

INTERVIEW WITH DOT GORRENCE
15 June 2000

I = Interviewer

R = Respondent

SIDE A

I This is Tape no. 25 for camera, Tape no. 11 for DAT. It's 15 June 2000 and we're with Dot Gorrence, who was born Dorothy Hood, on the banks of the Cooper Creek outside Windorah. Trish FitzSimons recording, Julie Hornsby on camera.

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

R Oh, well I was born in, outside of Quilpie, and what was the other?

I What was your name when you were born?

R Oh, yeah, Dorothy Hood, and ...

I And what year was it?

R Oh, 1942. Yeah.

I And so, do you know, were you born at home or in Quilpie Hospital or ...?

R No, I was born out on the property.

I So what do you know from your Mum about, like who was with her, for instance, when you were born? Do you know?

R No, I don't know who was there. I think it was my grandmother but I'm not sure.

I And were you the eldest in the family?

R No, there's two other girls older than me.

I So what was the name of that property, do you know, and what were your parents doing there?

R No, well, it was [Camonigan?] Station outside of Quilpie and then, that's where I was born, but I was, we was reared up on Tobermorey Station, yeah.

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- I And what were your parents doing on Tobermorey?
- R Oh, he was just a stockman.
- I So what if you think back to your earliest memory from your childhood. What do you remember?
- R Oh, I don't know. Not much, because we went to school when we was about five or six. I used to just go home for holidays. Yes, just home on holidays, that's all.
- I And do you know, was Tobermorey, like what was the area that your ... so your Dad was a Hood, and what was the name of your mother? Her family name?
- R Oh, Bismarck.
- I Bismarck?
- R Bismarck, yeah.
- I So were either the Hoods or the Bismarcks, where was their traditional country? Do you know?
- R Oh, one was from around Quilpie, that's Madigan, and the other one was from, Dad was from Thargomindah way. Yeah, [Cullalee?], I think it was, yeah.
- I And so, did you grow up playing, like before you went away to boarding school, did you grow up playing with the white kids on Tobermorey?
- R Yeah, we was reared up there with the family there, white family, yeah.
- I And when you say 'reared up', what do you mean? What would be the things you'd do with that family, or with the kids?
- R Oh, oh, we used to play and what normal kids used to do, I suppose, yeah.
- I Which would be what kind of things? Because you wouldn't have had Nintendos.
- R Oh, no. Oh, a bit of swimming and everything else, I suppose, you know. I don't really remember that much but I know we was reared up with them, yeah.

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- I When I talk to white women about growing up on stations, some of them describe playing lots with the Aboriginal kids and other women talk about that they were never allowed to go down to the Aboriginal camp and that there was a lot of separation. So I'm interested in how it was on Tobermorey. Would you, for instance, go inside the station house?
- R Oh, yeah, yeah. We used to go there, yeah. We used to be there a lot.
- I And how about, were you involved in working on the property at all?
- R No. No, we weren't involved. Oh, my bigger sister might have been but not ... I can't remember anyway. Yeah.
- I And your Mum? If you think of your mother's life, both from what you remember when you were a kid and what she might have told you later, what was her life like on Tobermorey?
- R Well, I don't really know. I don't know. Yeah, I don't know what it was like for her. I suppose, like every ... you know.
- I Did she work on the station?
- R No, not that I know of.
- I I know on some stations the women were made to leave the stations whilst the men continued to work there, but that wasn't what happened with your family, was it?
- R No, no. No, we just lived there all the time.
- I And how about your grandparents? Like that wonderful photo of your grandparents. That photo of all of you with them on the cart, tell me what you remember, or what you know, about when that photo would have been taken.
- R Well, I don't know when it was taken but they worked at [Congi?] Station and they was on their way home, I think, back to [Congi?] from Tobermorey.
- I And was [Congi?] fairly close to Tobermorey?
- R Oh, I don't know how far it is away, but I don't think it was that far away, you know. Not too far.

