

INTERVIEW WITH MANDY MURRAY
20 June 2000

TF = Trish MM = Mandy JH = Julie

SIDE A

TF ... June 2000. Channels of History project. Trish FitzSimons on sound. Julie Hornsey on camera. This is Tape 45 for camera, Tape 17 for DAT and this is the first interview with Mandy Murray on her property called –

MM Braidwood.

TF **Braidwood, thank you, just outside Jundah. So Mandy, tell me where and when you were born and what, we're not going to go through your whole life story, but just where and when you were born and what your name was when you were born.**

MM Um born in South Afri – South Australia, in Adelaide in, on the 18th September 1961. And Mandy Boyer is my maiden name.

TF And um how in, in brief terms, when did you land up in the Channel Country and what was, you know, I guess I'd like you to tell me the story of meeting -

MM It's been –

TF Meeting Alex. Actually first just tell me a little bit about your childhood. Just so we get the sense of, of where you get your trajectory.

MM Oh OK. Um wonderful childhood. My father's an architect and my mother was a nurse and they came from overseas and moved to Adelaide, had five daughters and we had a fantastic childhood where we travelled every school holidays. My father rigged up an old Combi van into a camping van that accommodated a family of seven, including two dogs, a shower, a toilet, everything, and all my childhood memories are of us travelling. Um all the way up along all parts of Australia that I wouldn't even know what they were called unless I looked back at the slides. Um and while travelling through Queensland one holidays, they decided that my asthma seemed a lot better here and hence went back to Adelaide and moved and we were Queenslanders from then on.

TF And do you think from that travelling, would you – that you got a feeling for the Australian bush?

MM Possibly from that but also when we did move to Queensland, my mother is definitely an animal, bush, land, space all around her person and um we lived near the city of Brisbane because my father's work being an architect, needed to be there but we have five acres which I still remember being a lot of land as a child and we had every baby animal you could think of that my mother would bring home in the back of a Mini Moke. When she picked the five girls up from school, we'd clamber in amongst calves and chickens and whatever she happened to have discovered that were not being treated right by somebody somewhere. Um and we all had horses and we did pony club and I just remember such a fun time with my sisters and I guess as a result of that, we are very very close.

TF So are talking Kenmore or something like that?

MM Um Aspley, was called, I think it's now called um Bridgeman Downs, Castledine, Bridgeman where we were. But it was sort of all Aspley then. Yeah.

TF So are saying you almost grew up like a country kid in the city or did you grow up with a city identity?

MM I would say, at the time I didn't think about it, but now looking back, I was definitely more of a country girl. I know we didn't, def – we definitely didn't have the neat braids and the neat school uniform. I mean um friends that I went to primary school now still laugh at the Mini Moke pulling up and the five girls with hair out to here, half putting on our shoes as we were running up because we had got the calves out of the next door neighbour's market garden that morning or, or um chased the horses out of the other neighbour's beautifully manicured lawns and then run for the bus with the bus driver putting bets on which one of us would make it to the bus first and I guess um feeding calves before school, riding horses after school, bringing up, being woken up in the middle of the night to watch baby pigs being born while we all sat with hot Milo and my father rigging up a light thing so we could all witness the birth of these pigs and I guess I feel a lot more like I was a country girl. But then as we became teenagers, um my friends all tell me I was very much a city girl. I guess because we moved into the suburbs once

my parents were divorced so they all saw the five Boyer girls as being definitely city girls.

TF So, at, so – fill me in then, the trajectory that landed you up here. Like how did you go from that –

MM From that there?

TF Yeah.

MM Um did my teacher training in Brisbane and was teaching in Brisbane, very close to where I lived for three years and transfer day arrived and everybody point to me and said it's your day today for sure. Um, three years in the one school in the city was fairly lucky as it was and, yeah sure enough, the mail came in. The Principal came to my door. I ran to the other side of the room saying 'No, no, no. It can't be true', but I must admit, part of me thought the adventure was exciting. Um I was sort of half wishing that OK, my life would take a different change and wherever the department sent me would be an adventure. And I was sent to a town called Aramac, north of Longreach, north east of Longreach, and um within about eight months of lots of different adventures of living away for the first time from home, and oh, just lots of different things that went on that year, at the end of the year ended up at the Muttaborra B&S Ball, affectionately known as the Burrado. I met a tall blonde 30 Sydney boy who told me he was a grazier and I thought yes, 12 o'clock, we all tell stories at that time of night. Um and I had to laugh because my friend that was teaching at the school with me at the time, we'd dressed up in, you know, the beautiful shoe-string strapped dresses. We bared the cold. It was quite a cool night. But you don't worry about that when you've got your shoe-string strapped dress on and by 11 o'clock, we looked at each other and we both said 'It's time. It's time'. And we went to the car and put on the big daggy half-dirty sweatshirts. Within ten minutes a voice behind me said 'Would you like to dance?' and that's where I met Lex and um I'm always laughing at the fact that we went all that time being freezing cold. I should've put that sweatshirt on from the start.

TF The, being a teacher or a nurse or a governess and coming to a country area and then marrying one of the graziers or one of the, the men here, is in some senses

like a well trodden pathway. Do you think at some level you expected something like this to happen or was this a, a surprise in your life?

MM I don't think – I definitely didn't expect it to happen because I left Brisbane with a 'you'll be – you'll meet a' – the Principal said to me, 'Don't worry dear. You'll meet some lovely grazier and you'll never come back to the city'. And I said 'No way. I couldn't live without my shops and the restaurants and the movies and you know, coffee with friends and um I'll be back in my two years when I've done my country service'. So I didn't really expect it and I certainly didn't think I'd stay living out in the west. Um but I know since I've been here that every year the transfers, they come out around, on – sort of very attached to the Longreach area and they have a Meet & Greet at the beginning of the year at the Longreach Gentlemen's Club and um from that intake every year of the new nurses, doctors, teachers, there is always a couple that remain behind and a few friends of mine um and myself are affectionately known by one of the graziers as the '85 Drop'. He says the '85 Drop' wasn't a bad year because that was when a few of us arrived and we, a few of us have married and stayed so it definitely happens. I just didn't think it'd be me.

TF And so how was it that, that Alex was a Sydney furfie?

MM And came here?

TF But a Channel Country grazier, yeah.

MM Um, his family, he's one of five children. One girl and four boys. The family lived North Shore in Sydney at Wahroongah. His father was um born and bred on a banana plantation actually at Byron Bay and had – oh I think he grew up in the Victorian sheep country. His father and um when Lex was born, they were at Byron Bay on a banana plantation but they moved to Sydney for their Dad's work. He ended up owning a trucking business in Sydney and um as the kids got older, his dream was to take them out on to the land. He didn't really like what, what he could see happening um I know Lex's Mum felt that the area lived and the people they mixed with, tended to be fairly pretentious and she really liked the thought of the whole family moving, working together, living together, socialising together and they started looking at a property. And they actually went western

New South Wales never dreaming they'd end up in Queensland. And I think the story goes that they were flown over a few properties and the plane kept flying and they eventually ended up over sort of this area and um later on, the father and I think three of the boys came back in a car and camped all the way along and I think they camped down here at Bellwater Hole and fell in love with the place and, and this is where they came. And within sort of three or, three years I think, they owned three properties in this area so – yes. It was, it's quite amazing because it wasn't something they planned either.

