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Full transcript of an interview with

ANNE LIDDY

on 19, 26 AUGUST 1985

by Beth Robertson

for

'SA SPEAKS': AN ORAL HISTORY OF LIFE IN
SOUTH AUSTRALIA BEFORE 1930

Recording available on cassette

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Cover Illustration Miss Anne Liddy (P8504A)

PREFACE

Anne Liddy was born in 1901 in Dawson into an Irish Catholic family 'with a genius for going to dry places where they don't make any money' (preliminary interview). In 1904 three generations of the family joined the exodus from the Upper North and became part of the 'second settlement' of Eyre Peninsula, taking up virgin scrub at Yallunda Flat near Tumby Bay.

Anne Liddy left the Yallunda Flat school in 1914, the year that the family farm went bankrupt and her father became a railway ganger. Her first job, for six years, was as domestic and mother's helper in the family of the Tumby Bay Bank of Adelaide manager. After returning to help on her family's new share farm venture, she began nursing training at the Tumby Bay District Hospital in 1923, recognising this as one of the very limited employment alternatives for local girls. Miss Liddy finished her training at the Adelaide Hospital and began her nursing career as a private nurse with the Royal British Nurses' Association in 1927.

Miss Liddy was 84 years of age at the time of the interviews.

The interview was recorded in two sessions in Miss Liddy's sitting room. Miss Liddy is a relaxed and thoughtful speaker but quietly spoken and record levels for the tape recordings were a little low.

Both interviews are two hours in length.

'S.A. Speaks: An Oral History of Life in South Australia before 1930' was a Jubilee 150 project conducted under the auspices of the History Trust of South Australia for two years and two months ending December 1986. The Interviewees are broadly representative of the population of South Australia as it was in the first three decades of the twentieth century. Selection of Interviewees was guided by a Sex and Occupation Sample calculated from the 1921 Census and Interviewees were suggested, in the main, by people who responded to 'S.A. Speaks' publicity. Each interview was preceded by an unrecorded preliminary interview during which details about the Interviewee's family history and life story were sought to help develop a framework for the interview.

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NOTES TO THE TRANSCRIPT

Readers of this oral history transcript should bear in mind that it is a record of the spoken word. It was the policy of the Transcriptionist, Chris Gradolf, and the Interviewer, as editor, to produce a transcript that is, so far as possible, a verbatim transcript that preserves the Interviewee's manner of speaking and the informal, conversational style of the interview. Certain conventions of transcription have been applied (i.e. the omission of meaningless noises, redundant false starts and a percentage of the Interviewee's crutch words). Also, each Interviewee was given the opportunity to read the transcript of their interview after it had been proofread by the Interviewer. The Interviewee's suggested alterations have been incorporated in the text (see below). On the whole, however, the document can be regarded as a raw transcript.

Researchers using the original tape recording of this interview are cautioned to check this transcript for corrections, additions or deletions which have been made by the Interviewer or the Interviewee but which will not occur on the tapes. Minor discrepancies of grammar and sentence structure made in the interest of readability can be ignored but significant changes such as deletions of information or correction of fact should be, respectively, duplicated or acknowledged when the tape recorded version of this interview is used for broadcast or publication on cassettes.

Abbreviations

The Interviewee, Anne Liddy, is referred to by the initials AL in all editorial insertions in the transcript.

Punctuation

Square brackets [] indicate material in the transcript that does not occur on the original tape recording.

The Interviewee's initials after a word, phrase or sentence in square brackets, i.e. [word or phrase AL] indicates that the Interviewee made this particular insertion or correction. All uninitialled parentheses were made by the Interviewer.

An 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, - - -.

Spelling

Wherever possible the spelling of proper names and unusual terms has been verified. Where uncertainty remains the word has been marked with a cross in the right hand margin of the Interview Log and Data Sheet which can be consulted in the Interview File.

Typeface

The Interviewer's questions are shown in bold print.

'S.A. Speaks: An Oral History of Life in South Australia Before 1930'

Beth Robertson interviewing Miss Anne Liddy [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] on 19 August 1985

TAPE 1 SIDE A

I'll start by asking you, is Anne Liddy your full name?

No, I've got another one but I dropped it years ago, just to simplify matters.

Do you admit to it still?

Oh yes, it's Angela.

Were you always known as Anne or did you have a nickname?

No, I was called Annie when I was little. But I altered that when I grew up.

Do you know who you were named for?

Oh dear. I think there was a Saint Angela - I was very badly misnamed of course - and I think one of my grandmothers was Anne or Annie, but I'm not sure really, at all.

What was the date of your birth?

The fifth of April nineteen hundred and one.

And where were you born?

Dawson, in the mid north. It's up somewhere near Peterborough or some place. It was the Hundred of Dawson in those days but I don't think there's anything left there now but a little tin hut and something like that.

How long had your family been there?

Well my grandparents came out from Ireland in - - -. I have the date there somewhere. I should have got them for you. Brothers - three or four brothers, Liddys - of whom Dermott-Darby was my grandfather. And my grandmother's people were Kellys, settled around there and they married and had a family. Would you like to hear of my grandmother's wedding?

Yes.

I loved my grandmother and I used to visit her quite a lot and she used to tell me stories about the little people and the fairies and the 'pooka' the big bull. Anyhow, one day I said, 'How did you come to marry Grandfather?', and we called her 'Gommah' and 'Gumdad' was our grandfather. And she said, 'Well, Annie, this was the way of it. I used to go round from one brother's wife to

another to help them with their work.' And she was with one brother's wife doing washing one Monday when her brother and her uncle drove into the yard in a tip dray and they say, 'Come on Mary, get your things together, we're taking you back'. And she said, 'Oh, why?' and they said, 'We'll tell you when we go along'. So she got up into the tip dray and she said 'Now', and they said, 'Well you're going to be married to Darby Liddy on Saturday'. And I said, 'Oh, Grandmother, did you know him?', and she said, 'Oh, not very well. He was just one of the young men who went to Mass and I saw him and I'd spoken to him.' I asked, 'Why didn't you run away?' And she said, 'Oh, I did. I ran into the church and said my prayers'. (laughs) And she said, 'They came and got me'. So she married Darby Liddy on Saturday and ruled him very firmly ever after. But it was a happy marriage - quite a happy marriage. They had, I think, six or eight children.

This was your father's mother?

My father's parents, yes.

And they had married before they came out?

Oh, no, they married after. They were all young boys and girls when they came out here and settled in the mid north. Oh, no, they were married out here.

I hadn't hear tell of arranged marriages.

Hadn't you? Oh they were all arranged those days. I said to her, 'Grandmother, why didn't you wait till somebody came along that you really wanted to marry?', and she said, 'Oh, if you did that they wouldn't take any more interest in you. You could die an old maid'. And that, I gather, was the fate that is worse than death.

As we've talked before, you didn't grow up in Dawson, did you?

Oh, no. There was a drought, I think, and when I was about three years old - - -. But they had lived there all that time, you know. My grandparents and parents grew up there.

From about the 1840s?

Yes, I suppose. Should I get that - - -?

Yes. [Break in recording - AL gets papers]

Well Gumdad, my grandfather, was born 1842. And it doesn't say just when he came out here but I gather he was about twenty, and my grandmother was a year or two younger.

What about that story you were saying she [grandmother] used to tell you about the big 'pooka'?

I can't remember about the 'pooka' - that was the big bull. There were lots of stories but I've forgotten them all. It's such a pity. We used to sit in this big smoky kitchen and only lit by a kerosene lamp, and there were shadows in the corners and I used to think, 'I wonder if Grandmother really is a witch. She might be a witch'. (laughter) They had Pat, who was my father and Mick, Jerry, Tom, Jack, Winnie, Kit, Bridgie and Mary were their family, and they were all born over - around Dawson, around there.

When was your father born?

Oh dear, he died in 1934 and he was sixty eight then.

1866.

Yes, I think that would be it.

As we were saying, you didn't grow up in Dawson.

Oh no. There was a drought of course. There were always droughts. So they decided to come over - - -. Eyre Peninsula was being opened up then for farming and my parents had a block and so had my grandparents - adjoining. And they went over there. It was virgin land - had to be cleared before they could sow anything at all in it. I think they - - -. I was three years old when I went over. I told you, I think, did I, that my father and mother and one or two aunts and uncles and my little sister went around the Gulf in a buggy, and there was a wagon and horses? It took them about three weeks. And during that time my father kept a diary which I've given to Marie, my niece. She's going to make copies of it for the family and hand it over to the Archives.

So a good portion of the family moved to Eyre Peninsula?

Yes, they all did. My grandparents, their sons - those of them who were living with them - my parents and my little sister, and there were several aunts too - all the aunts - four of them, yes.

So they went around the top?

Around the top. And I came across with my grandmother from, I think, Wallaroo, because I remember being handed across the gangway by a sailor and looking down at this dark, dark water between the ship and the jetty. I think I've told you all this, have I?

Well, we'll go through it again, shall we?

Then I remember during the night and being awfully sick and my grandmother comforting me. There was an aunt with us too, Aunt Mary Jane, who came across with us. And I don't remember anything more about that - about arriving at Koppio - where some uncles had gone before and built a house. I don't remember anything about that. I do remember one day when they caught a big emu - there were emus and kangaroos - it was all scrub, you know. And I was eating an apple and he [the emu] grabbed it out of my hand - big shock. But they let him go, the emu - a beautiful bird.

They had him tethered in the yard.

Yes, they had to yes. There was no future for him there, the poor darling.

Well, I'd like to speak more about the family and the move to Eyre Peninsula. But we'll just speak a little bit more about your parents first of all. You've said that your father's name was - - -?

Patrick - Patrick John.

And born, we worked it out, in 1866. Do you know anything about the schooling that your father and his brothers and sisters received?

No, not very much, but they did go to schools up there. I don't know what kind of schools, whether there were State schools then, whether education was compulsory or not. But they went to whatever little school there was.

And he went on to the family farm, or was he involved in some other work?

No, he had a farm of his own when he married - Tumby Bay, Yallunda Flat - he had his own farm. They were separate farms, his and his father's.

Yes, but before the move to Eyre Peninsula?

Oh yes, he had his own place.

In the Far North?

When he married.

You said that he came from a very large family.

My father, oh yes. There were about eight of them I think.

And did they all remain on the land?

