INTERVIEW WITH JUNE JACKSON
5 June 2000
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Timecode from Tape 16_BC_DV
Topics in Bold

I **This is Tape 16 of camera tape, still on DAT Tape 8, and the DAT time code is 24.44, 5 June 2000, Trish FitzSimons on sound, Erica Addis on camera, interviewing June Jackson in the Boulia Post Office and this is the second tape of June's interview.**

TAPE 16_BC_DV

So we were talking about your great-grandmother in Charters Towers. Just quickly sketch in your life for me in Charters Towers and then we'll get you back to the Channel Country.

R **Education**

00:01:14:10 I attended a State School in Charters Towers, then we went to high school at a boarding school in Townsville, came back to Charters Towers, went to a couple of properties governessing for a few years and was on my way to the Territory to governess when I found out that the lady whose children I was going to teach, she had died of leukaemia, so I then stayed here with my Mum and sister instead of travelling on.

I So in governessing, how did you view your future? Like, what were your dreams as a young woman?

R **Work**

00:01:51:00 I applied for a nursing post when I left school and they didn't come out till about the middle of the next year, so by the time they came I was already governessing so I thought 'Well, blow the nursing, I enjoy governessing', and probably would have done that for a couple of years. And I think I would have liked to probably have gone teaching but my mother certainly couldn't afford to send me, or give me anything, so I thought 'Well, I'll give myself three years governessing, saving as much as I could, and then try and put myself through schooling. But, unfortunately, I came back here and took on a lot of other jobs and just never left.

I Tell me which properties you were a governess on and what it was like to be a governess and how that fitted in with the rest of what's quite a complex hierarchy on stations, isn't it?

R Ummm, not the first one I was on. That was around Torrens Creek. They had three boys, two of which I was teaching the first year.

I Is Torrens Creek in the Channel Country? Where is it?

R 00:03:01:08 No, that's around Charters Towers. Yeah, and they owned the property and they had the younger brother working for them so there was only the owner, his wife, the three boys and myself, and the younger son. And then the next place was owned by his other brother and they had sort of the same situation, so if there was mustering to be done on one place everybody did those jobs, so there was sort of no hierarchy there. The next place I worked on was out of Torrens Creek, out of Prairie, which is just near Hughenden, and he was the manager there and they had about five guys working there, I think. I don't think hierarchy ever came into it. There was never the 'us and them'. They were just people who happened to be managing a place and knew that they were managing it, they didn't think they owned it, so I didn't sort of run into any of the problems that a lot of the governesses had where they were classed as 'whatever needs to be done, you do'. I was there to teach and that's what I did. So I guess I was lucky. You hear some of the horror stories from the other governesses. 00:04:16:22

I What, then, brought you back into the Channel Country?

R 00:04:22:06 Well, my mother and sister and all the family were here and, as I said, I came here in the Christmas holidays going on to another place and the lady passed away so I then stayed here because the children were then off to boarding school.

I So your Mum had moved back from Charters Towers when you and your sister got a bit bigger?

R Yes.

I So was that some sense of your mother having an attachment to the Channel Country as the Channel Country or was it more just that was the way that work took her?

R **Women/Land**

00:04:51:16 I think that was the way work took her but she always referred to Boulia as home. I think it's always been home for as long as I can remember because I can remember Aunty Bid, every time she'd come to Charters Towers she'd say 'My darling, when are you coming home? There are so many bachelors out there. We need young women out there' and I'd say 'Aunty Bid, I don't want to go back yet. If I go back I'll stay there forever', so when I was back here well Aunty Bid was happy that she'd got me back here, and I didn't particularly like any of the bachelors she was talking about because they were all about twenty-five years older than me but I just felt I belonged here. I think because in those days every second person you saw, you did belong to in some way or other, so … yeah, but Mum would always say 'There's no country like the Boulia area'. Yeah, you go back and you just think 'Ahhh, this is where I was meant to be' so I think probably that was just instilled in us, listening to them talk about it as home all the time.

I And so the identification was with Boulia rather than the Channel Country. Like, you go to that Min Min Café and it's sort of Boulia, capital of the Channel Country but, for you, or for your Mum it was Boulia as a town and a district?

