

INTERVIEW WITH ANNE KIDD

Transfer from VHS (Betacam Tape No. 12) 15 June 2000

TF = Trish, AK = Anne, JH = Julie

Updated 15/01/10 Timecode refers to tapes 28_BC_SP

Topics in Bold

TF OK. So this is Tape No.28 of Channels of History. This is Betacam only. No DAT. It's the 15th June 2000. This is the second tape of interview with Anne Kidd and we're on the verandah of the Community Hall with Anne's clinic behind us in Windorah. 28_BC_SP

TF So Anne, um – what was I going to say? Would Sandy often be away for long periods? Like um, would he be off in mustering camps and that sort of thing?

AF 04:01:11:12 Yes, sometimes. Yes. He'd be out for a while. They'd camp out um they might be over at the other block mustering sheep or doing something like that so they'd be camped – they used to camp out a fair bit in those days. Yeah. But ah in fact, even when they had cattle in the yard, they'd camp overnight because the yards back in those days weren't all that crash hot. Um – when we built some – got some better yards built, and we used to leave them in overnight as long as the gates were all tied up well.

TF And so was it tough for you being on your own with kids or was it as if you were living your life with the Mayfield ladies and you know, the other people of the station?

AK 04:01:57:20 Oh no. No. I had no problem. On my own I had no problem because Sandy's mother and father were always next door. And ah, there's about ah 8 or 5 kilometres distance between Mayfield, the old Mayfield house where the sisters were and where we were so um they were nowhere near us. But they used to come out nearly every day. When our kids were little, they just doted on them. They used to come out and take them out and ah sometimes the kids go over and stay with them for a night. Then when they went to school, they went to school here in Windorah, so I used to run them in. For a start I had two of them. Catherine did correspondence first year and then

next year we had Tom and Catherine and I was having another baby so he used to run them in here. And um and then eventually there were enough people at Galway Downs and um the Richards at Currareva, that they decided to start up a bus to run through and so our kids went on that bus too to make up the numbers so that they'd have enough kids to have the bus to bring all the kids in from Galway and then Currareva and then ours. So I'd run them up to the bitumen and they'd go from there and ah we had that for years. Right up – right through then until um with different drivers, until ah the youngest one, James, he was the last one to go on it. Until he went away to school, then things changed. They, they had no bus after that and they've never had one since. It wasn't actually a bus. They just used a vehicle of their own and ah and, and different drivers. Yeah.

TF Dot Gorringer was describing this morning how this used to be a two teacher school and was now a one teacher school.

AK Yeah.

TF What, what's, what accounts for that? Is that fewer people working on properties or?

AK 04:04:03:16 Oh, it started off as a one teacher school when I was first here and then there was an increase in number of kids and there was a two teacher – we had two teachers. But there was ah there were a few big families around and there was a lot of road works going on and there were people living in the town or staying close who were um working on the road and it wasn't so much people out of town. It was just people in town and they weren't, you know, working on the stations really, no. It was only those kids at Galway and Currareva and ours and then all these extra kids in town that made it necessary for the – mind you, when um when our kids first started off in here, I think there were nearly 30 kids then and only one teacher so things have improved a lot since then. The teachers do get a second teacher if they get to I think 26. Something like that, which is a lot better because they just couldn't handle seven grades and all those kids.

TF No. I don't know how you'd being.

AK It was nearly impossible. Yeah.

TF Mmm.

AK 04:05:16:00 So um they got the two teachers then when they got a few extra kids and, and they were right. It was a lot better.

TF And Anne, did you have to deal with many medical emergencies? I mean you were a trained nurse.

AK Mmm.

TF Did, did that nursing training often come into your life in those years when you, you weren't actually being employed as a nurse?

AK 04:05:38:12 Yes. Yeah. Um, they were always fairly lucky here. The woman at the hotel, May McGrath, always um did a bit of first aid type stuff and she was pretty good. She – it didn't worry her. But then, yeah. People'd come to me quite often too and then sometimes the policeman's wife or the postmaster's wife, they might be a nurse so they'd use them but whenever there wasn't anyone else, they'd fall back on me then. But no, we had to – there was quite a bit we had to do.