Yes they did. All the daughters were unmarried when they went to Koppio but they married. One or two of them were already engaged, and they married and left home. The two sons, Mick and Jack, remained on the farm of my grandparents.

You say that your aunts were already engaged. Had their intendeds moved to Eyre Peninsula as well?

Oh no, they were over here. So when they got married and came over here we - - -. As we grew up we didn't know them very much because it was a long way off. We used to speak of over here as 'the other side'.

How old were you before you came over to 'the other side' again?

I think I was about thirteen.

What was that occasion?

Well, I think I told you that I used to mind the Bank Manager's children and the wife of the Bank Manager came over for a holiday and she brought me with her to mind the child - there was only one then - to mind the child while she saw her friends and - - -. And I remember James Marshall's. That was a wonderful shop and there was a model in a beautiful pink evening dress. I'd never seen anything like it. And there was, at the gate of Government House, a little buggy - not a buggy, but a funny little carriage with one horse - and I think it was for hire. But that was an enchantment too.

So quite a different world.

Oh, a different world altogether, yes. We came across in, I think it was the Rupara. I knew all those ships that plied between Port Adelaide and Port Lincoln and went up to Tumby Bay, Cowell, Wallaroo and then down, around again and back to Port Adelaide. I think this one was called the Rupara. There was the Rupara and the Wandana and Morialta, particularly later.

What about your mother? What was her name?

Her name was Katherine Frances O'Loughlin and she had been born and brought up around Minora - places like that - up in the Mid North still. But I didn't know them very well, any of her people. Her parents had died long before I was born and she also had four sisters who married and lived over there, but they didn't go to the [West] Coast at all.

They married and lived over on Eyre Peninsula?

No, they married and stayed where they were in the Mid North.

Do you know the date of her birth?

It was - no. She didn't tell us her birthday. I think she was afraid we might find out her age. Actually she was about five years younger than my father.

Were her people on the land?

Yes they were. Her people were John and Annie O'Loughlin. That's where the Annie came from.

Do you know whether she ever did any paid work?

No, I think she always stayed home. You see, her sisters were all older. They married and went away so she stayed with her father and housekept for him. I remember she had a little buggy with a red front which her father had given her when she was married. She called it a 'spider buggy'. It was only a one horse thing.

Do you know how your parents met?

No I don't. I think they - - -. They're a pretty close-knit community up there you know. A great many of the Irish immigrants had settled up there and their children were born there and they all grew up knowing each other. But I don't know how they met.

Do you know the date of their marriage?

No, I don't know that either. I don't know. I know that I wasn't born until about - - -. Oh, it was 1895 I think, that they were married. I was born in nineteen hundred and one and I remember - - -. I don't remember at all but someone told me that when I was a tiny baby my grandfather came in and somebody was holding me and he said, 'Oh wisha be careful of that, they take five years'. (laughs)

You were the first born?

I was the first, yes.

What was the term he used?

'Wisha'. An Irish term.

What did that mean?

It meant - - -. I think it meant, 'Oh, be careful', 'watch out', or something of that sort.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

Two of each. And I had a little sister. I had three sisters - one died at six months old.

Can you tell me their names and when they were born?

Yes. There was Vera who was - she was born in July nineteen hundred and two. And there was Tom - he was the first of the West Coasters - he was

born two years later. And Gerald, a couple of years after that. And Nora. Nora was born on my birthday when I was seven years old and she was always my special baby. And then there was the little baby Monica who died so early, but she was five years younger than Nora.

So you'd remember her birth?

Yes, I remember.

We might talk about that a little later on. So you were the oldest and I guess had quite a bit of responsibility for your younger brothers and sisters.

Yes, I had. They had a very hard struggle you know - frightfully hard and very primitive - and always anxious, because you didn't know if it was going to rain, if they were going to get four bags to the acre or a couple of grains. And very early my parents' anxieties communicated themselves to me. I was influenced by this greatly, whereas my brothers and sisters weren't. They were younger and perhaps more occupied with being children.

Did you parents talk about their worries to you?

No, but they'd talk about them. I'd hear them talking about things. We had only tanks and I think there was a well - there were a couple of wells on the farm - but we had only tanks and we were terrified that they would empty before the next rain came. And there was the creek. I remember my mother taking her washing down to the creek in the kerosene buckets and a brand to put a fire under, and then the kerosene buckets were put on it and the things were boiled.

Did the creek run all year?

Oh no. But in the winter it froze over sometimes - very thin ice. And we tried to walk on it one day going to school with disastrous results.

Just briefly, what sort of work did your brothers and sisters go into?

Well, the farm - - -. I think by the time they had grown up - - -. They helped on the farm while they were going to school. I remember them standing on boxes to put on the horses' collars to take a team out. But by the time we were starved out of that farm they had grown up and they worked for the farmers around. Then more land was being opened up further inland - Kimba, Wudinna, Kyancutta, places like that. They used to go up there and work for the farmers. And for girls there was just nothing but to go into domestic service or to work in the shop in the township or to marry the boy next door, and one of my sisters worked in the shop in the township. The other one stayed home until she was married because my parents were getting on by

then and needed a bit of care - my father did. I presented myself in fear and trembling to the Matron of the hospital one day and asked her if I could be a nurse, and she said, 'Oh yes, yes. Come and see me on Saturday'. So she told me that I could start on Monday. My mother had been making my outfit and on the due day I presented myself, crackling with starch and full of noble ideals, and she looked at me and she said, 'Annie, would you milk the cow?'. (laughter) So off came the cuffs and on went the working apron and I milked the cow.

I want to talk to you a little later on about your time at Tumby Bay Hospital, but I'll just continue now speaking a little bit more about your family. You've said that you knew your father's family well. Could you just repeat for me your grandfather's name?

Darby Liddy - Darby Jeremiah. His grave is at Koppio. Just there, with a stone over it with Darby Liddy and a few dates and things.

And he was born, I think we worked out, in 1842 in the Far North.

No, not my grandfather. He was born in Ireland. That generation were born in Ireland but migrated very young - as very young men.

Where in Ireland did the family come from?

Clare - Country Clare. They all came from there, both sets of grandparents. I think their town was Ennis.

Had your grandfather's people in Ireland been on the land?

I don't know. They were peasants and so I expect they were on the land. They had whatever land peasants had - a plot or holding. But that's what they went for when they came out - for the land.

Could you describe what you know of the farming that they did in the Far North?

I think wheat mainly. I think it was in wheat country when they had the rain. I don't think they went in for sheep or cattle very much. Mainly wheat.

You told me the other day a description of your family's luck in choosing places to go that I thought was very apt. How did you describe that?

Oh, well they always seemed to choose places where there was hardship and no money, and they just didn't have the knack of making money at all. But some of the relatives they left behind them in the North did very well. They hung on and they did very well.

What do you know of your grandfather's brothers and sisters?

He had brothers. There were several of them and they all settled up there. There's quite a bit about them there [in AL's papers] and they married there. But I didn't know them, excepting one uncle who came to the West Coast to visit us. I think he was my grandmother's brother, Tom Kelly. He was a dear old man and he gave us each a sovereign which was lovely.

He was one of the relatives who had hung on and done a bit better! Could you tell me your grandmother's full name?

Mary Kelly. That was all as far as I know.

And she'd been born in Ireland?

Yes, and come out here as a very young girl. She had brothers out here. I don't know if she came out with them or after, but she lived with them until she married Darby.

So do you not think that her parents were here?

Oh no, her parents were not here. She came out. I remember my mother telling me about her mother - - -

END TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Because her parents wouldn't allow her to come unless she was married first.

Who was this?

This was my mother's mother. She married John O'Loughlin and they came out as a newly married couple because her parents wouldn't allow her to come out unless she was married.

Speaking of your father's family, how do you remember your grandparents?

Well, they were - - -. I loved them, my grandmother especially. But they were very severe you know. And when they were talking about something that they didn't want us to hear they'd speak in Gaelic and we'd be foxed. My grandfather was a small, very neat looking man, with a fine pink skin, white hair and a white beard, and his hair grew to a quiff, and my irreverent young sister said one day, 'Doesn't Gumdad look like a cockatoo?', and he did you know. (laughter) He had a beaky nose.

What did your grandmother - - -?

Oh, she was a very plain woman. She, as my grandfather used to say, 'You know, your grandmother is a very plain woman'. (laughs) She didn't mind at all. But she was. She had rheumatism very badly when I remember her, and she was, yes, quite plain - rather broad face - and physically she was not as fine a type as my grandfather. And she had got very fat.

How old did they grow to?

My grandfather died in 1915 and Grandmother many years later - I should think just about 1930, perhaps, something like that. But I don't know what their ages were. Oh of course we can work it out from 1842 to 1915.

Yes, so you would have known them both all the while you were growing up.

Yes.

And you say that when you were on Eyre Peninsula you were on adjoining properties. Did you see them daily?

No, but pretty often - weekly. We would go down there to Mass when Father [P.L.] Kelly came up and that would mean spending the day there.

Did Father Kelly go to their home?

Yes. He - - -. Do you want to hear about him?

Yes I'd like that.

Well, he was a very fine man and he had an enormous parish, right from Port Lincoln headquarters to Elliston and Streaky [Bay] I think. He had a very nice buggy and two horses which he looked after and cherished and he was a very fine man himself. He had been a surveyor and he knew that country because he'd helped to survey it. And he was always so beautifully clean and fresh looking. He had white hair - grey - and a fine clear skin and very direct blue/grey eyes. I was always a bit scared that he would see how naughty I was with those blue eyes (laughs), but he was wonderfully conscientious. He and Father [P.] Jorgensen worked together. Father Jorgensen was a Dane. He'd been a chemist I think and he - - -. He was very delicate. He has asthma badly. But he worked very, very hard - they both did.

How often would they have come to you?

Oh, not often. I think possibly once very three months - something like that perhaps. Because they had to do this tremendous circuit and district.

Would they come on a Sunday?

No, any day, any day at all. We'd get a note from Father Kelly to say he'd be coming. And also, he would sometimes go to the local hall when we got a hall built - Yallunda Flat. He'd go there and there was another hall at Koppio - right in the middle of the scrub. It was the school on week days but different denominations would have services there on Sunday. We'd travel all that distance from Yallunda Flat. I don't know how far it was to Koppio but I should think about fifteen miles. My parents fasting - they never ate before

they went to Mass. And they had bottles of black tea and sandwiches and cake and after Mass everybody congregated round the backs of their buggies and had their lunch and a meeting. It was very pleasant. They all fraternised.