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- I Would you visit them at [Congi?] sometimes?
- R No, I can't remember. No, I don't know that.
- I How old, that grandmother, what was the name of that grandmother who's on that cart?
- R Oh, Dolly. Dolly's her name but I don't know how old she was or ... then.
- I And how about that other grandmother that there's the photo of? What do you know of her life?
- R No, she had a good life but she was workin' on Thursden Station outside of Quilpie and her name was Daisy. Yeah.
- I And do you think ...? No, what were you going to say about Daisy?
- R No, nothin'.
- I Were your parents or your grandparents afraid of you being taken away?
- R No. Not that I know of. No. I wouldn't know. 'Cause we didn't, we never talked to the older people, you know, people that much then, them times.
- I Why was that do you think?
- R Oh, I don't know. We just never ... we were always chased outside, I suppose, when the elders were talkin'.
- I And your house when you were a child, what do you remember? Or was it, in fact, a house you were living in? What do you remember about where you would have been living and ...?
- R Oh, yeah, we had a house to live in, just on the bank of ... the whole station was on the riverside and, no it was a nice place to live, yeah.
- I Would that have been the Bulloo River?
- R No, no. I don't know, I don't know the name of the creek, yeah.
- I So would you have had, for instance, electricity?

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- R Well ... no, oh, I don't know. No, I don't think so. No, no. I don't remember much at all, you know, what we had there. It's been that long, you know, yeah.
- I Up till what age did your family live there on Tobermorey?
- R Oh, oh gee. I must have been about 13 or 14.
- I So up until the mid-fifties?
- R Yeah, yeah, it would have been, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it would have been, I think.
- I So the going away to school, how did that come about?
- R Oh, we just had to go to school and because it was so far from town, we had to go to boarding school.
- I So where was that school that you went to?
- R Charleville. I went to Charleville. Charleville School.
- I And tell me what you remember about that.
- R Oh, we went to the girls' hostel. It was a ... yeah, run by nuns, and used to just go to the primary school there. Board at the hostel and go to school.
- I I went away to boarding school and I bawled my eyes out. How was it for you? I mean, you were very ...?
- R Oh, probably the same, you know. Probably had a good cry too. Yeah, the first time, I suppose, but after a couple of years, well you get used to it. Yeah.
- I And do you know, were your parents being paid wages on Tobermorey?
- R Yeah, yeah they were. Dad was.
- I So is that how your boarding school fees were paid?
- R Yeah, yeah.
- I And how much contact would you have with your family while you were at boarding school?

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- R Oh, we probably never seen 'em till we went home on holidays. That was the only time we'd see 'em, yeah. That wasn't, like only a couple of times a year, them days, yeah.
- I So were you at this boarding school with your brothers and sisters?
- R Just the sisters, yeah.
- I And was it just Aboriginal children?
- R No, no. It was mixed.
- I So would you say that you encountered racism often as a child, Dot?
- R No. Didn't know what it meant then. We was just all in together.
- I So when would you say you came to understand what that meant?
- R Oh, I don't know. It'd be only the last few years, I suppose.
- I Now, that's interesting.
- R Yeah.
- I Yeah. And is that because you've experienced racism in the last few years or because people have talked about it a lot?
- R No, it's only because, you know, the way people carry on now, that's all. 'Cause years ago you never, like out here everybody got on real well together. It's not like livin' in the city there where they, you know, call you this and call you that, I suppose, yeah. No, it was ah ...
- I It's interesting, talking to Alice, she said it was when she went away to Bourke, for instance, that she'd suddenly not be allowed to go into a hotel, but that round here she'd always been treated all right.
- R Mmmm. Yeah. No, we never experienced that.
- I It's interesting, if your parents were being paid cash wages in the fifties, because from the historical stuff I've looked at, it seems like many Aboriginal people weren't getting paid cash wages until the late sixties and then lots of them lost their jobs. Was Tobermorey, do you know who owned Tobermorey?

