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Full transcript of an interview with

HERBERT WRIGHT

circa 1977

By Janice Kelly

Recording available on CD

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A series of dots, **.... ....** indicates an untranscribable word or phrase.

Sentences that were left unfinished in the normal manner of conversation are shown ending in three dashes, **- - -.**

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Janice [check name – interviewer is addressed as 'Jacquie' at p.17] Kelly interviewing Mr Herbert Wright *circa* 1977. This recording forms part of the 'Interviews Concerning Parndana…' project of the Somerville Oral History Collection of South Australiana. When dates are mentioned, the interviewee generally speaks them in the following manner: *e.g.* 1899 is pronounced as 'eighteen and ninety-nine'.

TAPE 1 SIDE A

– – – telling the boys and girls how old you are?

Tell the boys and girls how old I am?

Yes.

Yes. Do you want me to tell now?

Yes, you just say.

I'm getting close on ninety-three.

Yes.

My wife is nearly the same age.

Almost the same age.

Almost the same age.

Well, you've had a really long life together.

Yes.

You're very lucky.

What I can speak on goes back a hundred years. This year my father came back to Kangaroo Island, my mother came to Cygnet River and lived in the company's manager's residence in 1856.

That's more than a hundred years ago.

Yes, it would definitely.

And were you born at Cygnet River?

I was born at Cygnet River in that same residence. It's gone now, they're putting up a thing, though, in remembrance of it, I think. But they can't make you think it's anything like it at all because that was built of planks. It was really from the sawmill, they'd take a slice off the log so as to fit him on, saw him up, and they built their places out of that. We have a picture somewhere of part of that house, but we can't find it lately. I don't know what's happened.

Well, when they made the house by putting up the planks it would have had gaps in it. Did it have gaps in between the planks, did they have to fill – – –? Did they have to fill the gaps up with mud and wattle?

What, my son?

Of the house.

Yes, he's our youngest son.

Were you born at Cygnet River in the house, or were you born in hospital?

I was born at Cygnet River in that residence in 1884.

Yes. And how many brothers and sisters did you have?

It was five brothers – four brothers and me and a sister.

Were you the youngest or the oldest?

No, I was the third from the oldest.

Well, Mr Wright, did you go to school?

No, no.

There was no school.

No school, the only schooling I got was my night school lessons. (laughs)

And who helped you with those? Did your mother or father help you with those?

With what?

Did your mother or father help with your night school lessons?

My mother had taught me to read and write, yes. Father couldn't write. He could read. When I was twenty-four I was running my own business. I went into business on the main road – the shed is still there – I went into business and ran my own show – bills and booking and everything, I did it myself.

What sort of business? What business?

Tank making, mainly.

Tank making?

Then I went – that's how this man comes to be a tank maker, went down through. And then I went into blacksmithing, bike repairing and all sorts of things, building factories for the eucalyptus and bicycle work. All sorts of things I mixed into it.

It sounds like you had a very interesting life.

Yes, I found it tremendously interesting life. When those newspaper people asked me what I'd done in the past I laughed. I said, 'I couldn't run through it, it's too much.' (laughter)

Too much!

It's really wonderful to think what I've done, been interested in.

Well, when you were a boy you didn't go to school, so what did you do during the daytime? Did you have to work? When you were a boy, did you have to work during the daytime, or to help your father, anything?

I don't know what you said.

When you were a little boy, you didn't go to school, did you?

No, I didn't go to school, I had to work.

You went to work, yes.

As soon as I could run almost I was minding sheep. No fences, no dog. Me and my brother used to mind the sheep all day, drive them home at night and Father used to count them into their sheepyard, and if they weren't all there he'd send us back – no tea until we found them! (laughs)

Oh! My goodness. I bet you kept your eye on them, then, so that you wouldn't get sent back. And can you remember any other things that you used to do, any other work besides mind the sheep?

I don't know what you said. I wish I could hear better. (break in recording)

You said that your father had sheep.

Yes, very few.

What about shearing the sheep? How did you do that?