Until what age would Mass have been held at your grandparents?

I think until possibly the beginning of World War I. I think after that they used to go to these hall places.

And did people apart from your family attend Mass at your grandparents'?

Oh yes, yes. Any who knew about it would come. There were not many churches. The Methodists built a little iron church at Yallunda Flat and we all thought this was very grand - to have a church of your own. (laughs) A great many of our friends went to it.

Do you recall any conflict between the religious groups?

Oh no, I don't think there was any. I think everybody was too busy surviving. (laughs)

Did your people take an interest in the problems back home in Ireland?

Oh yes, yes indeed. My grandparents did. I remember during the War we used to get the Chronicle. That was about the only newspaper we got. And on Saturday nights Uncle Jack would have to read to the grandparents what had transpired in the Old Country. They had a deep green loathing for Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Mr Carson, who were the enemies of Home Rule. Oh yes, I was brought up on Home Rule. No very great idea of what it was about those days, but that preoccupied them a great deal, more than the War, I'm afraid, which was raging at the time.

From what you've said, could your grandparents read and write?

No, they couldn't read or write. You know, they had - for a long time they were not allowed an education in Ireland. It was not permitted. I don't know if that had gone by my grandparents' time. What was it, 1829 there was Catholic Emancipation, wasn't there? Possibly after that things loosened up a bit. No, they couldn't read or write, but they had a great thirst for knowledge, all of them. They'd have given anything to have been able to read and write. They were very deprived.

And they would have relied on their children for the business side of things.

Oh yes, they did.

And, as you say, learning about the outside world. Did they have contact with their folk back in Ireland?

No, they lost contact with them because they couldn't read or write. I think that had a great deal to do with it.

Did your grandparents play a part in your upbringing?

No, not a great deal. They were, like all grandparents, very indulgent, you know. They were strict with their own children, but we were miracles to them and we were spoilt I suppose by them. But my parents were by no means so lenient. They had very definite standards of how children should behave.

What were they?

Oh, well we must speak to people when they came, and that we mustn't tell lies, and must never steal anything, and all the things - we must learn our catechism, and be good little boys and girls which we were more or less. My mother liked good manners, cleanliness - we must be clean, and it was not so easy in those days with the limited water supply. My mother made all our clothes and her own. She was a small, what my grandfather called, 'a neat handed woman', and she was a good housekeeper with what she had to house-keep on, which my father's sisters were not. (laughs) They were delightful people. They were great fun, you know. And I used to go - - -. My mother had a streak of puritanism - so did my father - and they were very - - -. I used to go and stay at my grandfather and they were always singing, my aunts, and laughing, and playing the accordion. My father thought they didn't work half hard enough and my mother thoroughly disapproved of them too. (laughs) But they were good girls, just happy and cheerful. So when I'd go home I needed pulling into line. My mother did that in no uncertain way because I'd got very spoilt when I stayed with my grandparents.

Were there restrictions on your behaviour in your home? Were you allowed to sing?

Oh no, we sang as much - - -. Oh, yes, and my mother did too. She loved singing and she had a very pretty, completely untrained voice. Oh, no, they were by no means austere. We had an accordion and my father had a violin and we learnt to dance on the mud floor. My mother taught us to dance. So it was a happy childhood excepting that there was always this anxiety, you know - ways and means.

You've said that your grandmother in particular talked about the Home Country. Your grandfather as well?

No, not so much. We didn't know him so well. No, not so much. Grandmother was the personality of the team.

What sorts of things did she tell you?

Well, not very much. I wish so much I'd asked her a lot more. Not a great deal beyond the fairy stories. Of course I very soon grew up and I went away from home at fourteen when I'd finished school to mind these children in Tumbay Bay. So I didn't see very much more of her. The time when I should have been really getting interested in all these things I wasn't there.

Did you pick up much Gaelic?

No, none at all. Another great regret.

Did she ever comment, for instance, about the difference between Australia and her people's past?

Oh yes she did. I think when they came out here they loved the freedom and the - - -. But they loved Ireland too. They always said that it was a most beautiful country and I think they used to harp back to it often. But they were the kind of people who would settle down wherever they were and make the best of it, and I think that's what they did.

She told you the fairy stories. They'd also be singing the songs from home, I suppose?

Yes they did. And my mother used to sing a great many of the folk songs.

So you grew up with a sense of your past.

Yes, I expect you could say that.

You said that you knew little of your mother's family apart from an uncle. So did they not play much of a part in your life?

No, the only one of my mother's sisters that I met when I was little - when I was young - was Aunt Annie O'Loughlin, and she came over to Yallunda Flat and stayed with us. I don't think she liked children very much because I remember my sister and I thought her clothes were beautiful and she had lovely shiny patent leather shoes which we used to pick up and sniff and feel. And I think she was very old maidish about her things. She was a tall, slim, rather severe woman I think. I don't remember her very well.

You've already, when we've been speaking about people coming to visit you, commented on how different they were to what you were used to when you were growing up - the sovereigns, the patent leather shoes. You must have seen a

tremendous contrast between your existence and others'. Did you have perceptions about over here being quite different to home.

No, we didn't think very much about it. We knew that you went in a ship and it was 'the other side' and of course when we grew up - - -. As I tell you, I was about thirteen the first time I came over here, and of course it was another world - a completely different world.

Did you know what to expect?

No, had no idea. I was ready to accept anything. No, I had no idea.

Did the newspapers give you any concept of Adelaide?

No, I don't think they did. As I said, there was only the Chronicle and a Catholic weekly called the Southern Cross which is still in existence, and I used to wait on Saturday for my father to finish with the Chronicle and then to read it. But I can't remember very much. I remember the Titanic. I remember when the Titanic went down and the pictures in the Chronicle and the frightful tragedy it was. And the war years of course.

Did members of your family, or the family next door, have cause to come to Adelaide often?

No, not very many of them. The Gills lived next to us and they were as poor as we were and the Fusses [Fuss], a German family, lived a bit further off, and I don't think they came over here until the girls married. There were several handsome daughters and they married and some of them came over here. Then the Rutherfords, the Forrests - - -. Some of them came from over here and when they were older went over there to settle. But until the War I don't think anybody moved much. And then of course the boys began to go away.

Did you have relatives who, on coming to Eyre Peninsula with the whole family, moved away again during your childhood?

No. Uncle Mick and Uncle Jack stayed over there until I think they - - -. Yes they both died over there in Port Lincoln. Uncle Mick married and his son's a very interesting man too - Clarence Liddy. Awfully nice man. But now, I don't think they did come back any of them. My aunts married and came back here of course.

One thing that I'm interested in asking about the past is how the elderly folk from your youth - how you saw them coping with old age.

Well, it's their poor families who had to cope. I remember my grandfather dying in 1915 and my grandmother and aunt nursing him. I think it was very

hard for them because they hadn't many nursing skills you know, and I think it was about then that I thought I'd like to be a nurse. My grandmother hurt her arm one day and she said, 'Come here Annie and do something for my arm'. So somehow or other I tied it up, but I just don't know quite how. And she said, 'Oh, that's fine now Annie. I think you'd better be a nurse'. (laughs) I very early wanted to be a nurse for people, to make them better.

Why do you think that is?

I don't know. Being the eldest of the family, I suppose, had something to do with it.

Did both your grandfather, and later your grandmother, stay in their own homes until their deaths?

Yes. My grandmother died over here at Clare with her daughter - her eldest daughter. One day, I was a very vain little girl and there were only a couple of looking glasses in the house - you know, those little swing jobs - and she said, 'Annie you're a very vain little girl. You're always looking in that mirror. Do you know what happened to a girl who looked in the mirror too long? One day the devil appeared - horns and tail and everything.' So I couldn't wait for my grandmother to go about her business and I dragged up my little stool in front of the mirror and there I sat, waiting for the devil to come. (laughter)

Were you given other cautionary tales? Was that a normal part of life?

Oh yes, that was a normal part of life, yes.

Do you remember any others?

No, I don't remember any others. That one I remember because I was so disappointed. (laughs)

Can you tell me how your families coped with young children? Did the families help one another out?

Yes, they did. As well as they could, because they lived, you know, many miles apart on different farms. But they did help out.

You, of course, were part of a large family. Did any of you ever go to relatives for a time to be cared for?

Yes, when my brother Gerald was born - I think I was about five years old - and I went into Tumby Bay to stay with my Aunt Kitty one of my father's sisters. And she had married Patrick Fitzgerald, but he went out to the farm every week and came home at weekends. She had a little house in Tumby and I stayed there. I was very homesick. And that's where I went to school

first. A girl called Rita, who had black curls, used to come for me. The first day she brought me home to lunch and then called for me to go back again, but I wouldn't. I said, 'It's not the proper thing. You don't go back to school when you come home. It's not the proper thing.' So we were great on what was the proper thing. (laughs) I think it was one of my aunts who used to say this. Anyhow I stayed there for a while and I suppose when the baby was, you know, about a week or ten days old, I came home. But that, I think, is about the only time I remember going away from home.

What about when you were older? Were your younger brothers and sisters ever sent to stay elsewhere?

No, I don't think they were. I think my mother managed pretty well.

Did you ever have young relatives staying with you?

Oh yes, we did. Cousins would come and stay with us.

What occasions would these be?

Just because we liked them. They were playmates. Some of them we liked - some we didn't.

So your parents weren't looking after them for long periods of time?

No, not for long periods, no.

What were the occasions that your extended family on Eyre Peninsula got together?

Well there were some weddings. A couple of the aunts were married from home. And there were just family gatherings - Sunday, going to Sunday tea - just things like that, family occasions.

Did you go every Sunday to your grandparents' place?

No, not every Sunday, but quite a few. Actually our homes were not so far apart. We had to walk over some fields and a creek, and it didn't seem to be that far.

How far would you say?

I suppose it would have been a couple of miles perhaps. To school - we had a couple of miles to go to school and that was quite an adventure. You might meet a goanna or a lizard or mopoke, or something of that kind. It was over a creek and up and down hills and along wheat paddocks.

You've mentioned a number of bush animals as we've been talking. Did you enjoy getting into the bush?

Oh yes, loved it. My father used to take us out shooting on Sunday morning sometimes and he even tried to teach me to shoot, which was not a very rewarding exercise for him because I was frightened of guns and he told me to set my sights and to do this and do that and I just pulled the trigger and shut my eyes - or shut my eyes first and pulled the trigger. And he said, 'Oh, that's all right'. He gave me up there and then.