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- R Yeah, the [Boxes?] owned Tobermorey.
- I And so then when you were coming back for holidays, tell me what you remember of that time.
- R Oh, gee. Oh, I can't remember much at all, really. I know we used to go home on the train and, from Charleville to Quilpie, and they'd pick you up in town and take you back to the station. That's the only thing I remember.
- I Where would your family's food come from on the station?
- R Oh, from Quilpie, I suppose, yeah. Well, they had a store at the station too. Yeah. You know, they had a big store there. They used to get food from there.
- I And what changed things? Why did your family leave Tobermorey in the mid-fifties?
- R Oh, I don't know. I don't know what happened. No. I wouldn't know that. But I know Dad worked on a few other properties around there, round Quilpie, so I don't know what happened.
- I Was there a sense of trouble to that leaving?
- R No, no. Not that I know of, no.
- I So where did you then live?
- R Oh, well, we was all, most of us was grown up by then, except the younger ones, or a couple. I think the boys were out, I don't know where the boys were, but the youngest girl, she was with Granny a lot, yeah, so ...
- I Which Granny was that?
- R Daisy.
- I Daisy. So she's the one with the ...?
- R Yeah, yeah. She was reared up there with her.
- I Why was that? Do you know?
- R Oh, well, just after Mum died, Granny took her, looked after her. Yeah, reared her up.

I So what happened to your Mum, Dot?

R Oh, I don't know. I know she was ill, that's all.

I And how old were you when your Mum died?

R Oh, I don't remember.

I So how long was it till you met ... oh, I'm sorry Dot. Can we move on? Who looked after you after your Mum died? Do you want to stop?

R Yeah.

I Stop, or move on to another ... So Dot, tell me how you came to come to Windorah.

R Oh, I came out here in the sixties, I think it was. Late '59, early '60. And been here ever since.

I And what brought you out here?

R Oh, I don't know. Just Johnny, I suppose. I met him and came out here and been out here ever since.

I So where did you meet Johnny?

R Oh, Quilpie.

I And do you remember how you met him?

R Oh, he was on a drovin' trip and I met him in Quilpie then when he delivered the cattle.

I And so what were you doing in Quilpie at the time? You would have been, what, you would have been about 18?

R Yeah, I was working at the Quilpie Hospital at the time. Yeah.

I And Alice has told me, because when Alice and Johnny were droving with Bill, that some of the trips would end up in Quilpie.

R No, he had his own drovin' plant then.

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- I And so how long after you met Johnny did you and he get together, or get married? How long till you came out here?
- R Oh, about a couple of years or twelve months. Twelve months I come out here and stayed here then.
- I So, if Johnny had his droving plant, did you start to travel with him, because the drover's life would be always moving, wouldn't it?
- R Mmmm. No, he'd finished a couple of years after that, or twelve months after that, yeah.
- I And why was that? Why did he give droving away?
- R Well, I don't know. He just finished and he ended up on the roadworks around the town.
- I Why don't we just get some of these birds?
- R They'll just pull up for a look.
- I What are they, Dot? They're not cockatoos.
- R Corellas.
- I So are the corellas always here, or just in the wet season?
- R No, always here.
- I They're so beautiful. So I wonder whether we need to do a shot, you're not rolling at the moment? Could we do a shot, panning from Dot onto the corellas and back again, or something like that, so we kind of establish them?
- So Dot, tell me about this place. Why do you love it here?
- R Oh, I don't know. I just like the place. Different place to live in.
- I And this place right here, what do you love about this? How often would you come out to this creek?
- R Oh, I come down a lot, and bring the kids. In summertime they go swimming and fishing and that. In winter time they go fishing too but mainly the kids go, come down summertime to swim.

I And what fish do you get here?

R Oh, the yellowbelly and the catfish and bream and, yeah.

I And do you get as many fish here now as you would have 40 years ago?

R Oh, yeah, you still get a lot of fish, yeah. Yeah, there's still plenty of 'em.

I You know the bloke yesterday that visited your house was talking about how you used to get really high Mitchell grass and now you don't, have you noticed many changes in the environment here round Windorah in the last 40 years?

R Oh, yeah, yeah. There's been a lot of changes.

I Like what? Describe some of them. So Dot, what kind of changes have you noticed to this area in the last 40 years? To the land and the water.

R Oh, gee. Oh, it all depends on the seasons. Sometimes you get a drought and other times you get good rain, yeah.

I But do you feel that the land is being degraded at all or does it feel in pretty good shape?

R Oh, it's still in good shape, I think, yeah.

I And what is it about this particular place that makes you come here?

R Oh, I don't know, it's just home to us now. Yeah.