TF So that would have been what? Mid 80s or?

MM Ah yes. Would've been I think because Lex went from Sydney school to the Longreach Pastoral College so – and I think we worked out I was just before I went to Aramac so it must've been sort of, yes, early 80s.

TF So it's –

MM '79 I think they bought the place.

TF It's interesting if Lex had grown up in the city that he was going to agricultural college. I mean father and son very much shared the same dream or powerful father/son doing what his father wanted? Or –

MM Um –

TF You know what I'm saying?

MM Yes.

TF From Mona Vale –

MM Mmm.

TF To Longreach Pastoral College would have been –

MM Yes. I think Lex had, he left ah right at, I think he was still sort of the last bit of school or the beginning of Year 11 or – so he was still very much sort of a school age and in, in the middle of studies, and so to come out here um during a time when he wasn't sort of ready to leave school totally, I think that was the step that they chose – they chose, or he was keen on – I'm not quite sure of whether they expected him to go there or if he sort of thought that would be good. I know they were all really excited to come here so I guess the idea of learning about the land was, he would have been happy about. But um he did find college was

difficult in the first year due to the fact most of the students were from the land and he had no idea. And he was, he was fairly well teased apparently for being, asking you know the silliest questions but that only helped him to learn more and I, you know, from what I gather, he did quite well at college and has definitely had an interest in the land ever since so.

TF So was there a way in which you and he had a somewhat similar background? Like city based but with a kind of a dream of the country?

MM I think so. We talk about things now and we laugh at the fact we're bringing up, the way we bring up our own children is very much taken from the things that happened and what we did as children. And even though he, he was sort of from a wealthy Sydney area and you know fairly wealthy parents, um they certainly weren't spoilt children and they had to work and learn about the value of money and whereas I came from a divorced family where we sort of, I guess we struggled but not that any of us were aware of it. Um we felt we had everything we ever wanted and it's only now that I realise the val – you know what money's all about, that we actually really didn't have that much but um his family did very similar things with their children as to what happened to us so we'd have very similar ideas in a way we're bringing up our own children. So I guess in that way it probably helped for us to feel familiar with everything I guess.

TF So how did you then, how did the Aramac to, to Jundah –

MM To Jundah come about?

TF Yeah.

MM Well funnily enough, at the end of my Aramac year, you have to put in whether you want to transfer out by about October and I had decided that I was off overseas and because I hadn't been teaching five years, in those days you had to have five years before you could apply for travel leave, so I thought OK, I'll resign. So I had actually just resigned and went to the B&S Ball and met him. So I was already off and gone and finished with teaching. I went back to Brisbane and I worked in a restaurant in the city where I had been working part-time through college and I thought if I get lots of experience and I was a hostess at the restaurant and I thought, you know, I learnt a lot about bar and cocktail

waitressing as well and picked up a few new skills ready for sort of travelling, and um of course that was all my plans until I met him and I went to Brisbane, worked at the restaurant but of course we were on the phone all the time and missing each other terribly and thought gosh, I can't believe that I could've been out that far closer to him um so for that year I worked until Easter and realised I really didn't want to go overseas for a few years because I'd met him and I really just wasn't wanting to go now and so I actually, one day walked into the office of ah the North Brisbane Department of Education office, and I walked in and I talked to the Regional Director I think they were called in those days and I said I was just wondering if I could go back full-time teaching out in Longreach. And he said 'We never get those requests'. But he made a phone call to Longreach Regional Director and he said 'Oh I know Mandy Boyer. She was teaching in Aramac last year. Actually she would be quite useful here in Longreach because there's another girl that leaves at Easter to get married. She was the local relieving teacher but we weren't going to replace her. But the fact I do know of Mandy and I can see that she would you know, actually be quite useful here, um ring her and tell her she can be, if she can be out here in a week can she start.' So I got a phone call as soon as I got home to say when can you start and I was absolutely blown away because at that time I had lined up that I was doing a parachute jump with the Queensland Uni Rep ? Club um and a few other things that were coming up in the next two weeks that I just didn't want to miss so I sort of said oh well I've got to rearrange a few things here and um I could be out there in three weeks so sort of they said right and I suddenly ended up in Longreach at the relieving teacher. Um came via sort of Lex's property. His Mum and Dad lived here at the time with him and um we sort of thought great. All set. This is, this is it! He's two hours away from me. This'll be great. But unfortunately within a few weeks, I'd really sort of got into the Longreach scene and was suddenly single, because actually when I was in Aramac I was in the middle of breaking up with a Brisbane person and it was all very confusing and suddenly was on my own and I thought oh I actually really like this so I came down one weekend and told Lex that it was off. So that was a, that's a very long story but anyway, after um I stayed in

Longreach for two years and the new school of Distance Ed was opening and I was very excited, oh because then I decided I'd go overseas at the end of that year. And then the new School of the Air was opening and I thought gee, that would be great skills to learn to teach children on the air on properties and you know, that would be really um a challenge in my teaching. I don't think I'll go overseas next year. I'll do that. So I applied and I got that job. Did that for a year. The following year was the Brisbane's um Centenary in '88 and I thought I'd really love to be in Brisbane for that and so a friend of mine that taught with me Longreach, we went and lived in Brisbane for the year and of course right at the end, we'd already organised the transfer from Longreach to Brisbane. With six weeks to go, we went to the Stonehenge B&S Ball and of course on the way down, my friend Sally said to me 'Do you think Lex Murray might be at the B&S Ball?' and he had long gone back to Sydney. During this breakup he's left and gone back to Sydney and worked and came back out now and then apparently to do work for his Dad out here which I didn't really know about. And she said 'Do you think Lex Murray might be at the B&S Ball?' and I said 'Oh I wouldn't think so'. Um so we walked in and within half an hour, Sally turned to me and tapped me on the shoulder and she said 'Guess who's just walked in?' and apparently I turned to her and said 'Is my lipstick still on?' and she said – just looked at me and she just went 'He's for you'. And I was really quite shocked and anyway at our wedding, she stood up and told that story 'cause she was my bridesmaid and told everybody how you know, I had to, I wanted to make sure my lipstick was still on because he was, he was actually there, so obviously deep down there was still something. Something there. And I was hoping to run into him again. And he made it very tough for me from then on you know, to end up back together but I worked on him and it worked. So then I was actually transferred back to Brisbane. Stayed in Brisbane for the year. Went for the promotion to become the Principal of Jundah because we decided if we're going to be together, it's got to be right here. None of this Longreach or whatever, so um I won the promotion to become Principal of Jundah School so out I came.

TF So in your life at that stage, what mix of kind of career and assuming career would come from marriage if you know what I mean? Like um how much were you assuming that, that marriage would end your career and how much were you seeing a longer, a longer term pathway for a profession? Can you remember?