Father used to shear them himself, I think. I don't know whether it would be quite a hundred. Probably just a little mob of sheep. We didn't have any grass, it was all bush in those days. We lived on what was the old company section, part of that was cleared, and that's where we used to mind them – bit of grass. But then, like I told you, we'd yard them at night, we used to count them every day. We had a dog but he was no good at all at driving sheep.

Did your father shear the sheep by hand?

Yes, there was nothing else. (laughs) No such thing as shearing machines in those days. Sheared them with the shears.

And have you ever shorn sheep like that?

Yes, yes. One season I put in the shearing season myself. I shore ….. ….. people down the north coast of the Island – that's one of the things I have done. There's many of them.

Well, after the sheep were shorn, what did you do with the wool?

I suppose sent it to ….. I think they used to get about fourpence a pound for it.

About four pennies, that's about – well, that's about four cents, isn't it, not quite four cents. (break in recording) Let's see. I read in the *Sunday Mail* that you had the first car on the Island. In the *Sunday Mail* it said you had the first car on the Island. Were you the first one to have a car? (break in recording)

– – – picture of it. Would I get it?

Yes, I'd like to see that.

Not my car, that isn't, but it's the same thing.

Yes. (break in recording) Now, the car that you first got was an Oldsmobile car.

Oldsmobile.

And you were the first –

Island-born, yes, yes.

Island-born resident –

Yes, to have one.

To have a car.

Yes.

Now, in the picture of your car – – –.

There was two or three other cars here owned by people that weren't born here, but I was the first Island-born one to have a car. Also a motorbike, I was the first Island-born that had a motorbike.

And what sort of motorbike was it?

NSU.

NSU.

'No Steaming Use', it meant. (laughter) It was about this high.

Was it hard to ride? Did you have to be strong to ride it?

The throttle, you'd push it out, it didn't twist around like they have them now.

With this car, there isn't any steering wheel.

No, no, this was the steering thing. You could drop it between your knees and steer it with your legs if you wanted, and eat your dinner.

It's just like a big gear stick, isn't it?

It was hinged, you see, it would drop down here. And the engine was crossways and it was chain-driven, ….. round the axle at the back, and the starting part was on the side here.

Oh, yes. How fast could the car go?

Well, I think I reached twenty-eight miles.

That was really speeding.

Yes. But the old Ford of those days, I think its limit was about twenty.

And how old were you when you got the car?

They were built in '02, 1902, that model.

Nineteen hundred and two.

Yes.

Mr Wright, when did you get married?

When did I get married?

Yes.

1910.

Nineteen hundred and ten.

And we've been married over sixty-six years.

Did you used to take your wife in this car?

I didn't get that until '13, and we were married in '10.

Oh, well, you did take your wife.

Yes.

Did you have to wear hats and goggles, because there isn't – – –?

No, I didn't. There was no windscreen, which you'll notice.

There's no roof, either.

No. Yes, it had a hood.

It had a hood.

Yes. I didn't have it on – that one hasn't got it on.

No.

Yes, mine had a hood. You could get four people in it, there was a seat at the back looking back like the old ….. – that's a ….. name for the buggy. Passengers at the back looked back, you see, it was like that.

Well, with the car, were you still living at Cygnet River then?

No, I was living up at the Corner. My shop is still there. Do you know where Dudley Lee lives?

Yes, I do.

They call that Tinsmith Corner –

That's right.

– that's because I was the tinsmith. The house he lives in I had the first two rooms and passage it had built.

Well, I never knew why it was called Tinsmith Corner before. That's – what is it? – two miles from Kingscote, isn't it, about two miles out there?

I didn't get it.

That's all right. (break in recording) When your car, when you got your car, how did you get it onto the Island?

Onto the Island?

Yes.

Oh, the ship was running, *Karatta* was running.

The *Karatta* was running then.

Yes. That was in the *Karatta*'s day. She started here in '07.

Nineteen hundred and seven the *Karatta* started.

Yes, that's when she came.

And they had to lift it on and off.

Yes, yes, that's right. They used to pick all the bigger cars up, swing them ashore. They had to swing one, a new one, one ashore and it slipped and it busted the car.

Did it? It would make you a bit cross if the car belonged to you, wouldn't it, to have it busted like that.