I So when you came here 40 years ago, what struck you about Windorah? What was it like to move to Windorah around 1960?

R Ohhh. Oh, I don't know. I just liked the place and I just thought it was a good place to rear kids and, yes.

I So what was Johnny doing here? Like, what brought you to Windorah?

R Oh, well he was, well he was drovin' and then he went on the main roads then, workin' on the main roads, yeah. All different companies had sections of the road to do, yeah, so he just went on the roadworks.

I And would he just go out for the day or would he often be away?

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- R No, we'd camp out there. We had our own camp out in the roadworks, yeah. We used to stay out there, yes. Camp out at the roadworks all the time.
- I Right. So over what kind of area would you move?
- R Oh, well there was about three sections that we worked on from this side of Quilpie there to here, and then he worked on the other side of town too. That's 100 mile out near Morney there, the last section went, yeah.
- I So was this building the tar road from Charleville?
- R No, Quilpie. This side of Quilpie, yeah. Quilpie right through to near Morney, he went, workin' on the roads.
- I And so how would you spend the days, then, while Johnny was working?
- R Oh, well, we'd get to come to town sometimes or we'd stay in the camp all day. I had to cook and wash and look after the kids and ... yeah.
- I And how would you do things like washing?
- R Well, we had our own washing machine or washing tubs and we used to do it sometimes by hand or ... we had an old washing machine with a motor on it.
- I So how would you get power out in the camp?
- R No, we didn't have power. It was just you had a washing machine with a little motor on it.
- I With gas in it?
- R No, no. Petrol. Petrol one, yeah. A little motor with petrol, yeah. Just kick it and away it went.
- I And was that life, being out on the roads, did that suit you?
- R Yeah, it did, yeah. Yeah. I didn't mind it.
- I What did you like about that life?
- R Oh, oh, it was a big camp. There wasn't just me. There was a lot of married couples on the roadworks so, you know, it wasn't lonely, a lonely sort of camp.

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- I So the kids would play together and that sort of thing?
- R Yeah, yeah. Yeah, we had a family there with a couple of kids and we had our two. They used to all play together.
- I And so when the babies were born, where did that happen?
- R Oh, Quilpie mainly, yeah. Yeah, they was all born in Quilpie.
- I And then you'd bring them straight back out to the camp?
- R Mmmm. Yeah, yeah.
- I So how often would you move camp?
- R Oh, it wasn't ... no you never moved till the next section started up, till one section of the road was finished. Then you'd move to the next spot then.
- I And was it all Murris in the camp?
- R No, no, it was a mixture, yeah.
- I And in that camp, were there divisions between Murris and whites, or you'd pretty much all mix in together?
- R No, we'd all mix together, yeah.
- I So would you have meals together or each family would do meals separately?
- R No, no, we had our own camp, like everybody, except the single men. They all had a big mess. They used to eat in there, eat over in the mess, and then the married couples just had their own camps.
- I And what would you be actually sleeping in? Would it be tents or swags or ...?
- R No, we had tents and caravans, there was, and, yeah. Every family had a tent or caravan.
- I What did you and Johnny have?
- R We had a tent. A tent and a little hut.

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- I Oh, right, so how would the hut ... it was something that you could take down and put up again?
- R Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- I And toilets? How would you get by for toilets?
- R Yeah, we had toilets.
- I Like what?
- R Showers and everything, yeah.
- I So these were pretty major camps.
- R Yeah.
- I Are there photos of these camps?
- R Oh, yeah, there is, but I don't know where they are.
- I So for how many years did you and Johnny do this?
- R Oh, oh gee, probably three or four years, or it could have been more. No, it would have been more. Yeah.
- I So you were like a woman in your early twenties with young babies?
- R Ahhh, yeah, I'd be 20, 20-odd, about. Round about 27, I suppose. Mmmm.
- I And so what happened when it was time for your kids to go to school?

SIDE B

- R Oh, well, we lived in town then, when they went to school.
- I Would you have thought of sending your kids away to boarding school like you had gone away?
- R No, no. No, well they had Grade 7 here. They go to Grade 7 in Windorah and then after that they've got to go to high school. Got to go away to school.