MM Um I think my main aim was that he and I would be together and the fact that there was a job going, I don't think I thought I would just come out and live here and you know, have a relationship with him and live here. That never crossed my mind. It was sort of like well I'd need to find a job. I need to transfer as a teacher out closer to him and the school was coming up for transfer, for a new Principal. Um something I had never dreamed of going – yeah that was something somebody else did, somebody much brighter and much better at teaching could do. Wasn't something I'd ever be given the chance to do. And of course um went for the promotion and won the position because it wasn't really a sought after position and come into this whole new challenging career and I was just so thankful because um you know, it's been the best part of my career. I think it's given me so much more confidence in the fact that anybody can do anything if they want to. It's not certain people that get to do these things. Everybody can if they want to. And it's actually a lot of my friends um it helped them in Brisbane realise that if there was jobs going as Educational Advisors or something not just in the classroom, it made them sort of think well maybe we are the sort of people that can do these things so um I didn't ever stop to think that I wouldn't be continuing my career but – by coming out here. It was sort of like I'd have to find somewhere where I could teach so I could also be close to him.

TF And this was a one teacher school?

MM Mmm. One teacher.

TF So do you want to describe what, how you found work, describing – arriving in Jundah? What year was it? What did you find –

MM Um '89. I was so naïve to think I could even take it on. Um I think because I'd already been – I had taught out west and I had taught in smaller schools, it wasn't quite as scary as I think coming from a big school in Brisbane. I would never have been able to think that I could do that. But I was very naïve in to thinking

that I could do it. Um and I think at the end of the first year I found the job even harder than when, in the first week. In the first week you just don't know what's involvement. By the end of the first year I felt it's too hard for one person to do this. There was no admin assistant then and the teacher aide hours were very, very little. I had seven grades. I had um fifteen children in my first year in seven different grades. There were seven subject areas to cater for for every grade level. I was also running the admin side of a school and paying, and paying bills and running a cash book that I had never ever had to do myself. Ah and never ever learnt to. I didn't do accounting or anything at school. So it was a huge huge learning curve. Um very, very frustrating at times. Um you know, your praise and your pats on the back are very few and far between and of course anything you did wrong was always the focus. Um but I guess that's probably something that makes you tougher and makes you realise that um you know, you're not in it for the, for the pats on the back. But um it was a really, it was a really hard year and I actually ended up with pneumonia and, Ross River Fever and then pneumonia and you know, being quite sick from not taking a break when I really – my body really needed a break when I was sick and I just felt that you couldn't do that. And I remember the Doctor in Brisbane saying to me once, you know, I don't know what it is about you women that feel like you can't stop when your body's telling you your sick, and um you know, you'll end up in hospital and a sickly person for the rest of your life if you don't, you know, listen to your body and stop and I was sort of a bit frightened about that because I was always quite healthy and fit. Um –

TF Is that to do with a tough environment?

MM More to do with the, the workload and the, the responsibility of running a school and being in charge of those children's education and going to bed at night and waking up in the middle of the night thinking 'I didn't do enough with that one girl in Year 4 today. I just never seem to get to her. Those three little ones in Grade 1. You know, have they spent too much time waiting for me to get back to them'. And I guess I had a lot of sleepless nights and Lex was a very big shoulder to cry on. Um and at the end, sort of getting close to the end of the first year and I

battled out here with no electricity and frogs in the toilet and spray bottles all over me to try and sleep at night and wetting the sheets. Under the shower and quickly putting it on your body and trying to fall asleep quickly before it dried and of course waking up half an hour later and you're like a steam bath because it's so hot and we had a donkey for the hot water which would take sort of two to three hours to heat up to have a hot shower and um I'd get home from school at 7 or 8 at night. Lex would come in from the property about the same time. So your shower was like 10 o'clock you know, before you could get in and I think, it was, it was a very different environment. A different job. A different workload. And it was a tough year um and I know he always laughs and says he waited 'til I'd been here three years before he asked me to marry him because he was never quite sure if I could survive. But um at the end of that year they decided that they needed to employ admin assistance so I think I started to see that there was a bit of a light at the end of the tunnel and I think I started to feel that that challenge wasn't going to kick me out and you know, I could maybe handle the frogs now and um that I'd work that programme so that Year 4 girl wasn't left out as much and yeah. And I felt, felt actually by the end of my six years as Principal, that I had it, not completely right but I felt that I was fairly on track. But it took you know, a lot of, a lot of doing the wrong thing before you find out it's wrong and doing things a different and, yeah, big job.

TF So that first year, you and Alex were living together here with his parents or you were living on your own or you, you clearly weren't married at that point?

MM No. Weren't married and very aware of small towns so we decided um that the school house that's available for the Principal, that I would rent the school house and um everybody knew that you know Lex Murray's girlfriend was going to be the new Principal of the school so they knew that I was already going out with him and I sort of thought just a little bit down the track that that was probably a nicer way to come in than to have come as the single teacher and then the rumour's gone around that I'd hooked up with Lex. So it was sort of quite nice that it was already established. I stayed at the house but um I'm very nervous alone at night. I don't know what it is about me but um I just don't like being

alone at night and I found it quite hard to stay in the school house by myself and his Mum was living with him here at the time and she would go between the two main properties, Braidwood and Moorak, and more and more, if I was sort of staying here, it gave her the chance to maybe be over there and by about Easter time, I remember a couple of the Mums at school staying to me 'You should live at Braidwood. Why don't you live out at Braidwood?' and more and more people started saying things to me about you know I should probably live out with Lex and you know, why don't you live there and I thought oooh, this sounds OK. So after Easter I think I gave up the rent on the house and they rented it out to somebody else and I moved in here and then within sort of a fairly short time I think, his Mum thought great, then she can look after husband over there so um it's sort of just the way it happened.

TF So rural attitudes had shifted along with city ones quite a lot by, that's late 80s, early 90s? I mean ten years before it would've stretched somewhere like here I would've thought to, to be living together before you were married.

MM Mmm. Well there were some people in town that were living together, not married, but with children. So that, yeah. Surprisingly the attitude was never – although I do feel that it was probably lucky that I didn't just arrive as the single new Principal and meet, meet Lex because I think that might have been more of a gossip angle than – I think that might've been harder. Harder to bear.

TF Were there other attitudes that, that um other attitudes or aspects of life that were a big adjustment for you coming, I mean obviously you'd been via Aramac but thinking this is kind of, this is where I live now. What were the things that you had to really adjust to?

MM It's funny when you say 'this is where I live now'. It took a long time before – when I'd say to Lex things like 'well on the next holidays when I go home' and I called home Brisbane for such a long time. And um I was sort of living here but this wasn't – I didn't really feel like this was my home necessarily. I was sort of out here and um well the adjustments, I mean you know I love all of my friends and I'm very close to my Mum and my sisters and um, that was hard. But the beaut thing about being a teacher is every ten or so weeks I could go and you

know, I was able to go to Brisbane and spend that time with them. But it was just adjusting to things like not having power. Not having air conditioning. Not being able to sit in bed at night and read a book because the lights are off. You know, the generator's been turned off. Trying to come to terms with having to stay here on my own some times because if Lex was out working at the other end of the property, it was very hard for him to have to come in. Um I remember one night, he rang, or his Dad rang me to see how I was going. They were shearing and they had to shear right out the back on a property and I was - all the through the day when it was daylight and I said no, I'm fine. I'm fine. As soon as it was dark the panic set in. The anxiety attack. Um and I remember he called me up on the radio to see how I was going and I just burst into tears and he said 'Look, get in the car. Drive out. We'll leave a flashing light on for you out in the middle of the paddock. Find us and bring a sleeping bag.' so I bothered to do even that because I just couldn't bear to be here on my own. Um yes so think the um -

JH My battery's just died.