R **Women/Land**

00:06:24:10 I think so. Yeah. I mean, she loved the country, it didn't matter whether it was the Channel Country, the back of Cairns, or anywhere. She just loved the country. But I think I feel that this is God's own country here and … I mean, we've been away and we've come back and we just … you know, it's just the lifestyle, I think, the fact that there's always something happening in the Channel Country, whether it's good or bad, and I

think we just associate with the whatever, whether it's Birdsville, Bedourie, Winton, you know, it's just you feel this is your country. You go to Brisbane and you think 'I'm in the middle of nowhere'. Probably sort of once you get to around about Longreach you start to feel as if you're sort of coming back, you can unwind or whatever. I don't know, there's just something magical about it. For people that live here, it is. It's just magic. You know, you can come and go. You can go for twenty years but you can come back and just feel that you can relax or this is where you were meant to be, or something. We've had people come back, not so long ago, and I think it's something like sixty years since he was here, and he said 'There's just a feeling when you drive down the road that "I'm back"', you know, he said you come over the Middleton Channels there and the Hamilton Channels and he said there's something, whether it's the hairs on the back of your neck stand up or you just think well, you're back, it doesn't matter whether it's here or anywhere in the area, and he just said he got about 20k out of Winton or something and said 'I can feel it coming on' and they said 'Dad, the next pub's not till so-and-so' and he said 'No, just the feeling. I can just feel it', so whether it's because you grow up here and you think that you own this, I don't know, but you just feel as if you're there. 00:08:08:20

I So when your Aunty Bid would say to you there's lots of bachelors, we need you, did you grow up being very aware of being in a minority as a woman out in this area?

R 00:08:20:00 No. No. I've always held my own, whether it's men or women or whatever. Yeah, no, I've never thought of a minority. I think she was just saying that for something to say to get me to come back. Yeah.

I And was marriage something that you've always felt yourself to be heading towards?

R 00:08:38:22 Oh, eventually, but I think because of my grandmother and my mother, I think I decided that my marriage was going to last, so I wasn't going to rush into anything just because my girlfriends had all got married. I think I just decided 'Well, hey, I'm going to be the one that's married

forever. I'm not going to wait five years and then say "Sorry, but that's it, it's over"' and I think I just sort of took my time and looked around and … marriage, it wasn't the end of everything, as far as I was concerned anyway.

I So tell me that story, then, of how work for you in the Channel Country and then marriage, how did that all evolve? The mother of the kids that you were going to governess died in the Northern Territory, you came back here at Christmas time, and then what happened?

R 00:09:31:15 Not wanting to dip into my funds, I decided I'd better find a job. I got a job looking after the children of the people who owned the café at the time, who was a relation of course. So I looked after her three children for about four months and decided that really wasn't what I wanted, so they then said 'Well, we need someone to work in the café'. My sister was working there. She said 'You work in the café and I'll look after the kids'. Well I couldn't jump at that quick enough so my sister and I worked in the café then for probably twelve months or so. She left and got a job at Donohues and what did I do? I think I got a job on the exchange and worked there.

I So was the exchange … like now the telephone exchange is the little temporary building next door. Where was it when you got the job?

R **Work – Telephone Exchange**

00:10:36:05 Over against that wall. And the Postmaster sat behind you and said 'If you have nothing to do, here are all these amendments' and he'd plonk a great book in front of you, a ruler and a pencil, and a piece of paper, and you would sit there all afternoon between calls, making his amendments in his Australia Post Journal.

I I don't understand what a Postmaster General's Australia Post Journal would be. Can you explain that a bit more? It sounds interesting.

R 00:11:04:10 It's all the changes that are made from one day to the next, so they send them out to you in a ream of paper and you have to rule out the old

ruling and put the new one in. It might be a change of address for where something is supposed to go to, so you change that. Instead of sending you a new volume of something, they just send you the amendments, so you go 'Page 75, cross out "and" and put "it"'.

I So it was just getting the bureaucratic rules?

R 00:11:33:14 Yes. Oh, not just even rules. Just, I don't know, paperwork. It was, you know, just a waste of a whole heap of time, I think, because no one ever read it.

I I might just ask you again, what were the amendments?