I Okay, so this is Tape 26 for camera, with Tape 11 for DAT, it's 15 June and we're with Dot Gorrenge and the time code on the DAT now is 3250.

So Dot, what made you and Johnny decide to stop working on the road plant? Or was it that the job finished?

R No, the job finished.

I And so what became Johnny's job then?

R Oh, what was it then? No, we went to ummm, I think we went to Lake _____, that's the property, ummm down on Nappa Merrie, and then after that we, we ah ... Johnny went on the oil rigs then, gas company, oil company, then.

I And so what did you and the kids do when he was working on the oil rig?

R Oh, we just stayed home. I had to stay home with the kids and put them to school.

I So how was that for you?

R Oh, it was good. Yeah.

I Would there have been some of the wives that went with the oil rigs or were all the families in town?

R No, no. No, Johnny, he just worked with oil rigs, yeah. There was hardly any others in town worked on it. He worked down at Jacksons down there where the oil field is, for years.

I And so would he go out just for the day, or he'd be away?

R No, he'd be away for, oh, probably two or three weeks, and come home for ten days or whatever.

I So was that lonely for you after being with him on the road early in your marriage?

R No. No, I got used to it. You get used to them things.

I So how did you see your role in the family, Dot? Like, what was your job when your kids were young?

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- R Oh, well, I was just the mother. I had to look after 'em. Yeah.
- I And was cash pretty tight or was this a fairly town to bring up kids on one wage?
- R No, it was good. Yeah, it was easy to bring up the kids, yeah. No, I used to work at the pub, too, for years, at the hotel in Windorah.
- I And who was the publican in those years?
- R Joe and Nancy was the publicans then.
- I So what shifts would you work at the pub?
- R Oh, I used to do the cooking there. Just the one cook. We used to do the ... I used to start about six o'clock and go home and come back and cook the dinner then at night. Finish about half past seven or eight o'clock.
- I So who would be looking after your kids?
- R No, the kids used to be with me at the shop, at the hotel I mean.
- I And were there other Murri families in town or were you the only Aboriginal family in town?
- R Oh, no, there was a few Aboriginal families in town, yeah.
- I And how about now, Dot?
- R Yeah, there is a few there, yes. A few Aboriginal families.
- I Have you ever been involved in traditional Aboriginal ceremonies?
- R No.
- I How about your parents or grandparents?
- R Oh, they probably have, yeah. Yeah, they would-a-done but I don't know nothin' about that, yeah.
- I And have you ever been interested in that or does that feel like the far past?
- R Oh, it's the past but I'm, like lately I've been interested in it, yeah.

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- I So do you want to talk about that a bit? What's made you interested in that kind of traditional side of things?
- R Oh, I don't know, I just like goin' out and takin' photos of different things and, yeah.
- I Somebody told me, and I can't even remember who it was now, and I'm interested that some of the council workers would make Aboriginal traditional sites. Do you think there's truth to that? You know, almost for fun.
- R Oh, I don't know. I wouldn't know because I haven't heard of it.
- I You know, like, this was ...
- R You never, you know, you don't know. They probably would and some mightn't. You wouldn't know what to believe.
- I But you've never heard of that going on?
- R No. No. Well, you'd know what it was anyway, I think, if you were ... if they did do it.
- I Have you ever known Aboriginal people in this area whose families have had long, long connections with this land?
- R No. No, not ... oh, there was a few families in town that would have connections with it.
- I Who are you thinking of?
- R Oh, well most of them have shifted away now but there are the and the and Johnny's family, they used to all live around here but most of them's gone now, shifted away.
- I And why do you think that happens, that there's fewer Aboriginal families around now?
- R Oh, I don't know, I think they just, when they grew up, they just shifted away and got jobs somewhere else and, yeah, but there wasn't much out here for 'em then.
- I So are you saying, has the population of the town got smaller in the last 40 years?
- R Oh, yeah, it's got smaller but there's still, you know, still a lot of people around here, mmmm. Oh, we used to have a two-teacher school. Two teachers used to be here but now we've only got the one.