TF Are you rolling?

OK. So this is camera take 46, still DAT Tape 17. The DAT's on 30.58 and this is the second camera take of our interview with Mandy Murray at Braidwood outside Jundah and it's the 20th June, 2000.

Um -

MM I'm still trying to think because I know there were so many um -

TF Oh I was going to ask you about the - how Lex handled your fear of the dark and so on. Do you think the fact that he as well would, would have been adjusting to this kind of environment made it easier? You know, like because if he'd grown up here -

MM Mmm.

TF Probably he would have just assumed that you'd stay here on your own for weeks on end like women had always done.

MM Yes. I think um he had to adjust because he knew that it, it really upset him that I would get so upset being on my own and he found more and more that he didn't stay out there on the fence line or stay out only if he really really had to. So he

would make the times when he came in um much more often and he'd often – so I'd here him saying to people like, no I can't really you know go out and finish that out there because I can't leave Mandy on her own. And the other thing I found too is, it was the – having to start the generator, and it was the wind system. Um and in, in summer I found I could do it quite well and I used to get quite sort of you know, the pioneer woman and feel really great that I could finally turn it over and get it going. Which was already if Lex was up in the shed or somewhere but it was a bit of a panic if I'd my fifth turn and it still wasn't happening. And I'd start to think of a night with no, no lights and um and so, in winter when I couldn't turn it myself because it's so cold and you really have to move it quite fast, you know that would make it difficult and he would always know that he'd have to leave it running before he left before I got home and all sorts of things so more and more wouldn't go. But um you know, like just even at night, he likes to go to bed pretty early because he gets up so early and I find at the end of the day I like to have that time, so I've had to learn to go – to accept that I either go to bed when he does and he'll turn out the generator or I'll have, I'll stay up and I'll have to do the trek out to the motor room. And because I was so nervous at going outside, up to the motor room and doing it, I used to take two torches and I'd, so that if anyone was hiding to attack me which it was I, for some reason always think that there's somebody there to attack me, if I had my two torches, it'd look like two people walking along. So, much to the amusement of you know, my sister and a few other people, my two torch thing used to make me feel better anyway. But now I've got much better so I think it is something you can overcome. Um but I do now go out every night on my own and turn it off because I just can't go to bed at 8 o'clock when he does.

TF I've met it feels like a lot of very stoic women out here. Like women who've dealt with all kinds of um privations is the first word that comes to mind, and have been determined not to kind of, not to find it difficult or whatever. How did you feel you were accepted by the women who'd grown up here when you arrived? Like things like Lex saying 'I need to be home at night for Mandy', was that difficult in your relationship to other women?

MM Um I think because I came out as the Principal of the school, my relationship to, with the women was different from the start, because I did find when I went on maternity leave and I was out of the school for a while, that the relationship with the women was different then. Because I wasn't the Principal and the teacher of their children and I think um you can't become too close to the women when you are the Principal of the school because you're, you know, your responsible for all of the children and you don't want to become very good friends with just a couple of the parents, especially in a small town. So um I don't think they actually ever saw me as a country girl any – you know as in I'm now a property girl or anything like that. You know, they saw me as very much the, the teacher and um they weren't expecting that I could handle all those sorts of things. To them I think they were, that was quite normal. That yeah, she's the teacher from town and she's from the city and she can't handle being on her own and yeah. No, they didn't find that – I didn't ever find that they thought that that was um anything because they expected I think, the teacher from the city not to be as tough as them or something.

TF And how did you – what kind of roles did you see primarily for women around you? Like was that, were there any surprises on that front from the kind of marriages or relationships um gender roles that you'd known in Brisbane?

MM Um oh I'm always in awe of some of the women here, at the fact that they will spend a day on the fence line working with their husbands and do a really good job. And I know Lex often has commented about some of our neighbours when he's gone and given them a hand doing something and he'll come and he'll just be like going 'Wow, she knows how to dig a post hole' and whatever but he's um never actually expected me to do that because I came out and I was always the teacher and I always had a completely different sort of role. Um and when I go out, he takes me out to sort of show me things and he tends to do the work and I hover around and take photos or watch and now and then I'll hold something or whatever, but I often say to him you know, you've got to teach me these things. But um I, I'm just in awe of some of them because they've taught, they taught, teach their children through School of the Air and they ride motorbikes better than

the men and they can muster sheep and move those cattle and you know, I'd quite like to be like that. I think that would be fun, but I think I'd probably do it as a bit of a game and a hobby and then I'd have enough. I have been out with him when I've helped him do some sheep work and after the first hour I'm sort of looking for something different and he'll turn around and say oh we've just got all of them to go, with that same thing that we've been doing for an hour. And there they all are, another seven hours worth. Too, no. Too monotonous. So I thought of it as a bit of fun and you know, run around with the camera and pretend I'm a country girl and then come home to this, go to my job with my books.

TF The photography. Was that something – had you always been into photography?

MM Only as a sort of snap-happy recording every moment of my friends and everything we've ever done. Um you know, the old 'here comes Mandy and her camera again' business. But um of course once I had children, it gave me a whole new you know, subject that I just adored taking children photos and, and the, you know, the life out here and the visitors we've had and everybody comes armed with cameras and we staunch off and take wonderful photos and um over the years I've thought gee, I really just love this photography business and having three small boys in such a short time didn't give me a lot of time to get outside and do photos so a lot of them are of the kids inside and very few and far between when I found time to find the camera. But for Christmas two years ago now that the boys are a bit older, the boys and Lex gave me a um a trip to Brisbane. No children. To do a photography course and to learn how to develop my own photos because I'd always wanted to have a dark room and um and develop my own black and white photos so I came home with lots of new ideas and lots of new dark room equipment and I've set up my own dark room and I'm just now pursuing that as a sort of hobby that I hope maybe one day might lead to something. I don't know.

TF And do you think that photography would have been big for you. I mean one never knows. This is sort of hypotheticals. But do you think it would have become big for you in the city? Or is it something about coming to a, a new environment with new eyes, you know? That, that things struck you.

MM Yes. Hard to know. Hard to know what would've happened if I'd stayed in the city and whether I would have. I tend to think I probably wouldn't because my life would be – I don't know. Yes, you do - I see things here all the time and the opportunities are there. Now whether they would be driving around in and out of the city, I don't know. But I know definitely you know, just being out here, the environment just seems right to um to really capture lots of lovely photos. But not so much that I do a lot of landscape ones, but yes. Something just about the lifestyle. I'd like to say it's really easy going and laid back but I'm always running behind myself but anyway.

TF So give me a typical day for you now Mandy.