R 00:12:08:18 The amendments were changes to rules or regulations that had already been sent out and these amendments had to be made, rather than replace the whole book they would just change the amendments.

I And that's what you'd do when your usual telephonist work was …

R Slow.

I … slow. Describe the day of the switchgirl? How old would you have been and give us the rhythm of a day, when you started doing that job?

R 00:12:40:18 I probably would have been seventeen, I suppose, seventeen-and-a-half. I think the first shift started at something like 7 o'clock. You would then take over from the night shift who was usually the Postmaster or his second in charge. I think they would take it week apart, which meant that they slept here with a big bell. When one of the shutters fell the bell would ring, so they would jump up, put the jack in, and put the call through, then sit there and wait for the call to be finished. Then they would go back to bed.

I It's so ridiculous. I'd never thought that a switch had to keep going at night but, of course.

R 00:13:19:18 Mmmm. So then we'd come to work in the morning, they would go. I think we would work, say, three-and-a-half hours, then we would go for a couple of hours, then we'd come back and finish our shift.

The other shift would be the one that came for the couple of hours in the middle of the day, then you would work the night shift. I think the night shift went something like 7.30 to 10.30 and I think on Sundays it was 10 o'clock, and then the night guy would take over again.

R **Braided Channels: Communications**

00:14:33:04 You never listened into a call. You would not sit there and listen to a person's call for three minutes or six minutes. At the end of three minutes you would go across and say 'Are you extending?' They would either say yes or no. You put the jack across and that was all you would have heard, the last two words of their sentence, and 'Yes we are' or 'No thanks' or 'Get off the bloody line'. But you didn't … and it was against policy to listen. Him saying that she would get the gossip, it wouldn't have been because she was listening, it would be because people would ring up and say 'Oh, I'm looking for so-and-so, can you tell me where he is?' She'd say 'Well, his wife rang in looking for him and I think he's at such-and-such'. The gossip didn't really come from listening to people's phone calls, it came from people ringing you and saying 'Oh, look, I'll be away for two days so if there's any calls tell them I'm at so-and-so, or to ring me back' and the exchange was sort of like a little memo board, I suppose, and if I was ringing Vicki I'd say 'Oh, hi Vi, how are you? We're mustering today so I'm just ringing Vicki to find out where the men are', so you'd have a little conversation with the telephonist. So then someone would ring and say 'Oh, look, I want to get Elrose', 'Oh, it's no good ringing them because she's talking to June', so that was sort of the thing. It wasn't because you listened in to … I mean, you weren't supposed to, so if they did, they wouldn't be silly enough to say 'I heard so-and-so say something' because it was their job and it was an indictable offence, so no one listened in to anyone's conversations. 00:16:15:00

I So was it a role that you found pleasurable? Because you're obviously kind of at a communications hub in a way.

R **Braided Channels: Communications/Rain**

00:16:21:10 Oh, I think everyone that worked on the exchange enjoyed it. I mean, some people were over the board because you'd say 'Get off the phone, I just want to make my bloody phone call. I don't want to know what everyone in the country is doing'. You know, so yeah, I think, and people expected it. They expected you to know how much rain there was in every place because that was the first thing that happened when there was the rain. Everyone would ring you or you would ring and say 'Oh, Marion Downs, did you have rain?' 'Coorabulka, have you had rain?' 'So-and-so, have you had rain?' Then someone would ring in and say 'Oh, can you tell us how much rain there's been?' 'So and so and so and so and so'. Yeah. I mean, that … it was a centre, I suppose, of information, not gossip.

I I've heard people talk about the galah sessions, as they were called in the lower Channel Country, which sounded like it was everybody talking in on a party line late in the afternoon.

R **Communications: Galah**

00:17:14:06 Mmmm. I think that was more on the radio, the galah sessions. On the party lines, from what I know of here, there were no more than three telephones on a party line. Most of them would only be two, so there wouldn't have been a whole heap of people talking on those. The galah sessions, I think, mainly refer to the two-way radio. It was just open channel and you could talk to sort of anyone then.

I So when you were a telephonist, most stations would have had party lines so that only one of three households could use the phone at any one time?

