

INTERVIEW WITH NARELLE & BRONWEN MORRISH

19 June 2000

Timecode refers to tape 42_BC_SP

Topics in Bold

TF = Trish NM = Narelle BM = Bronwen JH = Julie Hornsey & BOB

SIDE A

42_BC_SP

TF I have no idea of your childhood but just sketch for me a little bit – I, were you born in this country?

NM 18:01:21:18 No. I was born in Lismore and um spent all my youth there until I decided to go nursing and did one year in Brisbane and then returned to Lismore. After I completed my nursing, I um was fascinated by the Psych Ward – Richmond Clinic that had just opened. And fortunately I was put, I was in that ward for a year or two when a psychologist just came along. And we moved –

TF And that psychologist was Bob?

NM That's right. We moved to Melbourne and worked there for a while. And then slowly he crept back to the bush.

TF And when you say 'slowly' he crept back to the bush, was Bob from this country?

NM No. He's from around Inglewood.

TF I don't know where that is.

JH Trish, can I just stop there for one sec.

TF Yep.

JH I need to just get –

TF - and I'm rolling too. So when you say Bob slowly crept back to the bush, how was it that you and he ended up in the Channel Country?

NM 18:02:40:12 Well, he was born um in Inglewood and raised on a property and I guess that had a fairly strong hold. Even though after that his schooling then went to uni, um I guess the bush part never left. So um we moved up to Winton and bought a place near Kynuna. We were there for 4½ years and then moved into the Channel Country in '79.

TF And so – I'll come to you in a moment Bronwen – but for you um Narelle, was bush something that you were into as well.

NM Um my grandparents were on a dairy farm so I guess that yeah, there's – I'd seen a touch of bush before.

TF This is really different then, I know that to come from Lismore um you know, little green valleys with little nooks and crags. This is pretty different. How did this, how did this landscape strike your eyes and your heart when you came here?

NM 18:03:44:10 Well unfortunately there were lots of drought seasons but the good ones in between, the good seasons, I guess that it's so beautiful – the landscape. And the waters. The birds.

TF So you were saying like at the moment it's incredibly beautiful? Is this unusual for this land to look like this? Is this unusual?

NM It is really. Yeah, because often it's – with droughts, it's often very soul destroying.

BM About one in ten year.

TF One in ten years is good like this?

BM Yep. The rest is pretty bad.

TF So how about you Bronwen? How did you come to the Channel Country?

BM Um, through my parents. I've grown up here.

TF So what would you say was your earliest memory?

BM **Flood/Childhood**

18:04:33:02 My earliest memory probably would have been um of the 1989 flood. I can remember standing on the um verandah of the Springfield homestead and just looking out at this great expanse of water. It was really beautiful. I can remember that. I must've been about three.

TF And what else can you remember from very early?

BM I can remember riding my pony Roaney. My strawberry roan horse and yeah. And just growing up on the station and –

TF So what year were you born in?

BM 1985.

TF And so for you Narelle, where does 1985 come in the kind of the cycle of seasons you've known?

NM **Channel Country/ Ecology**

18:05:21:16 Ahhh, '89 I guess was the first good season we saw at Springfield. Um that was a wonderful season. Um about 10 years we manage to get a reasonable season and in between, they're very marginal.

TF And so what is it like? I can't quite imagine what it's like to live through a terrible drought where your family's income is kind of piddling down the, down the plug hole so to speak. I mean what, what's that like?

NM I guess often you have to re-assess your values. Do a lot of soul searching. Um as well and try and feed cattle, keep them alive. Um –

BM Go out with hay and molasses and try and keep them alive or send to agistment.

TF So are you saying that the seasons here almost have like a metaphoric influence on what it's like to live in the land? You know like, that when it's drought, you feel droughty and –

BM Yep.

NM But the glare is really bad.

TF Is it? Oh. In saying, like from what you're saying to me, it almost sounds like you're saying that when the land is lush and beautiful it feels fantastic to live here and when it's droughty, it doesn't. But is that, is that in any way describe how you feel about things?

NM 18:07:05:20 Oh, not really. When it's a drought, you just feel very sorry for the cattle. And thankful that the Banks will be kind enough to keep – help you keep them alive. I guess. With through agistment or feeding them.

BM Letting us battle on and –

TF How would you describe that Bronwen? Like does it make much impact? Had it made much impact on your young brain and soul –

BM Mmm.

TF That cycle of seasons?

BM 18:07:32:00 Yeah, because you sort of – you get tired of the drought and just everything being bare but you know that some time there'll, there'll be rain and it'll be really lush again. You look forward to that.

TF Narelle, I can't remember whether, probably I'm pursuing this line of questioning because I can't remember whether it was you said to me or you said to Johnny and so there could be the capacity for kind of third handum that

you were not sure that, that non-Aboriginal people should live in this landscape. Is that something you would relate to at all?

NM 18:08:10:14 Ohh I don't really recall saying that but, yeah, that's – could cause a big debate. Um, Bob probably said that Trish. No I shouldn't – um, yeah, they're fairly amazing how that they obviously lived here before white people settled. Um I admire them because since white people have been here, there – a lot more water's been put in. Um, their coping capacity.

BM **Race Relations/Massacres**

I think the white people did do a lot of terrible things to them. There were some massacres on the place next door to ours Keeroongooloo.

TF What do you know about that Bronwen?

BM 18:09:00:10 Not very much. Just that um I think some of the white settlers might have poisoned the waterholes or some of them, and just shot them, shot the black, shot the Aborigines.

TF And is that, like where would you have heard those stories?

BM Oh from my, from Bob or from the ringers that come through.

TF Oh that's interesting. So what ringers that would have worked around this land for a while?

BM Yeah. Yeah.

TF Could you recall any instance of being told stories? See I'm really interested in kind of how historical stories live and get re-told and what impact they have on the way people live their lives.

BM Well um just like after a day's mustering, just round a, round the table.

NM Or campfire.

BM Or yeah. Round the campfire, there'd get told a lot of stories.

TF So can you give me any detail of the stories you might have heard?

BM Yeah. That's stretching my memory. Um, I'm just trying to think of one. Um –

TF How about you Narelle? Does anything –

NM Um just times when – when we first arrived at Springfield, there was still drovers going through.

BM You'd get stories of the drovers.

NM Yeah.

TF What, tell me about that? What do you remember about the drovers coming through?

NM 18:10:42:16 Um they, I think they brought cattle from in the Territory right through and that would be about the last droving trip that, that I'm aware of. Um I remember the night they came – stayed with us. They were lucky enough to put them in some yards and that was, I think, was the first time they'd had a break and not had to watch the cattle during the night. But that was very - very good that that happened because the next night, as they went through Raymore, the cattle rushed and I think they rushed every night for many many nights. I don't really know what spooked them but, but um yeah, that's ah unfortunate. It must be one thing that drovers really dread.

TF Sure.

NM I mean one of many. Actually full-time. It just stretched it. Oh they've since divided it in two, that job.

JH an ID.

No transcript 18:11:32:10 – 18:30:42:00