MM A typical day for me now is I work two days a week at the school as a teacher, at the one teacher school. Um so a very busy day would be a Monday or a Tuesday when I work. So um Lex would bring me a cup of tea in bed in the morning. The boys come in for their morning cuddle. I lie there thinking I really should be up getting ready because I know I'll be late if I don't get up now, but those cuddles are hard to resist and I end up thinking 'too bad, I'll be late'. Um and rushing around getting all their lunches. Organising the two little ones to go to the – have the day care Mum either come here or they go to her house. Um organising my lunch and Jack's lunch and getting Jack to do his um check what he needs for school for the day. Rushing off, dropping the kids at the day care Mum. Going to school. Um teaching the school for the day. Coming home. Picking up the boys. Coming home. Um watering the garden. Washing the – any wet sheets to make they're dry for the night, because of course I can't do that in the morning because there's no power so I have to wait 'til I come home. Start the generator. Put the sheets on. Um make any phone calls or anything that I have to do if I can. The boys are pretty demanding and usually the time just flies with things that we're doing. Um oh, getting dinner. Helping Lex chop the wood. Bring the wood in for the fire at the moment in the winter because it's cold. Um organising my work for the next day. Organising Jack's homework. Ah Jed also has, has been some speech therapy so some days I have had had to do speech with him. Joe's doing School of the Air Pre-School so he sort of needs a bit of his pre-school time as

- well. So I try and fit that in every day if I can. Um and then after dinner we always read the boys a, a story and Lex and I help tidy up the kitchen and put them all to bed. But it doesn't sound that busy but for some reason it really is.
- TF It sounds, I mean to me it sounds incredibly busy, because it sounds like a day not unlike the one I would have in –
- MM Mmm. In the city.
- TF In the city. Plus the kind of the generator and the chopping wood and the School of the Air Pre-School. Is there a way in which you've tried to maintain the kind of life style you would have had, have – you would have had in the city plus the kind of the country things? Like how have you worked out –
- MM Being in the city things?
- TF Yeah.
- MM Um, I don't know whether we – I try and bring in city type things necessarily into the home here but we definitely make sure that we all go away several times a year. I've been working on Lex over the years and he's getting much better at leaving the place and coming, um because I definitely think that I'd like them to see more than just living in Jundah. Um we, we go to Noosa every year for a holiday. Um we've been going camping over at Humpy Island with some friends the last few years to, because we both were camping kids as – when we were children we did a lot of camping. Um in the city you know, they've now experienced their first movie theatre and um we take them out to a restaurant always when we go away and they drag around the shops with me as well which they don't like as much as I do. Um I didn't get my little girl shopper that could be my partner but – and the boys don't seem to be that keen and um of course they've got their city cousins and all of our friends' children that they see quite regularly because either, either down there or they've come out here. And when they come here they spend a week so they really get to see, and spend a lot of time together. So, yes, I don't know really whether I make their life style out here – not, not consciously anyway, but perhaps things that we talk about sometimes – I know I've talked to Jack some days about driving to school and I said to him one day, this is the most beautiful drive to school. We've got 8 kilometres where

we pass emus, wedgetailed eagles dragging bits of kangaroo off a road to have their meal for the day. A family of pigs will run along. Brolgas will be doing their mating dance in one of the river beds. Um the sky's beautiful and blue. We don't pass another car. The countryside is that gorgeous sage green. The soil is red. You know, the colours are fantastic. We all sit and chat in the car or sing, sing along with whatever's on. Um and I just know that in the city, you know my sisters and whatever in, they're driving in traffic and the kids and you know, it's just chaos. And it's a horrible drive. And I have this beautiful drive.

TF I mean I have to – it is incredibly beautiful. You are of course what I've had described to me as the best season in 20 years.

MM Mmm.

TF You know, how's it been like experiencing the other side of this environment? The you know, the years when –

MM Bad times.

TF There's several years on end of drought and that sort of thing.

MM Yes well, fairly horrific, because when I came in and I was battling the heat and no air conditioning and no power and the donkey for the hot water and um you know, there was no grass growing. There was animals dying. The wool floor price was pulled out of the, the wool industry, and the wool industry started crashing. Um cattle prices had dropped and you know, I used to think why, why are here? Why are we doing this? And then the drought went on and on and on and of course the wool industry didn't come back and it, it seemed to be a really struggle. Everybody seemed very sad and, and everybody was struggling and everybody around us – I think I used to really love going to the city then and just being, living in fantasy for a while where we didn't have to think about it. But it was tough, um, tougher, so much tougher for other people I think than us. We seemed to get through it OK. We've got the river just nearby. We could pump and have a green lawn and I think, Lex used to come home from school, from work, where he'd work in this barren dry you know, wondering where his stock were feeding from, and he'd say you know, it's like coming home to an oasis. And it, it gave him a lift every afternoon to come home and see a bit of green and

um and it'd give him the strength to go back out there again I think the next day. But he'd, you know, you'd see some and hear some terrible things. I think the flood years were quite amazing. The first three years I was here, we had 12 floods and of course I was the Principal of the school here and I had to get to work. No matter what, I had to be there. Um, Lex would fly me in the ultra light and I'd fly into school and land on the airstrip or um at one stage we'd land just on the road outside the school or up at the golf course and everybody would ring the school to say what's the flood doing, you know, today because I'd be up in the air and I'd see all the markers and – that was really good. And um he'd fly me back and forwards and then we'd also boat home on a Friday. He'd boat across because we'd bring everybody's gas cylinders and mail and groceries. All the properties on this side, you know? And they'd all rely on the barge would come over with all of the things and it was really quite funny for us. For a long time there, the radio would ring and people would say what time's the boat leaving in the morning. Like it was you know, a regular bus run or something. Um so 12 floods in the first three years and then drought. And drought for 7-8 years which was really hard because I'd had this, you know green, green grass. Um so what we're enjoying at the moment is just sort of, almost scary because you know it won't last forever and we'll go back to that. I find that sort of almost scary. To enjoy, to allow yourself to enjoy it. To be this nice. Because you know that you're going to have to go back to that other one day.

TF So is there a way that the mood of the community almost mirrors the land around it? You know –

MM For sure. I think definitely everybody's spirits have been lifted in the last two years and especially this year um just, just a bit of pressure off everybody I think has made – without anybody actually just sort of talking about that, now that you've mentioned it I think yes, actually everybody does seem a lot happier and getting on with things and I think, you know, the managers, the, the property, the graziers on their properties that manage their properties and make their goals and their plans, it's very depressing year after year to see that those things aren't coming off. And then to head a season that's good and prices that are good with

the cattle and to see them now being able to sort of get that fencing going and you know, it just lifts them to think well now I've sort of got a property that's um getting some improvements done. Nothing's been done for so long.

TF Presumably financially it has a huge impact on the town as well?

MM Yes. Yes, well I guess in the town it would with the local businesses. I mean, I don't know financially really how better or worse that would be for them but um tourism I'm sure, I'm sure would improve with a better season. People come out here and um so the town would flourish a bit better then but I'm sure the graziers are all spending a bit more money. I know I'm trying to. Our list, our list we've had for 7 years, we've started ticking a few things off now. You know, we've waited for this time so –

TF And power. Are you involved in the Women for power Organisation?