TF And was that scary?

AK I, I can't even remember half the things I had to do.

TF Was that scary for a young woman? Because I mean nurses are essentially trained to have the whole back-up of –

AK That's right.

TF Of a hospital around you.

AK 04:06:26:06 Yeah. Very – it was very scary back then for a start. Um, I think especially because ah we weren't ah really trained for things like that and to come out of a hospital and then straight into a, a situation like this where you've got no back-up and you said, you know? It is a bit daunting until you get used to it. Yeah.

TF Reading that um Jean Ryckman's book – um, and it may well be just the people that Sister Ann Marie has a lot to do with, but there seems an enormous number of mechanical tragedies, you know?

AK 04:07:03:16 Yes. Yes, I noticed that myself. Yeah. Yeah. Um, but for different reasons, you know. Different things that happened. Ah and reading that book – yes. That struck me. Whether it's just because of that selection of people, I don't know.

TF I mean I guess in asking you that, I'm, I'm wondering whether you were often dealing with motor bike accidents, helicopters –

AK Well no helicopters back then.

TF Yeah.

AK No. But ah not a lot of motorbikes either. Mostly back then it was all horses. Um there was a really bad accident out on the roadworks one time but I wasn't here then. The ah woman at the post office had to handle that. That was a really bad one. Um – but there were other things. Every – you know, somebody falling off a horse or something like that. But ah not too bad because back then you could contact the doctor. If you were out of town any distance, they all had the radio on the stations. They'd usually contact the doctor and ah – 04:08:14:08

TF So the Flying Doctor –

AK up, yeah. Mmm.

TF Mmm. Mmm.

AK But anyone in town, yeah. We used to just check them out and get on to the doctor.

TF And were you ever worried about kind of medico legal issues? You know –

AK 04:08:30:02 Back then? No. No. Never a worry back then. I think for, for one thing there wasn't a lot we could do. We didn't have any equipment. All we were doing was first aid stuff anyway. Ah, there was no equipment whatever. In fact, just doing suturing, that type of thing, um we just had gear given to us and different people'd give it to you and then – there was nothing much else that you'd really do that was of legal issue.

TF But you would like stitch somebody up –

AK Yeah.

TF Not of, not for payment.

AK No.

TF No. And how about midwifery? How was midwifery handled in the '60s?

AK Oh well they used to all go away. And ah – ah, no there weren't too many. There were a couple of – you know, you'd get the odd miscarriage – something like that. Odd one'd go very close to being born on the road or something but – I can't remember any – recall any tragedies of any sort that way. Any deaths.

TF Had you gone away for your own babies?

AK **Childbirth**

04:09:42:24 Yeah. Mmm. I went to Brisbane for the first one, then Longreach for the others. So – and you always had to go away about a month beforehand. Still they like the women to go away a month beforehand.

TF So that must've –

AK Even now.

TF Had a real impact on families. I mean as you had your second, third, fourth, fifth and sixth.

AK 04:10:02:16 Yeah. Oh it's terrific, terrific impact, because you had to leave them behind. Um – and we were lucky. We had friends up in Longreach we could stay with, and ah – and you'd just leave the kids behind and, and you had to – I was lucky enough to have Sandy's mother and father and – and Sandy being around, and then the ah – Aunts too, to look after them. But ah – no, that, that's – was a problem. Mmm.

TF So then tell me about what, what lead to into what's obviously been a big shift in life for you, where you're working professionally as a nurse, how that was both – that – both that personal story and also presumably there was a sort of a political and organisational story to –

AK Mmm.

TF To getting a nurse here.