R 00:15:50:24 Mmmm. Yeah. You could pick up the phone, you'd hear someone talking so if you were polite, you'd put it down.

I So that kind of listening in on calls, I guess, would have happened, perhaps much more likely of other people on your party line, while they were waiting for you to get off the phone?

R 00:18:08:06 Mmmm. The only thing was that you could hear it click when they picked it up and you'd say 'Excuse me, but get off the line', so you'd hear it then. You'd hear them put it back down again. You knew when someone else was on your line.

I Was the Post Office … what other roles were going on in this building at the time?

R 00:18:27:05 There was the Postmaster. There was the second-in-charge. There was a, I'm not sure whether he was called the telegram boy or, there was always a junior guy here. So there were normally three, usually men, working at that time.

I And was that typical that the people on the counter were male and the people on the switch were female?

R 00:18:53:07 Typical of here? Yeah. And I don't think there were any women working here until just before I came, about two years, I think, before I came here they had a young girl working here, and up until all that time, as far as I knew, they were just all men.

I Including men running the switch?

R At night? Yeah.

I But during the day?

R They were women.

I Right. So it was men here on the counter and women over there with the switch?

R Yeah.

I So how long did you do that role on the switch?

R About eighteen months, I think. Yeah.

I And what year would that have been?

R Mmmm, about ’63, ’64. ’63 probably.

I And then what happened? How did your life …?

R **Romance**

00:19:46:24 Ahhh, I met my husband. He was working in the Territory at the time. They had trucks up there so he was sort of here and then be gone for six months. He came back and worked here for a while and then he and another friend and two of my cousins decided that they were going to Cobram fruit picking, so they bundled up and left and I thought ‘Well, why am I here?’ so I bundled up and went to South Molle Island and worked there. And after about eight months, ten months, or something, they decided to come home and I stayed at South Molle, then we decided well, we’d get married. I had an accident at South Molle and thought ‘Well, I can’t work any longer so I’ll come home’ and then we got married. Yeah.

I So a serious accident?

R 00:20:36:08 Oh, just a water skiing accident. I ruined my knee so I couldn’t walk on that for a while, so I thought ‘Oh, well, I’ll go home’.

I And what was it about Ray that gave you confidence that this was somebody you could be with for a long, long time, compared to your mother and grandmother?

R **Alcohol/Family Structure/Romance/Women/Pubs**

00:20:54:15 Mmmm. I think his family, I think, probably would have been a big influence. Ummm, his father was a bit of a drinker but I saw how you can handle people who do drink a little, without going overboard, because I always thought that alcohol was just a sin. And I think I learnt then that perhaps it wasn’t such a sin, that you can live with alcoholics. And just his Mum and his sisters and … I think just the family. I don’t think I’d ever missed it until I saw that and I’d think ‘Oh, you know, it’s just such a … to be such a part of that’, and I never felt not a part of it, from the first time I ever went with Ray, I think. I’d arrive down there, you know, Peg would say

'Oh, come for tea after you've finished work on Sunday afternoon', and the first thing she'd say was 'What are you having for tea?' I'd say 'Whatever'. 'Well, Vic's having steak and onion gravy, Ray's having chops, and Vicki's having baked beans on toast and Kay's having scrambled eggs'. I'd think 'What is this? A café?' So I'd just say 'Look, whatever. I don't care what I eat' because, you know, as children we ate what was put in front of us, and that was it. So I thought 'Here's this woman that on Sunday night is prepared to make six different meals for her family. This has got to be family' and I think I saw the way he acted with his family and that and I thought 'Oh, this is probably someone I could probably live with for the rest of my life'. I didn't jump into it quickly. We were sort of going together for twelve months, I think, then we had nearly a twelve-month engagement, and I think I remember saying to Ray, you know 'This is forever or not at all', and I think we just decided well, that was it, it was forever. I mean, you know, when you're nineteen and twenty or twenty-one or something, forever doesn't seem such a long time, but here we are all these years after, we're still together. 00:23:03:14

I Tell me about Ray's mother for a minute. How was it, and pretend that I don't know she ran the hotel. How was it that she would even think about cooking six different dinners on a Sunday night? What was she doing? Tell me about Ray's Mum in this town.