Was he using a shotgun?

Yes.

What was he shooting?

Parrots, rabbits.

Was this for the family table?

Yes. The rabbits sometimes were, not always. I remember one time. My mother used to make a very nice rabbit stew and I was writing a letter to one of my aunts and I said, 'We have - - -' - I was imitating the older people - and I said, 'We've had our troubles during this year'. And she said, 'You must never tell people about your troubles. Take another piece of paper.' Then I said, 'We had rabbit stew for dinner'. (laughs) 'Never tell them that we ate rabbit.' (laughter) So!

So there was an appearance to be kept up?

Yes indeed.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

We were speaking about how appearances were kept up. Could you tell me more about this?

No, not a great deal. But we were expected to be clean and tidy and we mustn't use slang. My father hated that. And we must speak clearly and pronounce our 'h's' and 'e's'. Then, of course, when we went to school, we started to learn things.

Your grandparents, of course, would have spoken with a very strong accent.

Yes. So did my parents. They had a strong brogue.

Did they discourage this in you?

No. When we went to school the other children laughed at us because we dragged out (laughs), we said 'daance' instead of 'dance', and we spoke like that. No, they didn't discourage us. Although, I remember my Uncle Jeremiah married a girl from Adelaide and she was a honey. She was tall and

very nice, and she spoke beautifully. She had four little girls and my mother used to say, 'You're so rough you children. Why don't you speak like Auntie Florrie's children?', so I was always trying to speak like Auntie Florrie. I remember one of her little girls. We played one day. 'Now what would you like for a new dress? What colour if we could all have a new dress?' And I said, 'Edith, what would you like?' 'I'd like navy blue'. And I thought this was the very acme of elegance. (laughs)

Now, of course, you have no accent at all that I can determine. Until what age do you think it still would have been?

I think until I went to school perhaps. Perhaps a bit later when I went to mind these children. The Bank Manager and his wife were very good to me. They let me read their books and I may have begun to shed it then, but they still used to laugh at the way I'd say things. I don't know. I had a quick ear and I was apt to pick up any sort of an accent that came my way. So I don't know how I arrived at my accent of speech now.

So far as keeping up appearances goes, would you as school children have compared troubles at home?

No, I don't think we did. I don't think we did. We didn't, you know. We were too much occupied with the here and now, being what we were and our parents' troubles were their own. No, I don't think that there was ever anything that I remember my schoolfriends telling me about their families.

You said towards the beginning of our talk that you very quickly picked up your parents' anxieties. How was this so manifested in yourself do you think? Were you worried about your future?

No, not a bit about my future, but I was just - - -. I don't know that I was particularly worried about it, but I used to wish we had a nice house and that we had all the things my mother would have liked. One thing she wanted very much was to send us over here to boarding school. Of course we hadn't a hope in the world of doing that, and my mother regretted it very much. I always had the feeling that we were rather second class citizens because we couldn't.

You've mentioned some of your neighbours who were as poor as you were. But did you know families who could send their children to Adelaide?

No, not many. Not until later on when I went to live in Tumbly Bay and looked after these children. Then there were some families who sent their children over here to school.

Were they farming people?

No, they were town people. One, I think, was the Manager of Elder's [Elder, Smith & Co.] or something like that. And one, Mrs Madigan, had the hotel, and she had three - four - beautiful daughters. They were very nice. They were very snooty, I thought (laughs), and we hated them. But they were awfully nice girls. We've met since we've grown up of course and it's funny. And then the Sheehans were - Mr Sheehan was Elder's or some of these firms too - and they came over here to school, the girls. They were younger than we are but Mary still lives round here and she's great fun.

You referred to yourself as thinking of yourselves as second class people. Did you think in terms of class as yourselves being inferior to the townfolk?

To some of them, yes, I expect so. This was my mother's fault, you know, having brought us up with these ideas instead of - - -. You know, that we should have been over here at school. I think if she hadn't talked about that it wouldn't have mattered so much. But, until I came over here to do my training I always thought girls who went to private schools were superior and I found they weren't. They were no better than I was in many ways. (laughs)

Where do you think your mother's ambitions for you came from? Was it part of her upbringing?

No, I don't think. I think it was just something that was in her. She wanted to have nice things - a nice home - and all the rest of it. I think it was just something that was in her.

Was she, as you remember, disappointed by the way their life had gone?

I think she was, I think she was. Although she had a very serene old age. I looked after her - both my parents and my sister when they were dying - and I always think how privileged I was to be able to do that. But she had a very serene old age and I don't think it - - -. But I think when she was younger she did resent the fact that we didn't have any money or anything else much. Yes, it was very hard on her. She had to work very hard and do without so much.

Let's now talk about your home and upbringing on Eyre Peninsula. First of all though, we'll just perhaps go over the move from the Far North to Eyre Peninsula. Do you remember your parents talking of the reason for going?

No, I was too young. I was only three, so I don't remember.

Did they talk later?

No, I don't think so. They just settled in and started - - -. Settled down to the hard graft.

Could you describe the home?

Oh yes, well it was just a little stone hut really. My father built it and it had - - -. He meant to build on to it you see so the front was a blank wall. There was a door in the kitchen with a window and a door opposite. This was a funny thing about these - my grandparents too - they build doors dead opposite each other. I don't know why. There was this big kitchen, off that my mother's bedroom, and I thought it was the very acme of elegance when they had a board floor put in the bedroom.

How old were you then?

Oh, I suppose I'd have been seven or eight, probably just going to school. There was never time to build the front rooms on. There was a lean-to kitchen at the back and later my father built a little bedroom for my sister and myself. You know, by the time - - -. While we were still children we left there. I was about - as I told you - about thirteen, or something like that.

You say that your grandparents lived in a similar house. Were the other houses in the district the same?

No. This seems to be an idea they brought with them from Ireland. There was this long stone kitchen and two doors, dead opposite each other, and they had windows - they had glass windows in them. Otherwise there were no windows excepting a little square hole in the wall at the eating end of the kitchen. There was one end where there was the fire stove and the cooking was done, the other end with a long table and stools, forms - wooden forms - where they ate.

How did this differ from the other homes?

Well the others, I think, tended more to having a passageway - a narrow little passage and off that opened a front room, as it was called, and a bedroom. And then out to the back - out of the house - which would be probably a living room and another bedroom. But they weren't all like that. Some of them were - - -. Our next door neighbours had a house made of pug - pug walls - and they built some iron rooms on after. But they were not so straight-forward. There was the - - -. Not the doors. And then my grandparents had an iron building at the back which was a box divided into four - two bedrooms, three bedrooms, and a front room. In the front room was a bust of Mr Gladstone who was one of our idols because, of course, he was for Home Rule. (laughs) And there was also a china dog with a gold chain round its neck. I often wish I knew what became of these things. I'd loved to have had them.

You said that the front rooms weren't built on to the house at your home. So what was the front room?

Oh, a kitchen, where my mother cooked and we ate. There was one of those sofas, you know, that had curlicue ends and a table, and another side table where she did the cooking. And there were cupboards on either side of the fireplace. A wood stove of course, and a fountain - one of those fountains - and a kettle. I think that was about all. It was all very, well, for use. A safe, of course, where we kept the milk and things, and a cool safe. I don't know if you know what that was. It was a safe which stood in water and it had sheets of sugar bag, or anything at all - canvas - down the side, which was kept always wet, and that's where we kept our butter and things of that kind.

Did you have any form of cellar?

No, we hadn't. I remember my father starting to build one once, and the rain came and filled it up. (laughs) My mother said, 'No, one of them will be drowned in that', and so it was filled in.

In the room for you children, did you share the one bed?

Yes. And fought like cats in a bag, my sister and I.

And were there fireplaces opening on to each of the bedrooms as well as the kitchen?

No, no fireplaces in the bedrooms.

Which room would you consider the most important in that house?

The living room, where we all ate and did everything - and read. My father was very fond of reading and he didn't have much to read or much time to do it in, poor darling. But he loved reading and knowledge. I'd come home from school and tell him certain items of history, and he'd gently correct me, and say, 'You know, you don't want to believe all that you get from your history books'. It's made me very sceptical about such things.

Was it British history?

Oh yes.

What sort of things?

Oh well, there was Good Queen Bess. And my father said, 'No, she wasn't a very good woman at all', and he began to tell me a few of her capers - you know, how she cut off the heads of people and all this kind of thing. And there was Bloody Mary who didn't cut off quite so many heads because she didn't have enough time. She only reigned five - - -. (laughs) Things like that,

you know, that were - that we were brought up on. Well, you know the kind of thing. You probably - - -. Or perhaps you'd outgrown the Grade 2 history by the time you went to school. But things like that. He just caused me to think and speculate a bit about things.

Did you parents voice their opinions about the Royal Family?

Oh yes, they thought they were very good - they admired them. I remember when King Edward died. We were coming home from Mass in the buggy and going up a hill. Mother said, 'Children, did you know that King Edward died?', and we just knew there was a King Edward. But on Monday morning we were very superior. We knew and the other children didn't. Oh yes, they did, and my father always said - - -. He used to say - because the grandparents of course were very bitter about the centuries of oppression that Ireland had endured - and he used to say, 'Well, now, that is all past and we're very well off here under British rule. It's good', and he tried to correct that attitude of the grandparents.

What was their reaction?

They weren't there. (laughs) But they were bitter. Cromwell - the curse of Cromwell - they used to speak of. Oh no, my father was very - - -. And another thing on the matter of religion. He said, 'You must never - - -. You must always respect other people's religion and never - - -', which of course we always did.

Were you and your sister at that time, and your parents, the only occupants in the house?

Oh no, we had my two brothers and my little sister and they had - - -. Oh, there was a little bed in my parents' room where my little sister slept. And the boys. Oh, then, yes, there was another room my father built out the back, right away from the house, and Vera and I graduated to that afterwards and the boys had our little room. But this was, oh, a great luxury to me. I made myself a bookcase, which fell off the wall very soon - I had it tied on, but - - -. Oh, and lots of things I tried to introduce to that room, but Vera was always a provocative child and she knocked down anything I put up if she could.

What sort of a structure was this room. Was it stone?

No, it was just wood and iron with a board floor. It was up higher than the ground and it had a step up to it.