AK 04:10:57:20 Yeah. Um – quite often if I had to contact a doctor, I'd ring Dr Murphy in Longreach and ah – and get advice from him, and then in 1992, they came around – quite a few of them, from the Health Department in Longreach and, and ah I think this – a lot of the work here must have been Tom Murphy's doing, to get a – ah – facility put here. Or to use the facility that's there but upgraded and ah employ me to – to ah – run it. So for a start it was um July '92 I started off, and they put me on four hours a week and um then sent me down a whole heap of gear and I just had to sort the place out. And then at the same time they decided to refurbish it. Do it all up, because it was a bit of a mess. A hole in the wall and – all sorts of problems, so ah they renovated the building so I had to work in the middle of all the renovations but – but at least I had – now had equipment, which made a big difference.

TF And did you have to go through an extensive process of, of retraining?

AK 04:12:23:00 Ah – not extensive. Back then I only had a couple of weeks in Longreach and ah – since then I've had a lot of ah workshops. That type of thing – that've been really beneficial. I've found them better than that two weeks I had in Longreach. Some of the workshops and things that we've been had – mmm. Been great.

TF And was it a big –

AK Because it was a big – it was a big change from what I'd been doing and to upgrade – I had been away once before. Oh – back in the '80s and had ah a refresher in Bundaberg. Did a week there. But there was still so much to learn because there'd been so many changes. Yeah.

TF Was it a big decision for, for you and Sandy – to have you doing paid work or was it in fact fantastic for the kind of – the economy of the household? I mean –

AK 04:13:23:10 Ah – it was – it was good for the economy of the household at the time. Um – it wasn't – it was a bit hard for Sandy to get used to the idea of me not being at home all the time ah because prior to that I was um – I was doing a lot – helping out a lot around the place. Ah – not mustering so much but in the vehicle. You know, helping round during the day. Yard work – that type of thing. But um – after we got rid of the sheep, there wasn't quite as

much work then either, which made it better. And – I think it was harder for Sandy to get used to the – the fact that I wasn't there all the time. That I was now – I had other commitments, um – and also not only other commitments, I was then expected to be the – people expected that they could get help. They didn't feel they were imposing. Um – you know?

TF And presumably they expected – I mean when you and I talked about this interview today, you said that's fine as long as nothing's happening. Presumably –

AK Yes. Mmm.

TF – although the clinic's only open 'til midday.

AK Yeah. I'm still on call.

TF 24 hours 7 days a week?

AK 04:14:51:00 Yeah. Yeah. Mmm. So – anything goes wrong, they can – they know they can ring up anytime. Yeah.

TF And do you think Anne, that you've made this move in some sense for yourself as a kind of like an independent career?

AK Oh definitely. Yeah, definitely. Um – I've um always wanted to get back into it – the nursing, and um – and it was just a great opportunity. If we'd ever had a – if we'd ever been in the town where I could've done it prior to that, I would've done it. Yes.

TF So when you spoke earlier and you were kind of half-joking, but you said something like 'in those days women did as they were told' –

AK Yeah. Mmm.

TF Would that in any way describe kind of the way you have defined your, your role in relation to Sandy throughout your role or –

AK 04:15:47:16 Oh, yes. Yeah. Um – earlier on – yes. But now I find it's more – oh, we've got more of a mutual understanding now. Yeah. I think it's been good for both of us. I think it took a long time for him to get used to the idea but I think now that um – he has a lot of commitments now too with um

Peacap and also with the ah Catchment Committee and the Coopers Creek Protection mob so – he's been tied up a lot so um – I think it's been good both ways.

TF So talking about that, that shift from um – you were saying, before you started nursing, you were working quite a lot on the land kind of supporting Sandy's work.

AK Mmm.

TF Is the kind of the land and how it's managed, is that dear to your heart?

AK 04:16:44:04 Oh yes. Yes. But um – I think also, I – I enjoyed doing it. Um because it was something completely different. I hadn't had any experience in it before and I quite enjoyed it. But um – it wasn't something I was brought up to and it wasn't ah – put it this way. This has been a great excuse. I'm independent and I get out of having to do the hard work. Yes. That, that physical side of it – I quite enjoyed it but I'm glad to be out of it now because I wasn't brought up to it.