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- I When did that happen?
- R Oh ... oh probably about ten years ago, I suppose. Yeah, it must be about then.
- I And was that because the stations are employing fewer people?
- R No, it's just, oh well there was a lot of main roads, like the roadworks goin' and there was a lot of families on then. When it got close to town, they used to live in town with their children, and even the properties, they had kids. They used to come into town. There was a lot of kids around. Well, we had two teachers.
- I So it's just town has been getting quieter and quieter?
- R Yeah, yeah.
- I So tell me when you started to get interested in history, Dot. Like, for instance, where did you hear about Alice Duncan Kemp's books?
- R Oh, I've always been interested in books.
- I Did you have many books when you were a kid?
- R No. No, I never. Never had many then. Probably the last ten years, yeah.
- I So do you remember where you heard about Alice's books and how did you come to get hold of one?
- R Oh, I just seen 'em in the bookshop and bought 'em. Yeah, bought a couple of 'em and one, oh what do you call him, one anthropologist gave me, gave Johnny and I a book to read, and ... he knew we were interested in the country a bit so, in this country, so he picked up a book for us while he was, you know, down in Brisbane, so brought it home.
- I You have a bookshop you go to quite often in Toowoomba. Do you want to tell me the story of getting Alice's books?
- R No, well I just bought it in a shop down there one day when I was lookin' through the new ... ah, the bookshop.
- I How much did you pay for it?
- R Oh, that one come from a second hand shop, that was \$60 that one, yeah.

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- I So it's a lot of money for a second hand book. Had you heard about it?
- R Yeah, yeah. Well, there was only a few of 'em made at that time. Yeah, there was only a few of 'em left, or you could buy 'em, so if I wanted it I had to get it.
- I There's been quite a lot of debate about Alice's work, about how accurate it is and whether it's a true picture of relationships between white people and Aboriginal people, that sort of thing. What do you think about that? What do you think of Alice's work?
- R Oh, well, I don't really know because I wasn't around in them days. Yeah, you wouldn't really, you know, I couldn't say much about it but I like the books and I know some of the country that she talks about.
- I And does it seem that she's accurate in the way she talks about the country?
- R Oh, yeah. Yeah.
- I Did you know Alice's sister Laura at all?
- R Yeah, yeah.
- I Tell me what you remember of Laura.
- R Oh, well, I don't, you know, I wasn't really, oh I don't know ... I didn't know her that well. I'd only seen her a few times, mmmm.
- I She probably didn't come to town much.
- R Town much, mmmm.
- I And how about with the museum in town, Dot? Are you involved with that?
- R Yeah.
- I Tell me what you're doing with that.
- R Oh, well, they're trying to get up and runnin' for an information centre and, oh we have our arts and crafts there too, so I suppose it'd be a bit of everything when it gets goin'.
- I And is it going to have a lot of stuff about Murri history?

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- R Oh it probably will when we get around to getting' something, yeah, yeah. It won't have a lot but it'll have something there, mmmm. Yeah. We'll have to put somethin' in there.
- I So am I right, Dot, that all this talk about black and white, to you it hasn't seemed so relevant? Is that ...?
- R Oh ...
- I Like, how would you describe relationships between white people and Aboriginal people?
- R Well, I can only talk for meself, but here it's great. Like we all just mix in together out here. It's not like down in the cities. Yeah, no. It's all right out here. It's good.
- I And why do you think it's different out here?
- R Oh, I don't know, it's just different. Like, a lot of the people have been brought up together out here. They probably have down there too but it's more politicians down that way, mmmm. Yeah.
- I So are you saying that Aboriginal politicians haven't helped you, or are you talking here about white politicians?
- R Oh, no, they do help you but oh, I don't know how you'd put it. I just don't, I don't know, not just into that, that's the thing.
- I So say when people talk about a Treaty, what do you think about that?
- R Oh, don't know. No, I don't like talkin' about them things.
- I And reconciliation? What do you think about that?
- R Oh, well, I don't know. Well, oh I don't know. They ... oh, I don't know what to say because I rarely ...
- I
- R Yeah, but see it's not ... I don't know. I wouldn't like to remark on it because I never, never really had anything to do with it, you know, with the ... like now they're talkin' about the Stolen Generation, well that's had nothin' to do with us so, you know, I wouldn't remark on it. Yeah. So.

