

**INTERVIEW WITH DOT GORRINGE**  
**15 June 2000**  
**Updated 15/1/10 Timecode refers to tape 25\_BC\_SP**  
**Topics in Bold**

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 Gorringe, 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        01:01:29:00    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 01:02:28:08 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.

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 Tobermory, 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 01:03:42:00 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 Tobermory?

- R 00:04:17:00 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 00:04:40:04 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.
- 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 01:05:18:14 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 01:05:30:14 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 01:05:55:12 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 01:06:53:10 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.

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 01:07:46:00 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 01:08:57:10 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?

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 01:10:11:00 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 **Education**

Charleville. I went to Charleville. Charleville School.

I And tell me what you remember about that.

R 01:10:33:04 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?

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 **Race Relations**

01:13:02:00 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?

R Yeah, the Watson's owned Tobermory.

I And so then when you were coming back for holidays, tell me what you remember of that time.

- R 01:14:46:00 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 01:15:11:15 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 01:16:03:00 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 01:16:36:00 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 **Romance**

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.

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?

01:19:49:15 Corellas in tree – 01:21:00:00 +Tilt to Dot 01:21:46:00+ to 01:22:40:00

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 01:25:44:00 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 01:26:42:00 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 01:27:22:00 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?

R **Work**  
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 01:27:47:22 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 01:28:28:00 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 01:29:08:08 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 01:29:28:10 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.
- 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 01:30:23:00 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 01:31:04:00 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 01:31:24:08 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.

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 01:32:47:00 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 01:33:02:10 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 **Education**

01:33:16:10 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. 01:33:27:10