R **Women's Work: Domestic**

00:23:19:14 What I remember of her, I can remember her working at Boulia Stores. I remember knowing she was Ray's mother but I didn't remember she was this little blonde-headed girl's mother. I always thought she belonged to the storekeeper. And I can just remember thinking how well-adjusted this little ten-year-old was, or eight-year-old, or seven or something, and then finding out that she belonged to this lady who worked at the store and was Ray's mother, and thinking 'She's working full-time. She's got a beautiful home, you know, and she's got this little girl.' She just seemed to be so organised, always seemed to be doing things. If there was a stall, she cooked. I can always remember those things, that if Peg Jackson

didn't make something there was no stall. Tell me if I'm wandering off the track. 00:24:13:19

I No, that's all interesting.

SIDE B

R 00:24:19:10 And then, she was still working at the store when Ray and I got married and I think it must have been about twelve months after that, she decided we'd have a meeting and she must have said to Ray 'If you come in with me, we'll put in for the pub'. So that's what they did. They put in a tender, must have been, and leased the hotel then.

I Which hotel?

R 00:24:49:10 The Australian Hotel. I was working at Donohues at the time. I was bookkeeping over there, trying to be a telephonist but doing more bookkeeping than telephonist. And they went into the pub.

I So you were then a young married woman whose husband and mother-in-law were working in the pub. Did that mean that you got involved in that as well?

R **Women/Pubs**

00:25:12:22 Ummm, not a great deal for a while, until I become pregnant. After that I gave up my job and then I did sort of become involved, I guess. But only, I was the relief cook for two days. Couldn't believe, but anyway I didn't kill anybody, but that was my job. Relief cook for two days or if the laundress didn't turn up, well I would do that, or … I think I was sick probably for the first six months, I think, of my pregnancy, so I didn't really want to be doing a great deal. But after that I was sort of … after I had the baby we were still living in my mother-in-law's house and she and her husband were at the hotel. He'd passed away. Ummm, so probably after my baby was born, I did become more involved with the hotel. I'd take her over and everyone looked after her and I'd do the upstairs or the laundry or whatever, you know, we were sort of doing it pretty hard so it just meant that

… I mean, any money they paid me was then coming back into the family rather than going out of it, so yeah, I became involved in it. I don't know if I ever liked it. Probably ten years later I would have enjoyed it more than having children in the hotel, you know, babies. 00:26:31:09

I And what kind of role was the hotel playing in this town then?

R **Pastoral Industry/Pubs**

00:26:37:00 Probably a very big role, I suppose, because in those days the properties still had a lot of people working on them. They would have their old cowboys and all their ringers. And that was probably the only entertainment they had. They'd come into the pub. The old cowboys, they'd probably come in twice a year with a big cheque. They'd hand the cheque across the bar and say 'Tell me when I need a cargo to go home', which meant they'd want a bottle of rum and a flagon of wine and a carton of beer or something, so when their cheque was down to that, or nearly that, you'd say 'You've got two days' and then they'd know that their cheque was nearly run out. 00:27:22:09

I And in the meantime, they'd stay in a room in the pub and eat meals in the pub, would they?

R **Pubs/Gender Relations**

00:27:27:12 At that time, there was a thing called Rotten Row. It was a block of cement, down the back, probably a hundred yards away from the living quarters. I think it was four rooms, tin rooms, each room had two iron beds on it with a mattress – one of those horse-hair mattresses, so that you could pour water through it and let it dry out between users. They would camp there for nothing. They were just allowed to go down there and camp.

I No sheets?

R **Alcohol/Gender Relations/Race Relations**

00:27:59:00 No sheets, nothing like that. There was a rule that unless they had a cup of soup and two pieces of bread in the morning, they weren't allowed back in the bar. So if they didn't call and see the cook and get their soup and their bread, they weren't to be served. So that at least gave them something to eat in the morning. And I don't think most of them ate for the rest of the day. They'd just drink until they … Ray carted them off back down the back again and then they'd sleep it off and it'd start all over again. And then when they ran out, they'd go back to the property and probably stay there for another six months. The young ringers, they would come in and probably spend the weekend and then go back home again. But that was really the only entertainment that was sort of there, I suppose. In those days, from what I can remember, the Aboriginals weren't allowed to drink in the bar. They could buy take-aways and take them away, so we didn't have the problem of fights and sort of things like that. We didn't really have too many of those.