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- I One of the things Isobel Tarrago said to me ... she showed me a poster where her mother Topsy Hanson, so a Murri woman from Glenormiston, and a white woman Mrs Brown, had their arms round each other. And she said, 'That's reconciliation,' you know, black and white used to live together, and if you've got to have a big name for it, then something must have gone wrong. Would that make sense to you?
- R Oh, mmmm. Yeah, I suppose. But I don't know, I don't much into that thing.
- I So what are the things that you're into in your life now, Dot? Describe a typical day for you.
- R Oh, I don't know, just sittin' at home doin' things, I suppose. Yeah. Or goin' drivin', campin' out somewhere.
- I Would you go camping with Johnny? Where will you go?
- R Oh, anywhere.
- I Like where?
- R Oh, well, I couldn't just really say because we go everywhere, or anywhere.
- I How long will you head out for?
- R Oh, a couple of days, I suppose.
- I And so if you were to describe how you felt about this land of this area, how would you give words to that?
- R Oh, I don't know. No, I wouldn't know.
- I Yes, sometimes it's hard to give words to things.
- R Yeah, yeah. No, I wouldn't know.
- I What do you reckon are the most precious places around here, most beautiful or spiritual or ...?

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- R Oh, well, there's a few places but I wouldn't like to say. No, there's a few around but ... no, I wouldn't like to say where they are, because I think there's only a few of us know where them spiritual things are, you know, yeah.
- I And so do you want to tell me a bit ... do you have a land claim, Dot? Do you want to explain a bit about that?
- R Oh, yes, it's over round Quilpie area there. Yeah, I don't know much about it over there. They've got, the other families got all that under control. They do all that so ...
- I And in your understanding, if you got Native Title over near Quilpie, what would that mean to you? How would it change your life?
- R No, it wouldn't change *my* life. No, it wouldn't change it. No, it wouldn't change *my* life. It might change the rest of the, you know, a lot of the other Murris but it wouldn't change mine.
- I Why is that?
- R Oh, well, it just wouldn't. You just keep on livin' the way you've been livin'.
- I Some white people I've spoken to, their picture of Native Title is that it would mean them giving up ownership of their land. Is that as you see it?
- R No. No, I don't think so, not over there, not in that ... not for that lot over there in Quilpie, I don't think. No, I don't think they'd have to give up their land.
- I So what do you think it would mean, say, for your sisters? If they got Native Title, what would that mean?
- R Oh, I don't know. Just go on livin' the way they've been livin' I suppose.
- I But would it mean being able to visit that land, for instance, more easily?
- R Oh, probably, yeah, but I don't know. I don't think they ... oh, not my sisters, they've been out there for years. But I don't think the others, the other ones who put in the claim, I don't think they've ever been out there, so they wouldn't know what the land or the properties look like, you know, wouldn't know. A lot of 'em live in the city and they just put in the claims, yeah.

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- I So why do you think they would put in the claim?
- R Oh, well, that's where their mother or father come from, yeah.
- I Alice put of you, that she wished you were able to make a claim around here, that this was the, not you as an individual, I guess she was talking about herself and for the Gorrenge. What do you think about that? Do you think that the current Native Title system is a sensible one for your family, for instance?
- R Oh, yeah. Yeah, well I think they are puttin' in a claim for it but I don't know what they've done about it yet so, yeah. So I don't know.
- I And from your end, it doesn't sound like you're very involved in your family's land claim, but what's involved? What do you have to do if you have a land claim?
- R Oh, gee. There's a lot of things involved in it but I haven't, you know, I haven't had that much to do with it. It's a corporation thing and they've got their committee set up and they just go ahead and do it all, yeah.
- I You go across sometimes for a meeting?
- R Sometimes, yeah, not very often, no. I haven't been across there for a good while now so I don't know what's goin' on with it.
- I A woman called Mary Graham, whose traditional country's round the Gold Coast, she's a Murri woman in Brisbane, she said that it seemed like Native Title was creating divisions between Murris about land that hadn't been there for a long time. What do you think about that? Is that your experience?
- R Yeah, well ... yeah, well it is the experience because, I don't know, you get people that have lived out here most of their lives or another one's come back from Sydney or Bourke or somewhere, and they come back to claim the land too, so you don't know where they come from. If they belong to the country or not up here. So, you know, it's a bit confusing sometimes. The only thing they've got to ... what they want, what some of the ummm, the what do you call it, some of the, like they've got to trace their family trees back to see where they come from, and it's a bit hard. But that's the only way they can, you know, trace their trees, I suppose, their families where they come from.

