how I was put one time. That's nice.

TF What do you think is special about the Channel Country of Queensland? Like what strikes you?

KP 13:14:57:06 The people. The people are overly friendly and um they'll stop and give you a hand and like they'd go back a hundred k's to help you instead of just – they're not selfish out there. Like they're out to help each other and that and it's like a family.

TF Something that one person said to us out west was that, that kind of class differences were less she thought out west than here and she was giving examples about who sat at whose table and that kind of thing. What do you think about that?

KP **Women/Land**

13:15:31:08 I found that a lot when I came down here. Um people are really um they've got their little clans down here and they're living in a smaller radius than what I'm used to but they go and socialise with them and that whereas out west, just everyone comes and socialises and talks to everyone and um I'm getting better at it now as understanding, oh well not understanding but just um I guess I'm accepting their ways whereas when I first come down here I just thought oh well like, it's different. Mmm.

TF How about race relations? How are race relations different here in Chinchilla than the ones that, that you'd experienced in Bedourie and Isa?

KP 13:16:22:06 Ah um very, very different. Very – I can't really elaborate on it. They're just – they don't communicate. They don't mix. That's all I can say on that is they just don't mix.

TF Who doesn't mix?

KP 13:13:39:14 Both. Both – they don't, they don't wish to mix with each other. They, you know, they stick to their groups and they I guess you could say bitch and carry on about each other. They're all as bad as each other from what I can see.

TF So where do you run across Aboriginal people living here?

KP 13:16:58:04 I guess you'd have to say um I don't really. They don't, you're different so they don't come near you and it's, it's just the same. The both cultures think the same thing so they're never going to mix. Which I think's sad. Because if they, they tried a bit, they'd see that there are good and bad in everything and everyone.

TF And going back to, how old were you when you left Sandringham?

KP 19.

TF So going back to that period when you were 18, 19, living and working out at Sandringham, were, were race relations basically the same as you'd experienced as a child?

KP 13:17:42:02 Yep. I think we all got along the same. Like um a lot of the kids that I grew up with were still in there and we all just mingled the same. It was very um funny when I come down here, the attitude with the different races towards each other and, and I had trouble with it at first because I, I sort of understood it but then I didn't because of the way that I'd grown up and that's how it is now.

TF So what would be kind of statements that might get made that you would find odd down here?

KP I don't think I want to answer that one.

TF OK.

KP I might pass on that question I think.

TF Yeah. But you were shocked?

KP Yeah. Just don't talk to that person because they're black sort of thing or those sort of things.

TF And do you have ever any understanding of, of the history of the Channel Country or of the out west to kind of understand why those things might be different?

KP No. No I don't. I just don't.

TF Have you ever been interested in, in history as a –

KP 13:18:50:12 No. Um I used to like the um history of talking to Dad about the pack horses and how they'd just pick this horse out to carry your swag and if you were the horse tailor you'd know which was the good and bad one to put your swag on so it didn't get torn. I used to like sitting down listening to those stories and, and that but yeah. I, I don't know. I got told I was silly for this but I would've liked to have been back in Mum and Dad's time, being the young one and growing up there because they, and someone said but oh everything was harder and you did it tougher and that and I sort of looked over and thought but yes you appreciated things more. People, the younger generation they don't appreciate things now.

TF Do you think that's true?

KP Yep.

TF Like what?

KP **Women/Work/Domestics**

- 13:19:39:22 Like getting a ahhhh um the fact that for instance like there's people don't appreciate the fact that they're 80 ks out of town and if they run out of flour, they can just jump in the car and get it whereas it comes out on the – I can't remember, I don't know what it comes out in now at home. I haven't been home for a while but flour used to come out on the truck and that in tins and um we'd get a load of stores out and put in the store and that's what we had and Mum had to keep it up and work out how much she needed and that and um stock shopping, like and these, some people just come in and get a bit of this and a bit of that or they livin' in town and they run out of whatever. They just walk down the shop and get it.
- TF How was the fact that your Mum was kind of home based and you were kind of focussed on your Dad and outside? What did that mean for your relationship with your Mum? Like how would you describe your relationship with your Mum?
- KP 13:20:52:10 Mum and I had a good relationship. Um I'd help her in the kitchen of a night with, with getting tea ready and um if I finished a bit early out in the paddock, I'd help her do the vegetables and that. Like we'd all, we sort of helped Dad outside with our main priorities because I guess Mum was just, seemed to be so organised and had it going and we'd just come in and help tie up the loose ends and set the table and unset the table and help doing that way but with the cooking, Mum was pretty in control and Mum would have a big bake day every second Saturday so we just stayed home and helped her with that.
- TF To get all the smoko stuff together.
- KP Yeah, all the smoko stuff. They were good because I used to eat a fair bit of the ingredients. I was, I got chased out of there one day but anyway.
- TF And what's your sister's life now?

KP 13:21:46:14 She's working at home with Dad, yeah. She's much the same, jillaroo and that. Loves working on the land. We sort of never ventured into the office girls. We weren't interested enough at school to get the grades, unless we weren't smart enough. I don't know what it is.

TF So why is it that you don't go home much these days?

KP 13:22:09:10 Well I see my folks a lot still. Um they come down to the Chinchilla Draft and that but um we're just busy trying to get a life going here and eventually Mum and Dad are going to move down when I start having kids so I'm going to have 'em with me in the end anyway so. Someone brought it to my attention that um because I never had any of Dad's Mum, and um Nan, she died when we were young and I just, I really think that grandparents have got a very big part in kids lives and I missed out on that so someone said that I must've been working towards it not knowing about it because when I have kids, Mum and Dad will be retired and will be down here so that I can just drop them with them and go.

TF So tell me what you remember or what you know about your Grandmother, Sylvia Geiger.

KP **Childhood**

13:23:09:14 I just remember going to drafts and um having this big tin of Leggo first to play with but the worst thing was that my brother was Grandma Geiger's angel so he could have what he wanted and I also remember going to spend a time with Grandma and the goats. Playing with the goats. That was - she gave us a goat each but Dad sort of arranged so we could never get 'em. He wasn't into goats but yeah. Grandma and goats and yeah. She was a nice lady. Really nice. 13:23:46:14

TF So is there anything I haven't asked you about that you think it's important for me to understand women, women out in the Channel County?

KP No I don't think so. I think you've covered it all.

TF You've been terrific. Thank you very much.

KP Thank you.

TF So this will be just a Showground atmos.....

End of taped interview.