MM Not so much as in involved with them. I mean I'm there for whatever they need me to do but unfortunately I've just, haven't really found enough time to, to write part of their book and, and whatever but um I'm definitely you know, a supporter of theirs and you know, just so thankful with what they're doing because there have been different people out here that have pushed for a certain number of years and then sort of almost had to go on with other things. So it's lovely that these ladies have sort of been the next group to push. I did um I did go to Parliament House with my baby Jed at aged 2 I think he was, sitting on my lap and Vaughan Johnson, the local Member, had asked me to meet him in Brisbane. We were both going to be down there at the same time so he thought this would be a good opportunity to go along and we sat in the desk with a beautiful oak desk and Jed had his Vegemite sandwich that he was wiping on the desk. And I told a few stories about having three children. What with a vomiting bug through the night Lex was away. Um and I had tor – a torch, and of course the first child that vomited, I didn't rush out and put the generator on to have lights because I thought this was it. Fixed him up. Cleaned him up and then the next one started. And from then on I was so busy all night, that the, that there just wasn't a chance to go and put the generator on so I actually end up - in hindsight I should have put it on right at the beginning because I was up all night changing sheets and towels

with these three very sick boys that last, you know, it only lasted that night and they were all riding their bikes by 8 o'clock the next morning but um it was very difficult to handle with, with torch light being here on my own and I couldn't wash and I told the Parliament – the politician, it wasn't so much not being able to quickly wash and blow dry the sheets. I had enough towels and sheets to go on and on all night. It was their little fluffy that they you know, were comforted by in their bed that I needed to wash and quickly put in the dryer. That um I didn't have that luxury being able to comfort them with their little bed thing and that was really hard, because I was very annoyed that night that I couldn't do that. But he sat there and sort of sympathised and I said to Vaughan Johnson afterwards and they said – oh that was a really good story about the vomit. And I said well it was actually a true story, but I said to him then, you know, Jed's sitting here as aged 2 on my lap. Is he going to sit here at aged 22 with his wife and baby asking are we ever going to get power, because Lex had been you know, part of this looking, hoping for power for the 20 years he's been here. So will Jed sit here in 20 years time with his baby, repeating what I'm saying now? So we will see.

TF What about the RAPS ? system? Like it's been put to me from some people that, that RAPS could be a, a solution –

MM Could be a solution.

TF For out here. And might make more sense than you know, a highly intensive quarter of a million dollars to bring –

MM The grid power.

TF Power to some properties. That sort of thing.

MM I know that they're looking at saying we have to become more environmentally friendly and, and the government have to be seen as working towards that way and setting more people up on the grid system is actually not showing that they're becoming um aware of the problem with electricity. They're actually adding to the problem. And I can see that, and I can understand that, but they're offering a system that from, the people that seem to know and have researched a lot like the Women for Power people. I mean I'm trusting all of the research they have done for us and believing what they're saying that this isn't, it's not well enough

developed for us to cope with. It is still going to mean that a second grade system and if we fought this long, I think we want you know, we want what everybody else gets and rather than a second rate system so – I don't have the knowledge myself. I'm just basing all my, my own opinion on what they're telling me so – and I know they are doing the work. They're doing the research.

TF And how about the um cotton farming? Have you been involved in that, speaking of environmental um issues?

MM Issues.

TF Yeah. Tell me how that's impacted on your life and your opinion on that.

MM Well it became a very big thing because of the organic beef group that we had just sort of formed a year or two before the cotton issue came up. Um and Lex and I are involved in the, in the OBI organic beef group um in the Channel Country because we are totally organic and can be now a very particular part of Australia that um doesn't need tick, we don't have ticks and things like that. Um the group that got together and formed this, the work that was put in with trying to establish communications with Japan and the exporting of our beef to Japan at a premium um and really working towards um overcoming the drought and some of the other financial problems by looking at a bit of niche market that we seemed to have because of our area, and this was looking positive and something that we were all sort of quite, getting quite interested in, um because the wool industry of course wasn't coming back and we really needed to all work on something else. And all of a sudden the cotton issue came up and it was definitely going to be threatening what we were trying to do, but it was also threatening the fact that, you know, what's happened to the rivers where they've farmed cotton before and you know, we were all out here sort of thinking, well hang on. We really don't want that to happen to this beautiful area out here. So apart from being worried about that, we were also worried about our organic business which really would have been in big trouble if we'd started having that. Um and I think the fight sort of is still continuing. We've won a few battles along the way but I'm not sure whether it's gone and finished with. I think the, the census is that it's not shelved and put

away forever but luckily the organic company's going very well and now looking at going into Europe and America so –

TF And how would somebody growing cotton and irrigating that, how would that threaten your organic beef and what exactly do you mean by organic beef?

MM Well the organic beef is absolutely totally organic so no chemicals are to be used. The sheep can't run where the cattle run because sheep are dipped. Um the cattle aren't to be touched with any chemicals. If they have fly in their eye, they're not to be treated with any chemical at all. So it has to be absolutely totally organic. We um we have certification through NASAR that and they certify you after three years of doing soil testing randomly throughout the area of your place, and then those um the certification continues every year after that. But you can start promoting your product and selling your product after three years and then every year, they test again and again. And you have to put certain management techniques in that they recommend and you've got to prove that you've done those and we keep pasteurisation um programmes and planning in books and photographs to show the pasture um so basically the whole system of the OBI organic group, right from eating the herb, the herbs and things that grow naturally in the flowers and whatever out here, right through to in-transit, they eat organic hay only. Ah right through to the meatworks that they've chosen to run, to run the whole property. I don't know all the sort of details, ins and out. I just, the bits and pieces that I've seen on video and what I've read. But basically it is totally organic. No chemical.

TF And so how do – (interruption)

So how, how would you know, one or two neighbours having, growing cotton on their farm, impact on what you're doing on your land?

MM Well once again, the details I'm not sure of, but I think basically what I gather is that the chemicals they use in cotton would wash down through the soil, through the river system and could end up on any of the properties anywhere and as soon as we have chemical found in our soil, we're not organic any more. Um, not certified organic. So I think you know, in a nutshell, I think it was basically the chemicals washing down the stream and into the soil I think was the, the main

- issue. Lex was very involved with all of that so I left it to him. I tended to the children.
- TF And tell me about race relations as you've experienced them out here.
- MM I haven't really experienced anything um Jundah itself doesn't have any indigenous people and apparently the history is that they're – I mean I'm going on what I've been told. I'm not sure if this is true. The history was that there was a, an Aboriginal woman that was murdered um down at what they call the Jimmy Shoe Creek in Jundah. Um and it's sort of a bit of voodoo now for the Aboriginals to live in Jundah and now whether that's true or just a story, I'm not sure, but in the 20 years that um Lex's lived here, there haven't actually been a family that live here and we don't have any at the school so I'm not sure if there is a bit of sort of taboo with, among the people. Um, I mean they live in Windorah and further afield but no, we don't have any. Even Stonehenge. They, they live up in Stonehenge so yeah. Might be a bit of truth to the story. I don't know.
- TF There was a – I don't know a lot about that history of this area but I do know there was a big massacre I think in 1876 at Battle Hole. Um, is there much talk in the town of that, of that history of, of conflict over the early settlement?
- MM Only when sort of certain historical events come up that you start to sort of talk about it or if somebody new has come to town like the new Principal of the school, and you sort of get discussing why things are named, what they're named, because I know we've got Tragedy Paddock on this property and um um, there's another – some sort of a big of a scary name somewhere else and apparently there's stories that go with those. But is the Battle that one about the little boy that walked from Retreat? Is that that story?
- TF I –
- MM Have you heard about the little Aboriginal boy –
- TF No.
- MM Who lost his leg and walked from Retreat all the way in to Jundah or something. There is a story about a battle that went on and a little Aboriginal boy had his leg blown off and he crawled from Retreat, which is where – Retreat was named because that's where the troops retreated to in one of those battles – and um he