I Didn't the stockmen and ringers have fights if they were drinking so much?

R **Race Relations/History**

00:29:09:06 Yeah, but you know, in those days you could just say 'Okay, you B—s, get out and fight outside' and probably grab them by the neck and throw them out. Well, you know, nowadays you wouldn't be able to lay a hand on them, so it was just, you know, 'Okay you bastards, get out and have your fight outside' and if Ray didn't kick them out, probably the other drinkers would, you know. So it was just a different lifestyle. There was no worry about getting sued because you said something to someone which was racist or against something or other, so life was much easier anywhere in those days. You know, they could tick up, so they'd say 'Well, put that on the books', so 'Sorry, you owe fifty quid now. Until you pay that, you don't get any more'. It was just different in those days. The people, you had your characters that would come in and drink and there always just seemed to be so many people coming and going and so many people more around than there is nowadays. 00:30:12:12

I Women? Were women allowed into the pub?

R **Women/Alcohol**

00:30:15:12 Not in the earlier days. When my husband managed the pub, there were women drinking in there. It was unusual for a woman to come in and plonk herself up in the corner in those days. I mean, several of them did but only because, you know, their husbands were there drinking with them and it wasn't … oh, it was sort of frowned on, I suppose. You went into the ladies' lounge and you didn't sit up at the bar with the men.

I And would I be right that there would be much less custom in the ladies' lounge than in the public bar? You know, that drinking was fundamentally a male activity?

R 00:30:51:18 Yeah. Mmmm. Particularly … yeah, we had about five or six shearing teams that were here and each of those would have seven or eight men in them, so you know there were a lot more itinerant people in those days that would be here for two months and then gone, so they'd come in, they'd finish a shed, so they'd celebrate in the pub and then they'd be gone again for a week. And then someone else would be in the next day or something, so there always seemed to be people around in those days.

I This tradition of women running pubs that were basically for men is a long one in the Channel Country. I'm aware of it happening in Betoota and Bedourie and Windorah and I've seen a poem that was, say, written in the sixties, written by a man where it was almost like he resented the power of the woman running that pub. You know, who maybe wasn't drinking but who held the power to say 'Back to the station' or 'Here's a drink'. What was it like to be a woman operating in that kind of system?

R 00:31:57:10 I was never aware of it. I mean, I was only a latecomer. My mother-in-law had run the hotel across the road for years before that and I don't … I think it really didn't matter who served them a beer, as long as they got their beer or their Scotch or their rum, and I don't know whether she ever sort of exerted her authority to say 'Hey, I'm the boss here, you're only a drinker'. To me, she wasn't that sort of person. 00:31:26:06

I So then how did you land up, because it's twenty-two years ago since you were here in this Post Office, so how did that come about?

R **Work:Post Office**

00:33:08:24 Oh, after about eight years in the hotel I think we decided we'd had enough and we'd just go for a few years, so we packed up and left and went to a small store, bought a small corner store, and in that there was a small agency for Australia Post, so that went with the shop. After about two years there, we knew this place was then coming up because they were making them non-official, so in a moment of madness, I guess, I applied for the job and was on a shortlist of two, and then when they knew that I would probably die here, and that this was my local town, I think I got the job.

I So the PMG at the time wanted people who were really committed to the town?

R 00:34:00:10 Well, they don't like their people … they don't like the Post Offices changing hands very quickly. They like to think that someone will be there for some length of time, yeah.

I And for you to have exuded that feeling, you must have really felt that. What was it that made you want to take on this Post Office?

R **Education**

00:34:18:07 Economics. The fact that I could come back here and earn a living and send my children to boarding school and be back home. Yeah, that's it in a nutshell.

I And so you and Ray took it on together twenty-two years ago?

R 00:34:34:10 Ah, I took on the Post Office and he took on the weather and the night exchange. So we've always sort of probably, I suppose, because of the pub, we've always just worked in a relationship. What needs to be done, one does it, and then the other one backs up.

I Can you explain that commitment around the weather? I had no idea that that was what Post Offices did. Can you explain what it was historically and what it is now?