TF Because there is a sense – not – I don't think anybody said it to me in relation to you, but sometimes the people in this project will say who are you talking to? And if I say I'm talking to Joanna Bloggs who arrived forty years ago, I'll often get the oh well, she wouldn't know much. You know, she's only been here –

AK Only forty years. That's right. Yes. Oh I can hear the old people saying that quite often. Mmm.

TF So there seems to be a kind of a sense that to be fully –

AK **Duncan-Kemps**

04:17:55:00 They say that you're not a local until you've been there a lifetime more or less. In fact old Arthur Church was out at Mooraberrie and - he died a few years ago now, but he'd gone there as a young boy of 16 I think – come out to this country from down in South Australia. And ah – he said – he said that ah – someone asked him some questions about the country one time and he said, oh well I'm not really a local. I'm not really born here, you

know? And he'd been there all these years. He was 80 I think when he died so –

TF So there was a way in which in nursing – it was something you were almost born that you'd brought independently.

AK Yeah. Yeah.

TF Yeah.

AK 04:18;40:04 And um – it was something I often thought about. Something I always regretted not having – ah done a bit more of it. Um – yeah.

TF And in that shift in your relationship with Sandy that you described a little bit, would feminism be a relevant word or – or are you talking more about a flexible adjustment to changed circumstances? You know what I'm saying there?

AK 04:19:06:12 Yeah. More – more of an adjustment. Yeah. I think – I, I didn't have the adjustment to make as much as he did. He found it a lot harder. Mmm. Yeah. No I didn't find the adjustment so hard. I found it – just found it hard trying to juggle the two. Yeah. The home and the – yeah. Try and keep him happy and – and work. Yes. And I find um – I don't know why but now – gradually the hours here have increased so – and now I do this every morning. I find it's a lot better. I know where I am. Everyone here knows where – that I'm there every morning and before when it used to be a couple of days a week, it was just too confusing.

TF Well you probably had a lot more call-outs.

AK 04:19:52:20 And I would still have to go out and help. Before I had the on-call sort of thing too, I'd still be expected to go out and help them at home. And I know there were times we'd be all the way over at Kyabra and had to come over in the chopper and pick me up to bring me in to somebody who was sick then. And ah I always had an uneasy feeling when I was too far away. Mmm. So now don't go out much at all. I don't –

TF So it's a hugely important role in this community – isn't it?

AK Yes. Mmm. Yes. The only – the only thing is, if I go away – they've got nobody then. There's no relief then. And ah they know they have to contact

the doctor direct. But they are trying to get ah relief when I go away now. People have been writing to Ministers and so forth to try and get something done. A bit more funding.

TF And do you feel that you're often taking on essentially a doctor's role – um – you know, that you're doing much more than would fit a nurse's job description?

AK 04:21:10:10 I think any remote area job does that but it doesn't take on the doctor's role but it – it's the eyes and ears for the doctor. Yeah. And a lot of things – that you have to decide for yourself that – and you're on your own. You have to make your own decision. Um – you've always got backup these days. It's a lot better than many years ago, you know? And the equipment's a lot better now. We've got um – we're – we're really well equipped here but the community bought a lot of the things we've got.

TF We laughed when we saw the parking meters and that.

AK Oh yes. They're there.

TF Yes. Um – and how about as a mother Anne, you have both sons and daughters. Yeah?

AK Mmm hmm.

TF What kind of – do you think you brought up your daughters to have a, a fundamentally different role than their brothers or was it fairly genderless?

AK 04:22:07:04 No. No. One thing I did expect those kids to do was to get out and do something. Um – back in the older days, I think – and this is one of the reasons I think why the three girls were still down at Mayfield, they weren't expected to work. They weren't expected to earn their own income. And I – I wanted to make sure that all our kids could get out and do something besides just going on the land. Mmm.

TF So you wanted them to have options? Not to just inherit –

AK Yep. Yep. Mmm.