How were you affected in the heat and the cold in that room?

I don't know. We seemed to have got on all right. I don't remember very much about suffering.

Was there a fire?

No, not in that room, oh no. There was a fire only in the kitchen/living room.

Did your mother, with your help, cope alone with the housework?

Oh yes, and helped my father in the paddocks sometimes. Oh yes, she coped with everything. Made our clothes, and made them beautifully, and washed and ironed and - - -.

What sort of work would she have done with your father in the paddocks?

I seem to remember that she used to help with the chaff cutter. We had a little hand chaff cutter, and she would feed the hay into the thing while he turned the handle. Then there was something we used to do. We used to go out too when we were big enough - a reaping machine. We loved a piece of new machinery for the farm. It was a great joy. Yes I think that's what she used to do mostly. Helped build a haystack. That reminds me too. It was the custom in those days - anywhere there were daughters - for the young men to come courting and they'd tie their horses to the front fence and put a nose bag on them and later on if they were invited to stay to tea, or found favour in paternal eyes, they were invited to get another nose bag from the chaff shed. So, one day an old man came to see my father and my sisters and I stood looking at him - three pairs of blue eyes - and he looked at us, and he said, 'You'll need a big haystack Pat'. (laughs)

Let's talk a little bit more about the house and the vicinity of the house. Did you have a home paddock as such?

There was a, what we called, the 'rye paddock' alongside the house. In front there was a little patch which I made into a garden at one period. And then that opened into a bigger patch where I think my mother tried to grow cabbages and things like that.

Were you able to grow vegetables?

Not much. Cabbages I seem to remember. And I've always regarded cabbage with a deep green loathing ever since then. (laughs) In fact I don't like vegetables at all. And, it's a curious thing, I was having dinner one night at the 'Feathers' with my cousins the Picks, and I noticed that Hector wouldn't have any vegetables. He just wanted the main dish but no vegetables, no salad. And I said, 'I know where you were brought up. In the back blocks where you couldn't grow any.' He said, 'Yes, I don't like vegetable.' They didn't have much when they were young.

Did you have a house yard?

No, there was just this little patch in the front which I think had a fence along and a gate. I suppose that was to keep us in when we were little. But at the back there were no fences - nothing at all. There was a barn with some sheds a little way from the house. But our back yard was the whole farm just about.

What were the sheds and the barn made of?

Wood - yes wood. With straw roofs - I think straw. Yes - or bush. Something like the brushwood we have here. I think that's what they roof - - -.

What sort of animals did you have around the house?

Cows - they were a bit away from the house - and horses. And we had some dogs which were always round the house - kangaroo dogs mostly, because they were good rabbiters. I think that was all. We didn't have - - -. We weren't allowed pets because my father said we wouldn't look after them which was quite true. But we didn't want them anyway. We loved the horses and the cows.

How many cows did you have?

We never had more than two or three. I always remember one day during the 1914 droughts. My mother said, 'Would you take the red cow down to the crossing and see if you can get her some water?' So I drove her down. The poor thing had bones sticking out of her hide. And we got down there and the water was just mud and she just sniffed around at it, and I nearly cried. I think that was the first - - -. That was a big sorrow, not to be able to give water to that poor thing. So I just drove her home again. My other gave her a bucket out of the tank which was very precious of course.

Did she survive?

Yes, I think she did. Oh, yes. We all survived. And there were horses, no doubt - I suppose ten horses.

They'd be working horses?

Working horses. There was one which was slightly lighter than the others. We had a piebald mare and she used to have a foal every - as often as she could - and she had two called Bess and Lila. Bess was my horse. She was more or less a plough horse. But Lila was lighter and Vera got her. We learnt to ride on them.

Did they also work?

Oh yes they did.

Could we talk a little bit about the farm and your parents' work on it. You say that they took up virgin bushland. Do you remember the clearing process or had this finished?

No, I remember something of it - my father going out with an axe and cutting down. And he used to have, sometimes, a man to help and - bringing the wood in and cutting it into firewood. I remember a little of that.

Of course the way most of them were clearing large areas in those times - - -

This is one thing I remember too. My father left a big area of scrub and trees and things for the animals to shelter in when it was very hot.

Was that unusual?

I think it might have been. It may not have been. Perhaps everybody else did it too. It was, oh you know, quite a big paddock and just places for them to go when it was terribly hot.

Do you remember the dimensions of the farm at all?

I seem to remember that it was only about four hundred acres. It was small I know.

Was it all planted with wheat?

Yes, wheat and barley I think sometimes. Oats. There'd be all those. But mainly wheat.

I know that another feature of clearing the land was the burning.

Burning, oh yes. Yes indeed.

Do you remember that?

Yes I remember burning, and my father saying, 'We had a good burn today'. Yes quite a bit of burning. I remember some bush fires too, but they were far enough away from us. My father and brother went to help.

You spoke about the arrival of new machinery. What do you remember about the different types of machinery?

Well, there was a reaper, and it had a big cabin where the wheat went when it was reaped. And then there was - how do they? - a winnower, yes. And the wheat went through the winnower and separated the chaff from the grain. And we used to help to bag the wheat.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

Yes, you were speaking about the winnower.

Yes. Anyhow, when that winnowed the wheat we bagged it and it was sent off to be sold. There was a drill too to put the wheat in. That was a long box - rectangular box. It had discs down below and the seed came through and was distributed evenly by the discs, and it had a plank along the back where the farmer stood driving the horses. We used to sit on this and drag our feet through the - - -. That was one of our favourite ploys.

You say that the family helped with bagging the wheat. Do you remember those occasions?

Oh yes. You got a bag and you scraped it in with your hands and then when it got enough in it so that it would stand upright, I think then my father would heave it in with a shovel.

Did you then sew the bags?

When I got big enough, yes. My mother used to sew them. They used to - - -. Everybody did that. Twine - binder twine.

Did you, at a young age, know what made a good year?

Rain. Yes, oh yes. We were always waiting for rain.

And were you familiar with the yields of the acreage?

Well we heard it all the time. I don't know what the ultimate was, whether it was four bags to the acre or what, but that was the - how they used to talk. These - my father's, you know, farming friends - would come round and they'd reckon that paddock should go so many bags to the acre and if the rain comes before this - - -. Do you know 'Round the Boree Log'?

No.

Oh, don't you. You should. "'We'll all be ruined", said Hanrahan, "if it doesn't rain next week".' (laughs) Well it was much like that. You should read those. They're near the kind of thing that I mean.

You would have experienced a number of droughts of different severity in these early years.

Yes. And the one in 1914, or possibly a bit before that, was the very worst. It was dreadful. And that was when many of the people who'd come over at the beginning of the century left and went inland - went to the country that was being opened up at Wudinna and Kyancutta. And those people got on very well because they went when the - I suppose the drought was about to break. It was beautiful land - great acres and paddocks of it.

You've said that your uncles, or your brothers, was it?

They used to work for the farmers there. No my father had another place, Moody, and that, of course, that was mallee farm too and it suffered very badly. I remember riding my pony with him - I don't know how far it was away, but a long, long way - and I was quite a little girl. I remember my father saying to me, 'Are you tired?', and I thought, you know, he's really concerned because mostly they were very undemonstrative, my parents and they didn't have much sympathy on whingers. I really thought that I was doing very well. I remember him telling my mother how good I was when we got home.

Who ran the other property?

He did. But I don't think he used it a great deal. He, I think, put in a few paddocks of wheat perhaps. He had some help from young men around the country.

When these young men were working on his farm, did they live on the property?

Yes.

Where were they housed?

One of them, I remember, lived in the reaping machine. (laughs) And others lived nearby. They'd go home at night.

Was there a shed built, or did they live in the barn, the ones who lived on the property?

No. They just went home at night, excepting one that I remember slept in the reaping machine, which was quite good, quite comfortable.

Did he ever have more than one young man at a time working?

No. And not very often, because there was nothing to pay them with. School was another great thing and I started when I was six and walked two miles there and two miles back. We had some very good teachers. Some of them were very good. There was one, Miss Owen, was my first teacher. She was a dear conscientious little thing and taught us well. Well she married a local farmer and then came a man teacher. He had red hair and none of us liked him. But he was good. I think he was a good teacher. Then came Miss Barclay and she was wonderful. She first interested me in reading and in literature, because I always wanted to read. I remember one day there was a page of quotations from Shakespeare and she said, 'Now whoever learns this first, can have this book, Shakespeare book, for a prize'. So I got down to it and on Monday I went to her and recited the whole thing through. And she said, 'You're the only child who's done it. None of the others really per-

sisted'. She loved reading herself and knowledge and she was a splendid teacher.

This was the school in - - -?

Yallunda Flat. It was a little wood and iron school, with a fireplace that smoked and was put right in the corner of the room - not slantwise on, but dead on to the wall. Have you ever heard of putting a fireplace there? It smoked terribly.

Perhaps just before we go on to speak about your time at school, we can speak just a little bit more about the household. Water of course was at a premium. How many tanks did household have?

Two.

And you've said that you had a fountain in the kitchen.

In the kitchen, and stove, yes.

That would be have been attached to - - -?

No, it wasn't attached to anything. It was one of those - - -. You see them sometimes in - oh, that place down at Encounter Bay where they have a - - -. I think there's one there. So it had a spout and a tap and it wasn't very big.

Could you describe it to me?

Yes. I suppose it would have been about - probably about that high - - -.

About twelve inches?

Yes - and round. It was rather tall and thin than short and squat and it had a spout coming out at the bottom and on that was a tap, a brass tap. And it was hot water - excepting when we were having baths and then the kerosene buckets would be brought in and put on the brand on the top of the stove - and washing days.

How often did you have baths?

I think we used to have them once a week. (laughs) Oftener if the water would hold out.

And where did you have them?

The tub - the washing tub - was dragged into the kitchen and we bathed in it.

What about the other important room of the house - the toilet? Where was that?

Oh the toilet was out behind a honeysuckle bush a good long way from the house. It was very primitive.

Did it have a bucket?

I don't remember. It was a wooden seat with a little house around it.

What do you remember of meal times in your youth?

Well, we all sat down - my mother served us. That was it. We ate it and I was a pernickety child - wouldn't eat things.

You said you couldn't grow many vegetables. What did the meals consist of?