What's that?

It would make you a bit cross if it happened to your car. That's all right.

I don't remember the cost of getting it to me.

I just see here some prices for the cars. Six hundred and fifty – – –.

You're looking at the prices on them?

Yes.

I can tell you, and I think it's right, the dollar in those days was four and eightpence our money.

Four and eightpence our money, and here it's got six hundred and fifty dollars.

The American dollar was four and eightpence in our money.

Well, that's something to work out.

I'm really sure that's right.

They were fairly – didn't cost very much money, really. Not like now.

I got it for twenty-two pound ten. It was of course second-hand, as you'd call it.

Well, Mr Wright, in your lifetime you must have seen a lot of changes on the Island.

Yes, I have. I can tell you what brought the Island into the daylight. It was three different things. In about nineteen hundred – yes, nineteen hundred – they started making eucalyptus oil. In a few years' time there were thirty-seven factories working, making eucalyptus oil. I owned two at two different times. And about the same time yakka gum became saleable and the superphosphate started much about the same time. The land nowadays – anything outside the river flats you couldn't grow anything on it, and then – to grow our hay everything had to be planted on the river flats. And then came along one day and we were clearing somebody's top land, he said, 'You want to get some superphosphate and you can make that land grow.' Well, that's what we did, and now they grow potatoes and all sorts of things in the same land. And the salt lake, in the summertime, that used to employ about fifty men. The salt lake now is not a salt lake, it's gypsum.

That's right, yes. Did you ever – could you tell us how they do the eucalyptus still? How do they make the eucalyptus oil?

I ought to know, when I've made tons of it! (laughs) Well, you have a boiler. In the first days they used to use square tanks, they used to get them out from England with different things in and we used to buy them, I think it was four pound ten each. You put a cooling coil in one, covered with water, the other one you'd chop the top out of and have a lid for it. You'd put the bushes into that square one and put the lid on, and have a pipe from that lid into the cooling tin, it'd cool through that and run into what we called a receiver which got rid of the water and left the oil in the thing. You'd bail that out afterwards. But afterwards, when we used these bigger boilers, we put two chains in, one each way, and pulled ….. a derrick, a crane, and lift the whole of the bush out in one lot, swing it around and drop it down. Then we would

burn that to cook the next still. In the early days they used to make a wood fire under the thing and do it with wood. We learned to burn the cooked leaves instead. That's how it was made.

And what about yakka gumming? Did you do that yourself, did you ever do yakka gumming yourself?

Yes, yes. That's the first job I did when I left home. I left home when I was sixteen, and the first job I had was cutting yakka gum on the way out to Parndana, or only just at what they call Roper's now, it's just across the road from Roper's, that was Yakka's in those days. And that's the first job I had, pound a week and keep.

Can you tell me how you did that?

How you did it?

Yes.

Well, really I don't – well, I can tell you properly how we did it. In those days we didn't – weren't up to date with it. I think we used to clear the bushes from around the yakka, spread bags on the earth and chop the stuff into that and then sift it with a sieve. Some people came from Western Australia that had been yakka gumming and they taught us how to make a jigger. After that, later than that, in my shop I used to build jiggers for them. It was a framework, a shaker thing with two sieves in it instead of the sieve. And then after that it's put through a winnower, makes two grades of yakka gum. But I think in the old days we used to lose the fine gum.

Were you the first tinsmith on the Island? Were you the first tank maker?

Yes. Well, I don't think I can say yes. Two people from Gawler, ….. brothers, went to that corner and built the first part of that shop in a little tin hut, went tank making, they couldn't sell enough and they sold their things and cleared out. And it just happened nicely I bought some of their gear and used their old shop and their little dwelling.

And did you teach yourself (sound of slamming door) how to do it?

To make the tanks?

Yes.

Well, tell you the yarn, I went to town intending to join a ship that was to arrive in a fortnight's time and went to my aunt's place and her son was a tank maker. And I talked about going on the ship and the old mother said, 'Why don't you learn to make tanks from Al and go back to the Island and go tank making?' I said, 'There'd never be enough sale.' I thought, 'I wonder whether they would.' Instead of going on the ship I went down to Adelaide and went about a fortnight with my cousin, he taught me how to make a tank, I went down to Adelaide and got two little things printed about the prices and 'first quality used' and all this sort of thing, and went into the same shop as they'd been using and went on for years. I made hundreds of tanks.