R **Post Office**

00:34:59:12 I'm not sure about historically. The way I think of it is that the Post Offices were here. They were always going to be something that was here, the same with the Police Stations, so it just seems to be that in all the small places where there is a weather station, it either is associated with the Police Station or the Post Office, and it happened to be with the Post Office here. And that just sort of went with the job. If we hadn't of wanted it, it would have gone to the Police Station, but we needed it economically. It was a good move.

I And what was involved? What was involved twenty-two years ago and what is involved now?

R 00:35:38:15 Oh, can I remember that far? What it involved in those days was walking into the back yard, reading the instruments, coming back in here and either giving a something like a telegram to the girls that were working or sitting down yourself and ringing Brisbane, and saying 'This is the weather', reading off a whole heap of numbers, and that was it. Every three hours you did that, except midnight. During the working hours you would bring it in and give it to the telephonist. She would send it. Three o'clock in the morning you did it yourself and rang it through. Six o'clock in the morning you did it and rang it through. You'd do one every three hours except midnight. Then, after the exchange closed, we then used to make a phone call. Instead of going through the exchange, we'd then make an actual phone call. And years after that we became more automated and we went onto a thing called a WOT machine, W – O – T, which was putting in a series of numbers, which was then picked up electronically from Brisbane.

00:36:50:00 Then about eighteen months ago, they moved it from the back yard here up to the aerodrome because of all the trees, the grass, the buildings, were making it so they weren't getting a true reading, so it went to

the airport up there, and I think there's something like ten degrees difference up there to in town where there's all the trees. So we now drive up there every three hours and drive back and use the little laptop out the back there to put it on and it's picked up.

I And would it be a fair question for me to ask you how much you were paid for that twenty-two years ago, give or take the odd pound or dollar, and how much you're paid now? Is that a really important part of your family economy?

R 00:37:37:04 Very much so. It educated my children. That and the night exchange got them through quite a few years of boarding school. The pay hasn't increased a great deal but it's still a nice little pick up. It's about $1,400-$1,600 a month so, you know, there's very little outlay for that. And it's quite interesting, yeah.

I So when did the exchange close down here?

R Mmmm.

I Approximately.

R It would have to be fifteen years ago. Oh, at least, oh probably more than that. I really can't remember. I should but I can't.

I For those of us who live in the city, telecommunications have changed pretty radically, I guess, in the last twenty years, I don't know. You know, phone cards, computers, email, the internet would be some things that would spin off my brain. Have you seen a huge amount of change in the technology that you're using in this business and how has that affected your role, affected the role of the Post Office and your working role?

R **Communications**

00:38:55:16 Ahhh, let me think. Well, technology's there to be used and we have to use it. Australia Post is sort of at the forefront of most things that are happening – Australia Post and Telstra – and we just roll with the dice. It's there so it has to be used. It really is amazing, I think, when you think

back to sitting there and the first Postmaster that I can remember, I think, was showing me Morse Code. I mean, I never had to send anything by Morse Code but that's how they sent the first telegrams. When you think of someone physically sitting there doing this, then just being able to write it on a telegram and someone sending it by voice, then to put it onto something like the laptop computers, and now you have the other things, I think it's just mind-boggling to think these things have … all this technology has happened in a space of twenty years. It's a bit like Jules Verne, is it, thinking, you know, you can put a submarine down, having no idea of the time that someone would eventually do it. I think it's a bit like this, thinking 'Where is it going to stop?' You know, you've got things you can plug into your phone that'll show you who's calling you. You can see their photo and it's just mind-boggling to think that I'm only fifty-six and I've seen all this happen in the last twenty years, you know. Just imagine what it's like for people who've been alive for a hundred years. 00:40:25:18

I When you were describing the plugging in the phones and that central communication role of knowing who was doing what, how do you see that the role of the Post Offices changed or adapted with the times?

R 00:40:45:02 Ummm, well Australia Post became Australia Post and Telstra. They were now two different things and people still can't disassociate the phone boxes out there with Australia Post. Because the phone boxes are there, they assume that I know everything that's happening out there. I really don't know. 00:41:12:07

I I'm thinking of how it feels from your end.