Mostly pickled meat. Not very often fresh meat. But if someone killed an animal usually other people shared in the - - -. Because it didn't last very long, you know. And if it was to be kept it had to be pickled. Pork - a good deal of pickled pork. And that was it.

Did you have any pigs of your own?

Yes, always had some pigs.

What about hens?

Oh yes, we had fowls.

Did they keep you in eggs?

Yes, they did.

Would you have bred from the cows that you had?

Yes, they had calves.

Did you raise the calves or slaughter them?

I think we raised them. They - - -. I don't remember. We didn't have very many, never more than two or three. But occasionally they had a calf. No, they didn't slaughter them - they kept them. And perhaps later on they may have killed them. If they were heifers of course they were more valuable. They'd have calves of their own bye and bye.

What was your behaviour expected to be at meal times?

It was expected to be very good but it wasn't. (laughs) We were a very rowdy crowd of youngsters, just like any others. But we were supposed to sit up and behave ourselves, but as I tell you, we didn't always.

Were you allowed to speak at the table?

Oh yes, we spoke at the table and everywhere else.

Was Grace said at the dinner table?

Yes. Yes we used to say Grace.

Did you take it in turns?

No, I think we - - -. Oh, I think my father would ask one of us to say Grace.

What was the disciplinary action taken in the family?

A wallop on the bottom (laughs) if you didn't behave yourself.

Who would give that?

Either of my parents. But there was no, 'I'm going to thrash you bye and bye now', it was just done when you were naughty, and that was it.

Let's talk about your time at school. You say you started when you were about six at Yallunda Flat. How long did you go to school?

Until I was thirteen.

That would be 1914.

Yes, about that - that's right.

You mentioned a short time that you went to Tumby Bay school when you were staying there.

Oh, when I was tiny, yes.

Otherwise, was all your schooling at Yallunda Flat?

Yes, all at Yallunda Flat. There was an exam. Was it Progress Certificate? No, that came after. I can't remember what it was called. [Qualifying Certificate]. Anyhow, I was getting into my teens. I'd been the bright little girl at the school until then, and then suddenly I didn't want to learn - didn't want to - - -. I suppose it was the effect of being a teenager. And so I just simply didn't pass it. I could do everything but arithmetic and I just simply was very bad at that. I was very good at other things. I remember it now because the shows - I took all the school prizes. Reading and writing and, oh, geography and history and all the rest of it. But then I just became a - - -. I've noticed many girls seem to flop in their early teens. When they get to secondary school they find it's hard - not that I ever got within miles of secondary school.

Was it your early success at school that would have reflected the interest your family had in reading, current affairs, and the like?

Yes.

Where did your father get books?

I don't know. They just came. I just don't know. I don't know. I can't think what he read, but he - - -. The newspaper, the Southern Cross and - - -. But

there weren't very many books. I never saw any. One of our teachers started a library and, oh, that was marvellous, you know, wonderful. So I grabbed up a handful of books and took them home. My father said, 'You can take that one back on Monday' (laughs). I think it was The Cloister and the Hearth. So I was very industrious on my way to and from school. I read it - as much of it as I could. I couldn't see anything to make a song and dance about.

Do you know now what the song and dance was about?

The Cloister and the Hearth. Yes I think - - -. Oh, my father read it. I think it was about - Charles Reade, isn't it, who wrote it? You haven't read it have you?

No.

I think it was something about a young priest falling in love with a girl and they had a baby. I think that was it. But I just thought, 'Well, so what?'. It wasn't very interesting - very dull I thought (laughs). What my father did for books I don't know, yet I seem to remember him - - -. Because there were simply none in our house, none at all.

Let's talk about your school days. What time would you get up in the morning?

We had to be at school by 9, so I think we got up at about 7, had a wash, breakfast, dressed, and walked the two miles.

What would breakfast have been?

Porridge, a great deal, bread and butter and jam.

And you'd walk with whichever brothers and sisters of school age?

Yes, were going to school.

Did you join other children on the way?

Yes, some. There were the Gills who lived next to us, and we met up with them somewhere along the track.

What did you do on the way to school?

Just walked, saying a bit - dodged animals. I was very frightened. I remember tip-toeing along behind a scorpion one day - a long, long distance. (laughs) No, we didn't do anything, other than we just sang, played. There was a horrible little boy who used to hit me. One day one of the men working in the paddocks saw him and he reported it to the teacher and she stood him up in front of the whole school and gave him a frightful belting. Oh, she asked me about it, but I wouldn't tell her anything about it. I don't know why, because I hated him.

What was the routine when you got to school?

Well, we lined up - two lines - and I think we saluted the flag or something like that. Sometimes - depended on the teacher. You know, they wanted that, well, all right, we did. And then we marched into school and sat in our places and I don't know what the first lesson was, but there was always beastly old arithmetic. I hated arithmetic, because I wasn't very good at it and I remember one day being furious because we were given an extra arithmetic lesson. I remember saying 'bloody' (laughter) which was the worst thing I could say.

Did you get caught saying it?

Oh no, took care not to. And then we went on. We had a recess period and then a lunch period, and I think we broke up about 3 and went home.

So you'd take your lunch to school with you?

Yes.

Do you know what that would consist of?

Oh, bread and jam sandwiches very often. I think it was mostly bread and jam.

It was a one room class room?

Yes, one room for all the classes. I think there might have been about 16 children. Not very many.

And how was the classroom furnished?

Long forms and desks - not solitary desks but long ones. And a desk for the teacher and a blackboard on an easel, and I think there was a cupboard, and peg for us to hang our clothes on, and this terrible fireplace - smoked all the time. And doors, dead opposite each other for some reason or other. No garden or anything like that. There was a school yard for us to play in.

Did boys and girls play together?

Oh yes indeed.

I think that's one of the striking differences between country and city schools.

Yes, I expect so. Oh yes, we were brought up - - -. I hated all the little boys because they were scruffy looking. And one day a boy came to school - I expect I was about twelve and he would be about the same age - and he had shining hair and white teeth and always looked beautifully clean, and I loved him dearly. My first love affair. (laughs)

You've mentioned that particular boy getting whacked because he hit you. Was that the normal sort of punishment at school?

Oh yes, a cane. There was a cane kept there. Some used it more than others.

Did you know just the three teachers when you were going through school?

There were five. There was Miss Owen and Mr Barringer and Miss Barclay who was the wonderful teacher who taught me so much. And then there was Mr Smith - the red headed one - and, who came after that? I think he was about the last teacher that I had. Then there were others after who came. Oh yes, Miss Frautche - a beautiful girl who was tubercular and died very young.

She was after your time?

No, she did teach me for a while. I was there. Oh yes, there was another one too - Miss Frautche and Miss - - -. She married Roy Richardson - oh, dear, what was her name? She was a tall, gaunt girl with a big jaw and - - -. Oh dear, what was her name? I can't remember, but she was my last teacher. And when I was going through this period of not knowing what I wanted to do and not wanting to do anything much - Daisy - - -. No I can't remember. But she married Roy Richardson and had several children. And when I lived over here one day a woman who lived in the house at the corner said, 'Were you Annie Liddy', and I said, 'I still am', and so she had been Rene Price and they were neighbours who lived a fair distance away. So I gathered up all I knew and this Mrs Richardson, who was Daisy, and Mrs Price, who had been - she'd been Irene Price and she was now Mrs Roberts - and my sister and the Cabot girls, Grace and Minnie, and had them all to afternoon tea. We had a wonderful afternoon remembering (laughs). Remembering those days.

Did you attend school every day?

Yes, every day.

Were there ever occasions when you wouldn't be sent to school?

Oh yes, if it was terribly wet or if one wasn't well, but not many.

What about having to help at home?

Well, I didn't do much. My mother did everything. She was very competent and she - we - whatever we did was not right. It was quite wrong according to her standards. So she didn't make us work half as much as she should have done. If she hadn't been so keen on having everything done properly, I expect we would.

So you weren't ever kept home to help with the housework?

No.

What about farm work?

No, we didn't do much of that either.

Would your brothers ever be kept home to help on the farm?

No, I don't think they were. But, of course they did after school.

What did you do after school?

Well there was homework, and there was play - go out to play. That was all. I remember my mother was very cross with me because I wouldn't learn to crochet or to knit and I hated them both. But I could make my own dresses and my sisters'. Perhaps I'd do that. I learnt to sew quite early - to make clothes.

You were saying you were at something of a loose end towards the time of leaving school. Was it in your mind that you would have liked to have gone on?

No, no. I just didn't want to do anything. A terrible thing. But I didn't, excepting a great singer like Madam Melba, or something like that. Head full of woolly dreams, you know.

How long did this state of mind last?

Oh, not very long. I left school and went to work in Tumby.

What was your parents' reaction to this frame of mind? Did you talk with them about it?

No. Oh, my mother was very disgusted with me. She used to scold me about it. But there was nothing anyone could do about it. I don't think it lasted very long. But having failed a silly little exam I felt very, very - that I'd let the side down badly.

Was there any question of repeating it?

No. Then, when I started nursing, I had to take an educational test which was very easy then. I think it consisted of - - -. Another nurse and I used to go to the local school teacher in Tumby Bay and he said to me, one day, 'Do you read a lot?', and I said, 'Yes'. He said, 'I thought you must'. There was a library in Tumby that I could use.

How long had the library been available?

I think quite a long time. There was a, what they called, an Institute, which was the hall where everybody - all the functions were held - and the library was there. I think it had been there for a good many years when I came to it.

'S.A. Speaks: An Oral History of Life in South Australia Before 1930'**Beth Robertson interviewing Miss Anne Liddy****on 26 August 1985**

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Was there something that you wanted to say before we went on?

Yes, about the Swedish and Norwegian wheat ships that used to come into Port Lincoln and very often the men would jump ship and go inland to work for the farmers. They used to come to my grandfather's farm. There were two I remember - Tom and Neil - and Neil used to make the most wonderful little boats and put them inside bottles. We never knew how - it was a never ending mystery - and they were dressed on a pile of bluestone. Bluestone was used for picking wheat and it was a lovely blue colour. And then there was old Bill who was very lame - he was a Norwegian.

Then there were the hawkers - Afghan and Indian and Syrian. Syrian was Mr Kardachi who afterwards opened a store in Tumby Bay. They were very nice people. Mrs Kardachi used always to make me a pot of marmalade when I came home during my training. She was a sweet woman. Bholah Shah had a little shop in Yallunda Flat near our school. He was married to a white girl and they had three children. Dan Singh wore a turban and he was spoken of as an Afghan. Before they started shops they used to take vans around the district with prints and Turkey twill and trousers - men's clothes and shirts - and they would sell them to the farmers' wives.