And now your son-in-law does it.

And I used to make water troughs and stove piping and little tin safes and all. If I was over home I could show you a picture of my shop with the water trough and those things in it, and the man that committed suicide just after – – –. He came over and got pictures about our business places on the Island – he was an editor – and went back to Kapunda and shot himself in the office. Yes.

And now your son-in-law is still making tanks.

Yes, he's still making – my son took, Arthur, took it on – well, in fact, three of my sons took it on. But Arthur took this on, he built this up, he built this house. He did this, Arthur did. And sold his business to this fellow, Les Waltham. That's how it came from me to Al Turner. Yes.

And what do you think about Kangaroo Island now, Kingscote?

Pretty good.

Pretty good place to live. (voices in background)

Yes, did me all right. In 1927 we – my business was flourishing, my mother – my wife, I mean, had a sister running a dairy down on Cygnet River, and I knew what difficulty it was to grow up without an education, I sold out and went to Kapunda so that they could get high schooling. We struck the Depression – you've never seen the Depression – and things were absolutely shocking. We lost practically everything we had. Came back here in '35 and bought this old place. I just had enough to buy this old place where we've lived since. I told Arthur about that and

he thanked me for it. (laughs) Yes, it was a very bad move. Yes, it got that way that we couldn't do much about schooling when we couldn't earn enough – things got absolutely shocking.

Yes, they were really hard times for everybody. When they started the Soldier Settlement scheme at Parndana, did you think that was a good thing? (sound of truck passing) Did you think that was a good thing?

No. When they went there I said, 'It will be an absolute failure because the land's no good.' And land there, where the aerodrome is now, I remember that being sold for one-and-tenpence an acre. (laughs) You could hardly believe that. Later on it was sold for seven-and-six an acre. We consider all that land absolutely useless – all out from – we lived at – do you know Fernville?

No.

A place just the other side of – just across from the aerodrome.

Oh, yes.

You don't know the old company section, do you, where the mill used to be, the sawmill?

No, I don't quite know where that was.

That's where I was born. But where you get into the next section from that later – Fernville, we called it, it had a lot of bracken fern – anything, like I said before, outside the river flat was useless. And then they went doing that with the land out there I said, 'It will be a total failure.' And now they're doing well. Now anything can be made to grow now as long as it's not salt.

Well, they found out some things to help them, didn't they, with the superphosphate and whatnot.

We used to go out past where the aerodrome is now, the swamp, (sound of tapping and banging in the background) and cut up the rushes ready for our pigs. (laughter)

Do you remember the first aeroplane coming to the Island, the first 'plane? (break in recording)

That was just after we came back to the Island, yes. One of them crashed just up here in a paddock. I think the man that fell in here died not long after.

That would have been about 1935, then?

Yes, we came back in '35. We lived – our old home was just across here.

Well – – –. (break in recording)

I forgot to tell you that, instead of putting bags on the floor when we were cutting yakka gum, we learned to make what we called a 'boat', a thing that would stand up while the yakka was chopped, it would come into that. And then another thing I didn't say, that we used to pitch the bushes out of the tank in the early days with a pitchfork, and then I told you how we pulled it out later with the two chains, didn't I?

Yes.

Yes, I forgot to tell you those two things. I would give you strings and strings more stuff if I could – – –.

UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE [U.F.]: He's pretty good on the wrecks, too.

On the wrecks? Well –

UF: Boat wrecks.

– I'm prepared to just keep going and have you talk. You know a bit about the boat wrecks?