- apparently walked that far. Now that's sort of 70 kilometres and he dragged himself that far or something. So yes. I don't know about this other one though.
- TF Do you feel um echoes of those um of that conflict in your life here now?
- MM No. No. I don't think there's really – I wouldn't say there'd been any race issues in the whole time I've lived here. You know, there's the Yugoslavians that do the opal mining. There's a lot of them sort of around, and um we've got some Islander people at the moment and you know, we don't have the Aboriginals but we have a lot to do with them, if we're – with the Windorah families when they come up to our Sports camps. I mean they come and we go down there. And no, I wouldn't say there's any, any um, any issues with them at all actually.
- TF And how about – you've lived here in the period of Marbo and Wik.
- MM Mmm.
- TF Do you remember hearing about those decisions and what kind of reverberations might they have had in your life and in this community?
- MM At the time actually, just as the Marbo issue was handed down, as the signing and that sort of thing happened, we unfortunately had our property up for sale because it was um, it was at a time where we had both got to a point where we thought 'why are we here'? Prices were low. Drought was on. You know, we weren't getting power. It was like, you know, why are we here? Let's go. So we looked at moving and we put the place on the market. We had 2 little boys at that time I think and they were very much babies so they really weren't country boys living out in the you know, wide open spaces. They were basically with me in the house. So we had the place on, up for auction, but it was a very difficult time and you know, the agent sort of said to us, you know, people aren't looking until the final thing is handed down and John Howard actually came to Longreach only about two or three weeks before our auction date and was talking about what this Native Title thing was going to be. What it was going to mean to us. And there was sort of um pieces of paper sent to properties that were part of some big group that was going to be taken over, and of course there was the Jundah sitting right there in it. So the agents did say look, people aren't going to be looking at places that might be ending up going back to Native, you know the Native Title issues

- are there and you're property being one of them may scare a lot of people away. So whether that did or not I don't know but the place didn't sell and you know, luckily it didn't because as the boys got just even a year down the track, we were so glad that they're here and um now more so than ever when I see what they can do and I just love the fact they're being brought up out here. But –
- TF Is this, is this leasehold or do you own it freehold?
- MM No. This is all leasehold. Um there are very few places that can be freehold out around here apparently.
- TF So it would in fact be the Wik decision that would potentially affect you more?
- MM Yes.
- TF Has that, I mean is there much talk about that issue?
- MM There was a lot around that time so that was going back to '80, ah '90 – when was all that? Probably four years ago. Yeah. Very much so. And we were actually receiving booklets in the paper that sort of, in the mail, that was sort of saying things like your property is, is one of the ones that's coming under the such and such group that will take over your property and we're sort of like - what really happens to us if this happens? Lex was very worried about it and I know I remember saying to him, you know, don't worry about things until they actually happen. You can't worry about things until we know what's going on. And then it seemed to all fade away really. So we don't know. Don't hear much about it at all any more.
- TF So are there any Native Title claims over this, over this land?
- MM From what they showed us on those maps, it was very hard to get details. It was sort of areas. And the actual Braidwood property was very hard for them to pinpoint yes or not. We, we never got a clear answer from anybody. Um but definitely this Jundah area, yes. There was. It was marked on that map so yeah, what part of Braidwood was counted I don't know, if any.
- TF Do you feel there's been much effort put in by political parties or by, I don't know, the Native Title Tribunal to kind of, to educate people in this area on the issue or has it been more like sort of scare campaigns or –

MM No, definitely scare campaigns. It was very hard to find out a lot of details. Um I don't feel that we understood anything really very well at all. We would write to our, we wrote to our Member, our Federal Member um in Roma and I remember receiving back um very much a, a sort of a standard letter that he'd obviously sent to everybody, but still didn't tell us what it's going to mean for us. If it happens. If it doesn't. So I guess we were at a frustrated stage of not really knowing anything but then as time went on, nothing was ever mentioned any more and it's not actually something we even think about now. So, no, it's sort of faded into the background.

TF This is a question going way back, but how would you describe the attitude to education in this area now?

MM Very strong I think actually. I think the people here are most concerned about what their children will be able to do. I know a lot of families would like their children to be able to return to the land, return to this area and have a job to come to. Um, but no I think the, I think the education's fairly high on most people's lists. The um School of Distance Education families that work through the correspondence, you know, those mothers do an incredible job of making sure that those children are, are um are really are doing real school and that's a big ask for them when they're also out helping their husbands and doing it. I don't know how they do it. I don't know how they do it. But obviously education is really of a high priority so they make sure they do it.

TF And having come to this area and in fact Lex having coming to this area, you know, as adults – well, you said Lex was Grade 11 – what do you see for the future? Like is this just a stage in your family's life or is this the beginning of you know, a multi-generation –

MM Generation. The –

TF Dynasty.

MM Yes. What was it? Dirtwater Dynasty.

SIDE B

TF ... in fact Lex having come to this area, you know, as, as adults. Well I know you said Lex was Grade 11. What do you see for the future? Like is this just a stage in your family's life or is this the beginning of, you know, a multi-generation –

MM A generation. The –

TF Dynasty.

MM The – what was it? Dirtwater Dynasty. Ahhh. We've discussed it on or off wondering what will happen and we both decided that we don't want them to have to go to boarding school because we just couldn't bear not having them around us right through sort of their teenage years, as long as we possibly can. So we're looking at moving when Jack starts high school, which is now only five and a half years away, which is really scary because I'm, I love watching them grow out here and even though I feel Jack at age 12 would have a fairly good solid basic land upbringing, he would have by then been out quite a lot helping Dad muster and um you know been out on that fence line and I think he'd, he really would have worked the place. Now Joe would be Grade 5 when we leave, so he would've done a fair bit too but Jed would only be Grade 4 and I sort of wish that Jed would also have been able to get to being 12 out here, not just you know, 8. So we're a little bit torn about that but we do want to move so that we can be with him for school.

JH The tape's just run out.

TF OK. We might just – we're nearly finished. I think we'll just finish on –

MM The audio.

JH I can put back in –

TF Oh yes.

JH minutes –

TF Yeah. OK. Recording what um?

JH Tape 45.

TF **OK. We're just finishing um Mandy's interview on the end of, of Video Tape 45.**

JH **Time code 21.**

TF **Time code 20 -**

JH 26.

TF Time code 21.26 on Video um whatever number I just said and this is still DAT, DAT tape 17 with the time code 1.07. This allows us to keep it all, and so this is, this is the third video tape of Mandy Murray.

JH OK We're ready.

MM So we were talking about leaving –

TF But –

MM Boarding school.

TF Yeah.

MM Um, we discussed selling the place or putting a manager on so I guess by the time we go to leave, we will have to decide whether we feel like the boys would like to keep the place or whether we'd like to keep the place or do we put a manager on. I think Lex is liking the idea of putting a manager on and coming out during the school holidays to do the cattle muster. Coming out and doing the shearing, and the boys bringing their city friends to come out and help. Um I'm planning that I'll bring all my friends out and we'll sit out on the river with our champagne while they do the mustering. Because all my friends say you can't sell. That's our annual holiday place. So I said don't worry. You can all come with me and they can do the mustering and we'll drink champagne.