TF Necessities.

AK That's right.

TF And how was that different for your girls than for your boys, if at all?

AK 04:22:57:00 Well, for the girls it meant they had to go away um – well they didn't have to I suppose, but there was – there were no work opportunities here. Catherine did work on the exchange for a while – for 12 months – and ah then she went down and started a hairdressing apprenticeship. And the other two, well Neesie – she went down – she was working in a child minding centre for a while and ah – and she did all sorts - any other work – but she hated the city. So she ended up back out here. Um – and Helen, she ended up going straight to uni after school and she was down in South Australia so we had very little contact with her after that because it was – oh, when I say contact, we didn't see a lot of her. So um – because it's very difficult to get from here to Adelaide.

TF Mmm.

AK Really – unless you drive.

TF

AK So it's a long drive. Mmm.

TF Yeah. So was there a way in which – you said – to achieve independence or whatever the girls needed to go away, was there a way in which you assumed that the boys would inherit like the family land and family business and then –

AK 04:24:19:08 Yes. Yeah. I, I just um – but they – I expected them to do something else too, you know? I used to encourage them to have some other string to their bow. It's not much use just coming back on to the land. So Tom went away. He did his ah wool classing and um he worked in the sheds for quite a lile – a while – oh a good few years. And um – then he eventually came back home and then the other young fellow, well he left school. There was no hope of doing much with him. He went his own way all the time. So he ended working on properties after he left school and then eventually he got his pilot's licence and then he got his chopper licence and then he decided to go chopper mustering and ah, he did that up until last year and now he's left that and he's working on the place.

TF And so –

AK And Tom's gone up to the other one. They bought another one between them. In Ingham.

TF So would you see like your two sons then, working on the – sort of Hammond-Kidd land and your daughters not?

AK Mmm.

TF Is that a – um, what's the word? I suppose I'm interested in these questions of inheritance. Do you accept that – that men inherit the land and that women acquire the land through marriage? Is that a –

AK **Inheritance**

04:25:50:22 I do in a way. Um – I just feel that too many people in, in one – involved in one area, can cause too many problems. Um – I feel the less people in something, the better. And I think, you know, the boys are involved in the land. That's enough.

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AK 04:26:18:20 Um, so – no I don't – and the girls feel pretty much the same I think. Oh – you just see so many messes in some of these places with um – a whole family being left in it, and then the brothers or – the ones who are interested, having to buy the others out and then being in debt, terrible debt, for the rest of their lives and – just some terrible cases like that. I don't know.

TF It was in fact the thing which –

JH Battery Trish.

AK No.

JH I'm rolling.

AK 04:46:50:14 I think it depends a lot on the family, you know, because – if, if the girls were really wanting to be on the land, then you'd have to reconsider, I think. And if they weren't married, I mean you can get into so many – look at the problems you can get into these days with um – a heap of people in one block of land, where there's not a lot of money to be made in them anyway. And how are they all going to get a living out of it? If one does something,

the others'll disagree and I think it's – it just makes things – makes more problem. So that if you can narrow it down to just a couple on it, that must – must improve things. Mmm. I suppose it's hard on the girls but they're you know, usually they'll marry and they're away from it anyway. That's their – they go their way.

TF So your daughter that has married back into this area –

AK Mmm.

TF Is she living on a property?

AK 04:27:46:10 No. No. She was um – she and her husband were on properties all around. Yeah. And um – she's a widow now, so she's back here. She's moved back here.

TF Into Windorah?

AK She lives next door. Over the road there.

TF Oh right.

AK Mmm. So um yeah, she's always been out in the west. Yeah.

TF And with this whole um – like all around or, or certainly debate that I understand to be around between cotton farmers wanting to come into the region as opposed to people, I take it like Sandy that are in favour of organic beef farming –

AK Mmm.

TF What do you think about that issue and, and in what way, if at all, are you involved in that issue?

AK Oh well, I think um – I think the more it can be kept out of this area, the better. Um –

TF What do you want it kept out of this area?