Yes, I know quite a lot of them. But I made a speech one time and I had thirty boats I talked about. I don't think I could remember thirty now – my mind is not so clear. But now they've got fifty. But a lot of them, I've known them. The *Mars* was wrecked the year after I was born. Yes, the *Locksloy* (banging sounds) was wrecked on – my memory's going bung – on 1899. The *Lock and Anchor* was wrecked in '05, and the *Robert Burns* about '08. She was purposely stuck on the spit, I think. And then the *Fanny Ann* was wrecked before I was born, the *Ozmanly* at D'Estrees Bay before I was born, and then the *Montebello* was wrecked in '06, 1906, at ….., and then the *Oscar Robinson* went ashore with a big blow at Snug Cove, but they managed to get her off again. The *Duncary*, they got people thinking that she was wrecked – she wasn't at all, she got too close to shore. They cleared out and left her and went around to Snug Cove, but they sent a boat down and pulled her out from the shore and she went away with her job. What other ones could I talk about? I'm not so clear now. I think I had about thirty when I was ….. I saw the *Maeve*, a fishing boat smashing up at Cape Willoughby – I believe she was purposely put

there. The *Magic* at Cape Cassini, I believe she was purposely put there. She was a big fishing cutter. I saw her smashing up. Then there was the *Fairfield* at Cape Cassini, and the *Cygnet* out off Cape Cassini – she didn't strike the shore at all, she was – a storm swamped her. There was the *Fides* at Snug Cove, just the other side of Snug Cove – they call it Left Valley, where she was struck. The *Emily Smith* out on the other coast, not far from where *Locksloy* was wrecked. I'll tell you a funny thing about the *Locksloy* wreck. The night that she was wrecked my brother – elder brother – and another fellow and me were sleeping on the south coast of the Island and he dreamt that there was a big ship ashore and casks were washing ashore, and that's exactly what happened. There was a lot of casks of whisky went ashore from her – wasn't that a funny thing?

Yes.

Yes. I don't know whether I can mention any others – there are a lot of small ones, but we didn't used to count them, the fishing cutters. We didn't keep it in. There was – what was it? – *Mimosa* at Stokes Bay, that was before my time.

Why (loud clattering sounds) were some of them wrecked on purpose? (break in recording)

– – – purposely wrecked? Well, I think anybody couldn't do much else. The one at Cape Willoughby, they struck the rock right down under the lighthouse (laughter) – right on the shore.

You think they should have missed that!

Yes. And the *Magic*, she was bought for, I think, a very small price and insured for seven hundred pounds, not dollars, and where she was wrecked she was right in a bay – not going to Adelaide with a load of sharks. Why would she be right in a bay when she was going to Adelaide? Looked too funny. The father of the owner said, 'You're doing all right out of this,' he said. 'She's insured for a lot more than he paid for her.' (laughter) How could you make other than that out of it? Yes. Then there is the *Brothers*, she went on the rocks at Cape Cassini. There's another one, I forget the name, a yacht, a pleasure yacht, it was run on the rocks. They got a captain – one of the men from here, the captain – (loud voices in background) she was run by several business people. He went snooking and instead of watching

where he was going he was attending to the lines, and ran her fair on top of the wreck and reef – I'm not sure whether she was wrecked or whether they got her away afterwards. And then another – what was that, her name? – my memory lets me down. She was a fishing cutter. She ran on that same rock, I think. She was lost. And at the same time another boat owned by the same man went ashore out at Vivonne Bay, I think. They were fishing boats. No, I could tell you lots more about my experiences, if it was necessary. (break in recording)

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

There I learned to split palings and shingles. I done road making, well sinking, masonry, building, building timber and (loud clattering of dishes and banging of cupboards) ….. houses. I was an orchardist for eight years, and I done ….. for wallabies, I've hunted kangaroos. I said I'd done road making, didn't I?

No, you didn't tell me about the road making.

I've done fencing, timber cutting. I've cut three hundred tons of timber at Middle River back in '2, '3, and we never got a stick of it away that year, they got it away afterwards, I think. I worked there for seven months and my seven months' wages would have been about twenty-eight pounds. That was good wages, a pound a week in those days, a pound a week and keep. That was decent wages in those days. What else will I tell you I've done? I didn't tell you I'd been a fisherman, did I? Yes, I was fishing for nearly twenty years. I owned five boats during that time. Now, will I think of anything else that I've done? I told you I'd done shearing.