TF It's a very very different attitude to the land than, than people who've been on it for generations and who you know, I mean boys, boys um Jack's age will probably thinking about taking over the family's land as what they need to do or whatever.

MM Mmm.

TF How do you, how do you see those differences in yours and Lex's lives and attitudes as opposed to, to neighbours that have been here forever?

MM Well I guess just that the kids at the school even um, they talk about you know that this is where they'll live forever and that they will be graziers on the properties where their dad's worked or the kids whose dad works on the Council, well they'll work on the Council. Like Dad. And it's sort of not, they don't think about the fact that maybe they might go and do something else whereas I know

our boys at, some times at dinner, sit and talk about what they're going to do and of course they rattle off a whole lot of things. Um and they always, I know Joe includes um I'm going to first be a racing car driver, then I'm going to be like Dad. Then I'm going to be a toy maker and then I'm going to be – and Jack would like to be an Engineer. He's often talked about being an Engineer or a some sort of you know, designer of something. And then I might have a turn of being like Dad and being a grazier but then I'll go off. So you know, they often sort of mention being a grazier like Dad as a, as one of the thing – many things that they'll do. And it is a very different way to, you know, the way I hear the kids at school talk, is that they will do – they'll be here in Jundah forever.

TF And what's the girl's equivalent of that? Like what do the little girls of Jundah in the main see for themselves in the future?

MM Working in the office on the Council. Which is where sort of the ladies work. Um or helping Mum run the shop. Or helping Mum run the new service station. So yeah – the, 'cause there is a lot more women working in jobs in Jundah now than there were sort of when I came I think. The lady at the shop, ran the shop when I first came and now there's sort of two other – a little Post Office and there's a service station now and new since I've been here, so it sort of opened up a few new jobs for women and the Q Gap ? office was another one that a lady was running. Um, a few extra admin jobs at the Council so they're sort of some girls that I taught at the school. A lot of them um oh not a lot of them, but a couple of them that I taught when I first came here, now I'm teaching or playing with their kids at play group. So that was really weird. Um and they're you know quite young mums but um yes, they did their schooling and then they came back and lived in Jundah and they had babies so yeah.

TF So how does that kind of I guess essentially very conservative set of attitudes around staying in the same area and you know, doing the range of jobs that are available in this area, sink with the keen interest in education that you described?

MM Um, I don't know whether it's true or not, but I think some of the property children seem to be the ones that may go on and do university or college, so whether that just happens to be what I've witnessed when the town children seem

to be away at high school and come back to the town, but that's just because of, you know, the 10 years I've been here, that's what I've seen. Um, so no, they want them, they want them to you know, have a good education and things but they don't necessarily want them to go to uni or college.

TF So is that a class difference between town and, and rural areas surrounding and a class difference based on relationship to land do you reckon?

MM I don't know. I hope not, because I know there can often be a, a town/country thing. Um, I don't know whether it's just certain people and it just so happens to be the way it's been here. Um, there's not a lot of children on properties sort of in this area really. Or they're little at this stage so I haven't witnessed a lot of them go on past sort of high school, that many of them. They haven't been at those sort of ages yet, so that's yet to come, whether they'll become anything at uni or college, I'm not sure. But no, no – I don't know about the class thing. Hard to know. Hard to judge.

TF Anything I haven't asked you about that to you is really obvious in um either your, your life out here or more generally about the life of women out here in the Channel Country?

MM Well I know life for women – um, I think can be you know, fairly tough, because they, they don't seem to be able to go away very often or they don't feel that they are allowed to go away whereas I don't know whether it's just me and Lex, often a lot of friends look at Lex and say I don't know how you do it. She's always off. But you know, now and then I get that urge for a coffee and a haircut and I jump on a plane and go to Brisbane and he thinks that what I put up with out here, I certainly deserve to go and do that. And I know a lot of our friends that are born and bred on the, in the country, some of the men um often shake their head and think – and say to me, you know, boy, I don't know how he puts up with you. And you know, he often used to say to me at the Christmas holidays when I was – before we had children, and I had seven weeks holidays and no way could he leave the property in summer because it was the dreadful time to leave when the waters were so vital and whatever. And he, and I'd say you know, oh well I'll go down to the Gold Coast where my sister lived and you know, do the seven weeks

away and he's like oh great. Yes, I wish I could come. And he had a few comments from friends sort of like saying I can't believe you let her go for that long. Like she can't go away for that long. And he would say gosh, I'd be with her if I could. I'd go away now if I could. It's a dreadful time to be out here but you know, unfortunately I can't leave the place. And I have a very good friend that um is often shaking her head and saying I can't believe that Lex, you get Lex away so often or that when you are away, that he may decide to stay those extra couple of days because you've had for whatever reason um, their husbands say alright finally yes to a holiday. They go on the day they planned and they're back the day that he planned to get back whereas I seem to be able to sort of sway Lex sometimes to stay that extra couple of days. And she's pinpointed it to being the fact that he's not from the land originally whereas some of them feel they can never leave the place.

JH Well finish on audio.

MM Um and that they just are not allowed to leave the place or you just don't do that. You don't go away for you know, long periods of time or often through the year even just for a couple of days. It's just not something that you do. You're on the land and that's it.

TF Is it perhaps that you're more comfortable financially and so you two can, can kind of buy support here that other farmers around, not farmers - I beg your pardon - graziers can't?

MM I think sometimes when we look at some things like that, we're lucky that we're close to the town because putting on a caretaker while you go away is a huge chunk of your holiday money. It's a lot of money to get somebody to look after your place. But being 5 minutes from town, we can actually get someone from town to pop out, water the garden and go home. Whereas friends of mine on properties around, they actually have to have somebody living there, so for someone to live there, they charge you know, quite an amount per day to stay there and then of course you're running your fuel and your generator for that person as well. So the expense is huge, and I guess that makes it much harder. Um, me working as well and a different um you know pay packet coming in from

somewhere else definitely helps as well, even though I'm only there a couple of days, it just gives you that holiday money that you know, the farm money goes back to the farm and anything I earn was for us to play with really. Um – and I think the fact that we have family down in Brisbane and the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast means that you've always got places to stay because a lot of people don't have connections in Brisbane so they're having to put up, themselves up in motels and you know, that sort of thing does become out of reach for them so yes, possibly.

TF So where do you reckon 20 years from now you're likely to be? Can you imagine a life for yourself? You'll be what? Late 50s?

MM Ohh, gosh. Well hopefully by then I will be living, possibly in the Sunshine Coast hinterland area. Um we may still have Braidwood, whether the boys are running or what happens. So whether I venture out here for a little fun holiday um maybe I'd like to be doing something like photo journalism by then or something. You know, maybe I might end up doing something with my photography. I'm hoping that there might be a dream out there somewhere that I'll fulfil one day. Um – I don't know whether I'd still be living in Jundah in 20 years. I don't know. I know Lex says he's now been here for more than half of his life and that's sort of is quite amazing to him. We both definitely don't want to live back in the city. Um, love to visit it but no way to – yeah, don't want to live back there again. And um somewhere where we're 10 minutes away from jumping on a highway to do whatever you want to do but when you go home, you can't see houses or anybody around you and you can pretend that you're out in the country again I guess. That'd be nice. Very nice.

TF OK. Thank you very much.

End of interview