So there was quite a national mix.

Oh, quite. And another thing. You were asking me about my upbringing the other day. Well my mother was very keen on deportment. I'd get a terrific thump between the shoulder blades and told to 'stand up straight' and anything - like having one's arms akimbo - was slouching, and one hip down, 'like a tired old horse at the slip rails', my mother used to say. These were all breaches of - - -. They were things one shouldn't do. So until a few years ago I did have a fairly good posture.

Speaking about the various nationalities in the district, were there any German folk in the area?

Yes there were, but not very many. The Fusses lived next to us - people called Fuss. They had four very handsome daughters who were married in very short order because they were very strictly brought up - very good housewives and, as I said, very goodlooking.

Do you remember attitudes changing towards German folk in the district during the First World War?

Well, of course to be German was a dreadful thing, but I don't remember any other families there, and I don't think people changed towards them - they were good neighbours. I don't think people's attitudes - - -. But of course there was a - - -. Oh, yes, now I remember one thing. There were Schramms - people who had come originally from America but with a German name. The Schramms had four boys at the war and they were not allowed to vote in the Conscription issue which speaks volumes about the attitude of the times.

What was your parents' attitude?

Oh, they were very tolerant of course. They were tolerant of everybody

Do you remember the Conscription Referenda?

Yes I do remember it. People with plaques with 'Yes' across. My parents, of course, voted 'No', and I think most people did because it was thrown out pretty decisively, wasn't it? But yes, I remember the patriotic people voted 'Yes'. There was a Dr Mannix who - he influenced the Catholic vote a good deal I think.

Do you remember family discussion about the issue?

Not a great deal. It didn't interest me very much, so I don't remember. There would be talk about it occasionally but it passed over my head.

I remember you saying that your grandparents were very concerned with the issue of Home Rule and the like. What was their attitude to the war?

I don't know exactly. They were much more preoccupied with Home Rule actually.

Because there was an upsurge of troubles in Ireland during the First World War.

Oh yes. So that was their main preoccupation. And the war - of course they were interested in the war. Everybody was. We couldn't be otherwise, and especially with so many young men going from the district to be killed, some of them. I remember two boys I'd been at school with being killed in France, very soon after they arrived there. I remember hearing of a cousin - two cousins. One was killed in France the day after he arrived, and the other died in Egypt.

Was that on your mother's side?

One was on my mother's side - her young nephew was killed in France. The other was an older man. An older generation than my father.

Were any of your immediate family involved in the war?

No, no they were not. I had only one uncle who could have gone and he had a damaged arm. He was not eligible medically.

That's the period that I'd like to start talking about with you today. During the first interview we talked about your family background and your upbringing at Yallunda Flat and we talked about you leaving school when you were thirteen. Would that have been in 1914?

Yes. I was born in nineteen hundred and one.

And you told me that you were somewhat out of sorts at this stage of your life.

Yes. I was a teenager and a nuisance and didn't know what I wanted.

I'd like to talk about your family circumstances in 1914. There was, of course, the dreadful drought in that year. Can you tell me how that affected your family?

Oh yes, it was devastating. We had two tanks and our fear was of them running dry. My mother used to take the washing down to the creek while it ran and everything had to be boiled, you know, even kerosene buckets. Now what was the other thing that affected us? Oh, well, of course the stock. Did I tell you about my taking the red cow to the crossing?

Yes.

That was the sort of thing. There was not enough water. I just don't know how my parents managed. But this was the period at which I was so conscious of my parents' anxieties and the Bank took most people's places. They had this terrible thing called 'the Bank'. Our farm went because we were bankrupt, like many others, and my father then took a job on the railway. It was being built from Port Lincoln to Kimba and he used to work there and come home at weekends.

Did he have to give up the farm during 1914?

Yes, but we lived there. We were allowed to live on there.

How long did the family remain on that property?

I think for about - certainly for some time after the war - because then my father went share farming with a man down at White's River. The farm was owned by Dr Kinmont. He was one of the first medical men over there. His headquarters were in Port Lincoln. But it was managed by - - -. He had a manager and my father went there and we had the house on the property because the manager lived in the township.

That was after the end of the war?

Yes, I'm trying to think. I know that I started nursing from there, so it would have been, I imagine, the early 1920 years.

Your family were allowed to remain on the old farm. Did your father continue to work it at all?

I think he did a little in his spare time. There were a couple of wells and a spring. The spring was our lifeline. It was a walk over hills and gullies, but it never dried up. The water was beautiful. But there were wells too near the house and water was drawn from them.

Did your father continue to work on the Railways for that, what would have been five, six, seven year period?

Yes, he did. I can't remember just how long.

And was he a labourer - a ganger?

Yes, he was a labourer.

Can you remember him speaking of the work?

I remember him coming home looking terribly distressed one day because a man had been - - -. They had these funny little carriages that went along the railway track and apparently the handle slipped and hit this man on the forehead and he was killed. I remember him speaking of that. And they lived in barracks, I think, during the week and we used to take him to the barracks. My mother drove the buggy and pair - I don't know how he came to hang on to them but he did - then home again. Oh, we loved that. That was a great expedition to go up to Ungarra. I think they'd got as far as Ungarra in Moody.

You say you wondered how you hung on to the buggy and pair. Did your father lose his work horses?

Yes, he did. He lost his work horses. They were just - - -. He couldn't keep them on a drought-ridden farm and so they went into a sale.

Do you remember the look of the farm changing during this period?

No, not much about it. It was a very pretty place, surrounded by hills. The house was built on a slope and a creek ran below it. It was a very pretty district. But I don't remember that it changed very much. I suppose it did. It must have.

Your brothers would have been getting older at this stage. Did they work the family farm?

No, they didn't. When they were little boys I remember them standing on kerosene boxes to put the collars on the farm horses and the hames, and hitch up the straps. But, no, when they were old enough to work they went to work for the surrounding farmers and further up - Kyancutta and Wudinna where the people who left our district went and prospered. It was very good land and they used to go to work for them.

Do you know how your father felt about having to work on the Railways after being a farmer all his life?

I don't know. He didn't say much about his feelings, but I imagine that he felt it was a 'comedown', as my mother would have called it, and it was.

What about her attitude to this change?

I don't know. She didn't say much about it either. I imagine she felt it quite keenly too. But of course it was happening to everybody - to lots of people - so we had no undue cause to be sorry for ourselves.

So, with you leaving school during this crisis year, did you know that you would be expected to go to work?

Oh yes, I knew that - that I must do something.

What were the opportunities as you perceived them?

They were very little. Working in a shop in the township, going into domestic service, or marrying the boy next door. One day - - -. One hot New Year's Day I got my sister to go with me to the hospital. We set out to the hospital for me to ask Sister Doepke would she accept me.

This was some considerable time later wasn't it, that you began at Tumby Bay Hospital?

Oh yes, quite a long time. There was quite a lot in between.

Yes, I'd like to speak about that period.

Well, I went to work for a local bank manager in Tumby Bay to mind their children.

Which bank was he with?

Bank of Adelaide.

And what was his name?

Monfries. Mrs and Mrs Monfries. And they were very nice people. They had, at that time, one little boy whom I adored, and later on they had a girl and another boy.

What age were you when you started there?

I think about fourteen.

And how did you get this job?

Well, Mr Monfries came to our sale. We had a sale, you know, 'distress sale' as they called them. And I think he was the bank with which my father had dealings and he asked my father if his eldest daughter would be - if he'd allow her to come and work for them. My father said, 'Yes', and there I was.

Do you perhaps only in retrospect feel some sense of irony in that sort of work - working for the bank?

Oh yes. Yes. Yes I did indeed. And being naturally a snob, I suppose, I didn't talk about it a great deal. But I realised more and more how good they were to me. They allowed me to read their books and took an interest in my mental development and in return I did quite a lot of work - minded the children and cooked and cleaned. But I remember them with gratitude and affection.

Do you remember leaving home to take up the job?

Yes.

How did you feel about that at the time?

I was a rather stolid child - not given to showing my feelings very much, and always looking forward to the next thing. Later on, when I was older, I'd weep bitterly at having to leave home for any reason, but at this time I don't remember that I did. I think my father felt it more keenly than I did.

Did you live all the week with the family?

Yes.

How often would you see your own family at that time?

When they came into the township. Sometimes I went home and I'd perhaps take one of the children with me. The eldest boy, Peter, came home with me one or two holidays I remember.

How long were you with the banker's family?

They came to town - - -. They were moved, I think, at the end of the war. Mr Monfries transferred to a bank here in Adelaide and I came with them. And I was with them for two years.

In Adelaide?

Yes.

Would that perhaps take us up to about 1921?

About 1920 I would think. And then my father, you see, had gone to this share farming job and there was a lot of work on the farm and they wanted me home to help with - help my mother.

I'd like to talk a little bit more about your time with the Monfries. Can you tell me what your daily routine would have involved?

Well, I got up and lit the fire in the kitchen - the stove, iron wood stove. Then I milked the cow and I got to being - - -. I was fairly highly strung and always looking ahead to the next job. Then I'd go very early - sometimes it was not daylight - across to the yards, to the yard to milk the cow. And somebody told Mr Monfries, 'That girl of yours is a good riser, isn't she? Saw her the other morning making for the cow yard at about half past five', or something like that. Then I came back and got the breakfast and washed up, and so on from there.

Would you get breakfast for the whole family?

Yes, but - - -. I think they did a lot of the breakfast and getting themselves meals. You know, Mrs Monfries did. She had been brought up on a farm too.

And did you eat with the family?

Yes.

And did your duties involve housework?

Oh yes. Not a great deal of it as I remember. I remember Mrs Monfries sweeping and dusting. But I did some.

Was their first child, the girl, a baby when you went to them?

A boy - he was a boy. Yes, I think he was about ten months old. I would take him out in the afternoon in his pram.

And were you responsible for washing and feeding him?

No, not altogether, but I learnt to do these things - to look after him.

He would have been starting school.

Yes, he started school while I was still with them.

Then were you looking after the younger child during that time?

No, she was born when I had gone - when I went home. Oh, yes, and Mrs Monfries was having this baby and I think she felt that she needed an older

girl would could cook and could do all sorts of things but they asked for me to come back later.