When you did catching wallabies –

Yes, I've done wallaby snaring.

– yes. How much did you get for the skins, can you remember?

It used to be round about a pound, twenty-eight shillings a dozen, skins then, wallaby and possum skins. I put in three months straight at Rocky River on that job. During that time we found a grave in the bush, and I never could find out whose grave it was. It must have come from one of the Murrays or the Emily Smith, and nobody had lived out there for a long while knew whose grave it could have been.

I'd like to tell you another thing about the records, what happened here in the early days. They say that Captain Flinders' men went ashore, and the description they gave it was a ….. at Penneshaw and dropped thirty kangaroos and took them aboard for meat. Have you ever heard of a kangaroo that would stand up while you hit him in the head with a stick?

No.

I haven't.

No.

And I've queried from there from the old people at Penneshaw whether there ever were kangaroos there, and they've always said never in their time nor could they have heard of them. And another thing, it's not suitable country for kangaroos. And to say that they would go ashore from a boat, they wouldn't have a dog to hunt the kangaroos, how did they catch them, how did they get them, thirty of them? I could easily say that's a lie, rubbish, couldn't be possible. No, that's one thing I'd like to contradict, because I'm sure it would never have happened.

Did you ever try any gold mining? (break in recording)

No. I've never done mining, but I'd like to tell you – do you know how ….. Hill got its name? There's a gold mine across the creek from that. ….. ….. shafts this way and the tunnel in from the ….. ….. ….. They worked that twice. It was worked before I was born, I think, that's when they dug these places; and during my time they worked it again. My father used to do carting for people, he took a thing out – they called it tamping, I think – to crush the stone and get the gold out of it, and it didn't pay. They got gold but there wasn't sufficient to pay. In the early days they had a silver mine at Western River, and in later days, in my time, they had a precious stone field at Penneshaw. I don't know whether it was sapphires or ….. It wasn't diamonds or rubies, but it was one of the other valuable stones. And early days they had what they called Dawe's Digging – it's up in Parndana country. They had places dug along the road that was there then – I don't know whether it still is. Mr Dawe used to go there digging and getting gold, and in later days Bill Murray and his wife used to get gold out of a number of the creeks by washing the earth – it stuck in the bed of the creek. They got quite a bit, but it would hardly pay wages.

(break in recording) You repaired those?

Windmills (voice in background) – I told you I used to make water troughs, I think, and tanks and little cooler safes – I've got pictures of them ….. ….. ….. home. We can't live home any longer, we can't look after ourselves– we have to live with our children. ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. (loud voice in background obscures interviewee's speech)

You were telling me about the shipowreck. Did you ever get stuff off of the shipwrecks?

No, no. I went out when the *Robert Burns* was left on the spit, took the ….. fellows out and we examined her after they'd taken most of the gear off of her. We put in a tender for something more off of her but they didn't accept it. I'd have no dealings with the wrecks otherwise. When the *Yu Yang* was left – that's another one I didn't mention – now, D'Estrees Bay country, my father went out there with his horses and dray and brought a lot of flour – she was loaded with flour, going from Port Pirie, I think, to – I'm not sure whether she was a Chinese boat. *Yu Yang* sounds like it, doesn't it?

It does, yes.

I'm not sure whether she was going to, but she struck rocks and the flour washed ashore, and Father had got one of the bags of flour, it was only spoilt in about that far and the rest was dry. The water only soaked in that far. That was the *Yu Yang*, that was in my early days.

U.F.: He had a kangaroo tear his shirt off his back I think at one stage. You were asking about the kangaroo – I think it was his back it tore it off of.

Do you know a story about a kangaroo tearing the shirt off your back?