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- I So how do people go about tracing their family tree?
- R Oh, well a lot of 'em go to the archives in Brisbane, or John Oxley Library down there and find out different things, yeah. Get a lot of information from down there.
- I And when you talk about belonging to the country, what would that mean? Like, do you belong to this country, for instance?
- R No, not here. Round Quilpie. Yeah, that's where I come from, there, originally, but I suppose you can call it country now, you've been here for so long, yeah. A couple of fishermen over there, must be fishin'.
- I How often do you fish here?
- R Oh, we come down every now and then when we get a chance or when we feel like it.
- I Get a good feed here?
- R Mmmm, yeah. Yeah, you get a good feed.
- I So is there anything I haven't asked you about, Dot, that you think important for me to understand your life here in the Channel Country?
- R No, I don't think so. No.
- I Do your kids come? How many of your kids live round here now?
- R Oh, I had two families. Two livin' here in Windorah, two in Quilpie and one in Toowoomba. Yeah, so, and the kids love it out here, so ...
- I So you imagine there'll be Gorrengees around Windorah for a long time to come?
- R I don't know. Oh, there could be and there couldn't be. See, I don't know.
- I How about for you and John? Like, what do you see for the future in your life?
- R Oh, I don't know. The same things, I suppose.
- I So what's John's job now?

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- R He's still with the oil company. He's workin' out of town at IOR. Yeah, he works out there.
- I So he just goes out for the day or he still goes out for days or weeks at a time?
- R Yeah, he does three weeks on and three weeks off. Goes out there, stays out there.
- I And you're completely used, now, to having the periods when he's away as well as the periods when he's back?
- R What's that?
- I Well, you must be quite used to having John here and then John away?
- R Mmmm, yeah, yeah, that's right, yeah.
- I Does your life shift a lot when he comes back?
- R No. No. No, it's the same.
- I On a completely different matter, how do you define the Channel Country? What does that word 'Channel Country' mean to you?
- R Oh, I don't know. Don't know how you'd put it.
- I Well, where do you reckon it begins and ends, for instance?
- R Oh, well, it begins up north here and ends down Lake Eyre.
- I So would you see somewhere like, say, Stonehenge, would that be part of the Channel Country?
- R Oh, I don't know. Yeah, it'd start up there 'cause it's ... yeah, it would be, yeah, yeah. It'd start up there and finish down Lake Eyre.
- I Have you ever been down to Lake Eyre?
- R No.
- I So what's the furthest south you've been following these rivers down?
- R Well, it'd be Innamincka. Yeah. Yeah, down at Innamincka, that's the furthest I've been.

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- I And when, in terms of history going way, way back, like there was the big massacre of Aboriginal people, I think, at Battle Hole, near [Jundah?], is that something that you would know about or that people would talk about very much?
- R No, they don't talk about that much.
- I So which are the bits of the history going way back from round here that people talk about a lot?
- R Well, I don't know if people do talk about it. I haven't heard anybody talkin' about things, you know, what's happened.
- I I thought maybe because there's a new museum here in Windorah, isn't there? And there's a new one going in in [Jundah?] and it looks like there's a new one in Quilpie. Like, there's probably quite a lot of interest in history at the moment?
- R Yeah, well there's a lot of interest in history but you don't hear people talkin' about it.
- I Is that partly for the tourists, do you think?
- R Oh, yeah, tourists probably want to know about the history and that of a town and different things, yeah.
- I Okay, is there anything you wanted to ask, Julie?
- I Anything else we haven't covered, Dot?
- R Ummm, no, I don't think there's anything else.
- I Okay.
- R About what?
- I About whether cotton should be allowed to be grown.
- R No, I don't reckon it should be.
- I Why not?
- R Oh, well, I suppose there's a lot of chemicals and things that they use, yeah. No, I'm not in favour of cotton so ...

END OF INTERVIEW