AK 04:28:45:02 The cotton growing. The agriculture. Intensive farming. I think um – until they find more ecological ways of doing this type of intensive farming, it – it needs to be kept where it is until they sort out the problems they've got with it now. It's not much use in um contaminating other areas

with their um lack of water and all that type of thing. And I mean, there's not a lot of water here. It – it all dries up. Except in the main holes. And it's only those floods we get that, that give us all the feed, so if they start pulling water out of that base that we've got, it's going to have a big affect on the land further down.

TF And am I right that the pastoral industry in this area generally hasn't actually cultivated the land, which makes cotton farming quintessentially different? You know, the past – pastoral industry here hasn't ploughed up the land and poked seeds in, has it?

AK 04:30:32:04 No. No. It's all natural feed and ah there's a lot of ah native sorghum. See all native grasses, clovers and heaps of grasses – um, the DPI are doing a ah, compiling a list of all the different grasses in the channels. It's a big job but ah they're doing all that sort of thing.

TF Why is it – do you know why it is that the pastoral industry hasn't traditionally cultivated this land? Is it that they haven't needed to, or – or –

AK I'd say – yes. They haven't needed to.

TF Mmm.

AK **CC Ecology**

There's been no need – um – it's classed as the best fattening country in Australia so - if not the world. Natural fattening. So they've never had to do anything to it.

TF So they –

AK Why change something when it's going right?

TF So organic beef farming here then, didn't require or – well, did it require a huge shift in, in practices, or – or –

AK 04:30:57:00 No. No. Um – the only problem with it was ah any old sheep yards or any old yards where there'd been ah – ah – any sort of chemical used for white ants or whatever, you know? Especially sheep, because there – lots of arsenic dips and things used years ago. Um – they have to be filled in. That's all got to be checked out for organic farming. The real opal beef one.

TF And what was it that caused you to go out of sheep farming – your, your family?

AK 04:31:32:10 Cost. Cost of running them. The prices weren't so good. Um – the area here is ah, it, it grew really good sheep. Big sheep. Um but – and there were years where we got plenty of wool, and it was pretty good wool. Ah but very difficult to manage with sheep because as soon as you get a spit of rain, you'd have to get them out of the channels because they bog. And most of this property – there's only a – oh, part of it, that's red country. But you'd have to move them into that one area all the time. It was the cost of shifting them round. The cost of shearing them. Fencing was a big problem. It was getting to be a really big problem for us because we've got all cattle around us so we'd have to put netting in them. No-body else needed to put netting in. And just miles and miles of fencing.

TF So when we started this interview, you described Francis Hammond – you said something like 'she didn't go out into the – on to the land herself but she was the boss kind of telling people, you know, what to do or, or you also made it clear that her daughters may have been the real power but you were talking about how she saw herself.

AK Mmm.

TF Do you feel in a way yourself to have inherited that kind of role now?

AK 04:32:59:20 Well – maybe up to a point. Not, not to the extent where she did. Um – I do, still do the books for the place so I know what's going on that way. She didn't. Um – so mine is sort of more of a practical nature. Yeah. Where hers was more of a institutional nature. That was the way it should be so that was the way it was. No, it's only because of that they I – I um – feel that way because – just because I do the bookwork.

TF And would you kind of discuss with Sandy in detail, the direction that the property is – is taking? You know –

AK Oh yes. Yes. Mmm. Yeah. We have ah – ah have big talks on all that. Try and work things out – yeah.

TF With you seeing your role as, as the sounding board or as the equal partner in – you know, like –

AK 04:34:10:10 Oh – sounding board and partner. Um – yeah. More of a – more of an advisory role type of thing now. Yeah. Because I don't get out and actually do it myself now. I'm more there to have a talk to about it, just to sound off and see how things look – mmm. 04:34:46:00

TF And how would you –

JH Finished tape.

End of interview.

Next Tape 29. No transcript?

05:00:00:00 Anne Kidd (cont'd)