Yes, I was setting snares, that was down at Snug Cove or out from Snug Cove, ….., I was setting snares, had a dog with me and it went away, and I could hear 'yap, yap, yap' for a long time, and when I finished setting snares I thought, 'Oh, God, see what's the matter.' So I went over and she had a great big kangaroo stuck up. So I picked up not a very suitable thing to hit it with and went up to him and hit him a belt in the head and he went down and I thought I was ready to give him another one, the old – went down to jump. He jumped enough, he jumped, I swung round,

he grabbed me with both of his claws, tore both of my shirts and a little bit of skin with them. There were holes dug in the ground where I pulled to get away from him, but I managed to get another better piece of wood and kill him. But he wasn't waiting for me to hit him like Flinders' fellows got. No, no, he was there and I went up to him, he was fighting with the dog, when he looked around I gave him a belt in the head and it broke. I thought he was going down to floor, but he wasn't, he only went down to jump – and he got the skin as well as the shirts. I didn't know they knew that. (laughs) (break in recording)

….. was with my brother one day, got him and put him in a dry creek and stood on top of him. I think they did that to a woman, too.

Mrs May?

The first thing they do if they can is to get you and put you in the water and drown them. My son, Mark's out there ….. ….. ….. (clattering of dishes continues) He had a lovely sheepdog and it went ….. ….. ….. ….. ….. pushed him in the dam, the dam, and stood on him, drowned him. That's the first thing they'll do if they can, get at you in the creek and drown you.

Yes. I think – – – .

U.F.: Jacquie, would you like a cup of coffee or tea or something? (break in recording)

Yes.

It's a hundred years this year since he came back in – they shifted back to Hamilton in the north. Hundred years this year since he came back to here. And he went out to D'Estrees Bay, his sister was living there in a cave, her and her husband. I believe some of their children were born there – they had four children, and father went there and built a little stone place and they were married there the next year, '78, 1878.

Well, what were they doing there, what work?

Now, you've asked me a difficult question. That's what I want to know. They must have been snaring. They *were* snaring, I know, but whether they could make a living out of snaring there because the wallaby on the coast are terribly cunning. But when Father walked from Penneshaw – he got across from Cape Jervis in a little sailing

boat that used to bring the mail, walked out to D'Estrees Bay, and before he got there he saw a snare and he cooeed and got an answer, which was his brother-in-law coming around his snares. And then he built this little place. Have you been to D'Estrees Bay?

Yes.

When you're going up along the road to Point Tinmine there's a little stone place falling down on the left hand side of the road and that's where Father built and that's where he lived when they got married. They lived there till they had two children, and they shifted into Cygnet River and eventually got back into the house that Mother had lived in as a child, and that's where I was born. And my sister was born there. When my sister was born, about the first day, I think it was, she was squeaking and someone said to me, 'What's that?' I said, 'It's the ….. I'll get a string on its leg and drag it round the house.' (laughter) (break in recording)

Now, where the old house used to be I showed Mr Sanderman, he was going to build it in a remembrance of it, now they're building one on the road in the wrong place. And I went out there – I couldn't walk to show them where it used to be, they'd have to cart me, I can't walk, I can only just get across down to a car – but it was built just up out of the lagoon, and the stone chimney was (knocking sound) ….. the road. Where they wrecked the chimney there would surely be plenty of stone stuff to show where the fireplace used to be, wouldn't it? Arthur was going to take me out to get there, but I said, 'I can't walk, it's no good. Otherwise you'd have to carry me.'

Oh, thanks. (sound of rattling cup and saucer)

My orange drink hasn't been made, has it?

UF: No, Mum was laying down. Would you like a couple of bickies, or – – –?

Oh, no, thanks. This will be fine, yes. (voices in background)

….. ….. ….. is …..

Oh, yes.

It was early in the century. (banging sounds)

Well, I think you'd notice the place is a bit different now.

’02 or ’03, something that can hardly be believed. I don’t suppose you’ve heard of freak waves that come when the sea’s calm? It was a very calm day, and George Bell was living at Stokes Bay. Old man Hearst at Smoke Cove. I was working at Middle River with Ben Bell. And in the morning we saw George Bell away out, his little sail – there was no engine in those days. We went over to work, and when we came back to dinner he was right in by the shore and the sea flat, calm as could be. We went in to dinner, while we were having dinner we heard a roar. I don’t know why we didn’t wake up. Probably George Bell came out with the water running out of his clothes, he said, ‘My boat’s smashed and old Hearst nearly drowned.’ We went down and his boat was smashed in half like that, and lying away up high out of the water, a long way from the water. Two big waves come in when it’s real calm, flat, and smashed the boat, chucked it away that high and dry on the beach, and the boat was a wreck, like that, in half. I don’t remember seeing Mr Hearst, but he wasn’t drowned. I can’t remember seeing him. He got tangled up in the sail, I think, when the boat rolled over. Yes, that’s one thing I saw there. I’ve seen three of those freak waves like that.

One day I was eating my tucker on the beach out on the South Coast, had my dinner, camp dinner, alongside of me. Now, fifty feet up the slope from the sea, and I heard a rustle, I looked round and a great wave was coming tearing up. I hopped up and left my tucker and went away up out of its road. It picked it up and took it away out and brought it back and put it almost in the same place that it took it from! (laughter) Another day I was fishing down at Cape Cassini, that was not long ago, about fifty years ago. I caught eleven nice fish, I went up higher to wash them in a puddle hole, a wave came out and ran away up a channel alongside me and jumped over the top and came tearing down, and I fled. My fish went out to sea and I had none. (laughs) That’s three experiences I’ve had with freak waves. You read in the paper of somebody being drowned, washed off the rocks, that’s what happened. Yes, I’m always warning these people when they go fishing off the rocks: ‘Look out, don’t go ….. ….. alone.’ Flat calm is the time they seem to come. No, there’s three big waves that come roaring in and smash everything, and then it’s flat calm again. That was in ’02 or ’03, I don’t know which. I was there seven months during the two months of the year.

At Middle River they got an epidemic of diphtheria, I think. Snellings, way back before my time. And three of them died with it. They had a railing around it when I was there. But a funny thing about that, their granddaughter got married, had a family, she lived in here, this was in my time, and I'm pretty sure they got the same complaint, and I believe it was three of them died. ….. ….. ….. so much ….. Yes, a terrible, funny thing that was. There's three, I think, buried at ….. ….. (knocking sound) – you've heard of Charlie May that's still living? His sister was one that was buried there. (break in recording) – – – came from Penneshaw.

And she was born on the Island? Your wife? Your wife was born on the Island?

U.F.: Yes.

It's all right.

U.F.: Get it through to him, did you?

Yes.

Her age, what she did?

U.F.: No, about where she was born and anything you know about her life story.

INTERVIEWEE: Yes, well, she was born at Penneshaw. (coughs) Her mother died when she was about eighteen months old. She was taken by her grandmother. Her people lived out of Penneshaw. Her grandmother lived in Penneshaw, just up on the hill. Her grandmother took her and brought her up. By and by her grandmother and grandfather both died and her father married again, but they never took her back, never took her to live with them. And by and by she got living over here with her uncle that lived at Cape Cassini. She hadn't any proper home at all. Then she struck me! (laughs)

She was right.

Yes. She was – her and her cousin were living for a while up on the hill, just across from where I was living at the shop, and Mr Turner from Smith Bay used to leave meat at my shed for them. She used to come across and get the meat, (laughs) and you can guess the rest!

Yes, I think I can. (banging sound)

Yes. So I had two rooms and a passage built, cost me forty pounds to have it built, cost me about a hundred and twelve, I think, altogether – material and building – and we got married in '10. She got a home. That's her record. (loud banging noises and voices in background)

How many children did you have altogether? How many children did you have?

We? Six – two girls and four boys. Three of ours are here and three are not – three are away on the mainland. Our eldest son is over sixty-five, he lives in Prospect. The next one is a daughter, Mavis, she lives away over in New South Wales, and the other is – we call him 'Chick'; his name is Orville – he's living at Port Lincoln now. He's been living at Cowell, he was in business there ….. ….. ….. living in Port Lincoln. His name is Orville. My brother in America had Wilbur – you remember Wilbur and Orville Wright were the first to fly? – well, my brother had Wilbur and I had Orville. (laughs) Yes, and we call him Chick – he was a little fellow and when he got to school they called him Chick. It stuck to him and he tells people to call him Chick. Yes, we had six. This is our youngest, this daughter.

You're lucky to have your family to help look after – – –.

END OF INTERVIEW.

END OF TAPE: END OF INTERVIEW