So was your period of employment with them interrupted during that time?

Yes, during that time.

About how long were you home before you returned?

I just can't remember. I haven't any idea. I think it was not so very long.

Can you remember the sort of wages that you earned?

Oh yes. I think I used to get three shillings a week and my keep which sounds terrible now, but it was really - - -. You know, it kept me in stockings and things like that.

Did you keep all of your wages or did you send any home?

No, I kept them all. I don't think there was anything much to send home after I'd - - -.

How did you compare the home that you were living in in Tumbly Bay with the home that you'd left?

Oh, it was a palace. It was actually a very ugly house. The carpets and curtains - it was all very ugly according to standards nowadays. They were red papered walls and red and blue carpets - they were quite crude colours. But it was a palace compared to our little mud floored house in the bush.

Do you remember your room?

Yes, it was a long narrow strip of room on the back - built on to the back outside. It had a single bed - as far as I remember - and a chair and a dressing table, drawers.

Were you the only one helping in the house?

Yes.

What about washing day? Was that part of your duties?

Yes. I did all the hanging out, anyway. Yes, I helped with all these things.

I remember you indicating in our last interview that your employers would comment on your accent.

Oh yes, well of course I had a brogue. My parents spoke with a strong brogue - not unpleasant, and they had pleasant voices. But, yes, they used to laugh quite kindly at this. It never offended me. Nothing like the ragging we got when we went to school.

Do you think your manner of speaking changed during this period?

I don't know - it probably did - began to change. I was always a very precise, prissy, little girl, and I remember one of the inspectors saying when he came to the school, 'Who's that little girl who pronounces her "ings" so nicely?'. I think I'd got that from my parents because they were sensitive to good speech.

Did your employers provide your clothing?

No, although they gave me dresses and things. Mrs Monfries' mother was a wonderful dressmaker and I remember her making me a dress.

Did she live with the family?

No, she lived on Yorke Peninsula, one of those - Curramulka I think or somewhere. And they had a farm there.

You would have been a young teenager during this period. What sort of activities did you have outside their home?

I went to church every Sunday and I met one or two young people there, and one of them used to take me to dances in Saint Columbus Hall at Hawthorn [AL is speaking now of her time in Adelaide with the Monfries] and there was a - - -. The Catholic young people used to have dances there, and we used to go together.

Did your employers supervise your free time?

They were very strict. They were very good and saw to it that I didn't stay out late very much. They were very aware of their responsibilities with a teenager on their hands.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

Perhaps now we could talk about the time that you went to Adelaide with the family. Do you remember that change?

Yes I remember. But I was more useful then, I could cook, and things like that. The children had begun to go to school.

Had the wife supervised your work and taught you various things?

Yes, she did. She taught me quite a bit and supervised my work. She was an easy going woman and didn't drive me too hard. Yes I learnt to do things.

Did your wages increase over the time?

Oh yes, they did.

Do you remember about how much they were?

No, I can't remember, but I know that I got quite a bit more. No, I can't remember.

Did the family ask you if you'd like to move to Adelaide with them?

Yes. And they asked my parents of course. Yes, of course.

Did you want to go?

Yes, I think so. I wanted to get on to the next thing. Oh yes, I think so, without being madly excited about it. As I tell you, I was a rather stolid young woman.

Were you sorry to leave your old home and your old district to go on to new places?

No. I didn't like Tumby Bay very much and - no, I wasn't at all sorry to leave. Sorry to leave my family of course, but not the place.

Did you have intentions of going for a certain period or what did you see in the future?

No. I had no ambitions - well I suppose I had some shadowy ones. But, no.

What do you remember these 'shadowy ambitions' as being?

Oh, well, of course I was full of the wildest dreams. I wanted to be a singer like Amy Castles. I wanted to do all that kind of thing which was - - -. I was a great dreamer and a great idealist, you know. I think I lived a good deal in another world in my own mind. But in the meantime I did the next thing to hand, as I've always done.

Now tell me just briefly, what was the house like in Tumby Bay, in physical terms?

The bank. Oh, well, there was an office in front. It was one of these houses - you see them round here, you know, with - I think they call them Tudor, do they, front? And there was a verandah in the front, a long passage - shotgun passage - right through, and that opened on to a verandah. Off that was a sitting room, a dining room which was used largely as a bank office, and a couple of bedrooms and a kitchen.

I'm wondering, did you encounter the farmers and the local people as they came to do business?

No, that was all done in the office.

Do you have any idea how he felt about his work during that period?

Mr Monfries? No, I've no idea. He, I'm sure, was a very conscientious man. He'd come from a long line, I imagine, of Presbyterian Scots, and was therefore very conscientious, and very able I think too.

What do you remember of the trip to Adelaide?

Oh, well, we came across in, I think it was the Rupara this time - a boat called the Rupara. I was enchanted. Electric light! It was the first time I'd switched on electric light. We got on the ship and had dinner and then went to bed. It was very necessary in many cases because it was frightfully rough in the passage we called the Althorpes - between Kangaroo Island and the foot of Yorke Peninsula. And we arrived next morning at Port Adelaide. I think we had breakfast and got off the ship and came by train from Port Adelaide to the city.

And what do you remember of your first impressions of entering Adelaide?

Oh, wonderful. I thought it was - - -. Oh, I had been across once before with Mrs Monfries - I think I told you - to mind the baby when she saw her friends and things. And we went to Carrumulka and stayed with her parents that time. But we came across to Adelaide too. Oh, it was an enchantment. There was James Marshall's and John Martin's. In James Marshall's there was a model wearing the most beautiful pink evening dress. There was this little trap at Government House gates - a funny little horse drawn contraption which I suppose people hired. And there were the trams and lifts in the stores. And all these beautiful houses and beautiful streets. They were very small homes I think really. But oh, it was an enchantment.

And where did you live?

With Mrs Monfries' friends and relatives in the suburbs.

And when the family moved back to Adelaide, where did they live?

Kingswood. Had a little house in Kingswood. I've often seen it since. It's changed hands many times.

Which street was it in?

Cambridge Terrace.

And did that differ again from their home in Tumby Bay?

Not a great deal. It was small, quite small.

Did you have your own room there?

Yes, I did. I had quite a nice room there. I think there were four bedrooms and a sitting and dining room, kitchen and a lobby, and bathroom.

Did they have running water in the house?

Yes, oh yes.

Had they had that in Tumby Bay?

I don't remember. I was so used to bringing water in the buckets wherever it was. Oh yes, they did. There was running water in the bathroom anyway. I don't remember about the kitchen.

And did they have electric lights in their home in Adelaide?

Oh yes.

What did your work with the family consist of at this stage?

Much the same kind of thing. I had learnt to cook and I did quite a bit of cooking. Oh, the usual household work - cleaning - things like that. Still minding the children whom I dearly loved.

What were their names?

Peter. That wasn't his name but he was always called Pete. He's still around somewhere. He came to see me a few years ago with his wife. And he also came to see me during the war. He'd been in New Guinea and he won a military medal, or a military cross or some such. He came to the ward I was charging one day and asked if he could see Sister Liddy and I said, 'Yes, I'm Sister Liddy', and he said, 'Well, I suppose if I didn't know you there's no reason why you should know me. I'm Pete Monfries.' So, it was marvellous - a great reunion. His family were living in Adelaide by then.

And then there was Margie - Margaret - a very pretty little girl. And the youngest one was born when I was with them at Kingswood. Oh dear, what was it? He was killed during the war. A beautiful baby and I adored him. James.

You would have been a young woman of what, eighteen, nineteen during this period?

Eighteen or nineteen.

What did your activities out of the house consist of at this time. Did you meet people in Adelaide?

Yes, I did. This is when I, through going to church - - -. The Kingswood Catholic Church was not far down Cambridge Terrace. Then I'd had introductions from my mother to some of the people she had known - my parents had known in the Mid North who'd come to Adelaide to live. And they lived in Unley and Kingswood, Parkside. And, as I told you, I went to dances at St Columbus.

So that was my social life. I can't remember anything else very much, or very exciting. Oh yes, and sometimes - that was when I first went to the theatre. And they were very - - -. The Monfries were very interested in my reactions and the play was - - -. Gladys Moncrieff was in, oh, one of the first plays she played in here - I can't remember. But she was very young, slim and had this beautiful voice. And of course that was another enchantment. I loved it. Catinka - that was one of the - - -. Maytime. Maytime and Catinka.

Was that at the Theatre Royal?

At the Theatre Royal, yes. I used to go up into the gods and I remember taking Pete with me one day, and his little bright eyes looking up at me as we scrambled up the stairs. It was a fearful scramble to get to the gods. Oh yes, that was one of the things.

Were you able to bring friends home to the house in Kingswood?

No, I didn't ever ask to. No.

Did the family involve you in their outings?

Let me see, I think we had a car at that time. Yes, they did sometimes. But as I got to make my own social life and they of course had theirs, not so much as in the country. They bought a car in Tumbay Bay and I used to go everywhere with them in that.

What were the circumstances of you returning to Eyre Peninsula?

My father had, by this time, gone sharefarming and my mother needed me at home. My sister had gone to work in the township in a store. She came home at weekends. The rest of the family were still at school and there were cows to be milked and bread to be baked and all sorts of things to do. So, that's what I did for the next couple of years.

Did you want to return?

Yes, I think so. I loved my family very dearly and, yes, I did. And that was a very pleasant life too. It was a farming district and we knew a great many of the people around.

What sort of social activities would you be involved in there?

Oh, dances and concerts when they happened. I remember I had a twenty first birthday party at home and other young people - - -. There weren't many people of my own age. They would have 21st birthday parties. And the dances at the hall and the Institute. Football matches.

Which township would you have been going to?

Tumby Bay.

Did your family give you an allowance at this stage?

Yes, I expect they did. I don't remember really very much. Oh yes, I was always given some money. Not very much because we didn't have much to do things.

What was the home like that you were living in?

Oh, it was a quite nice house. There was a little passage from the front door. No one ever used the front door - it was always the back. Off that opened a bedroom for my sister and myself and my parents, and the hall opened into - down a step - and opened into a room which was a sitting room, more of less. A dining room. There was a dining table in it but we always ate in the kitchen. And there was a kitchen. I don't remember very much about it, but I think there was - - -. There was another room, yes, I'm sure there was another room for my brothers. But it was a quite pleasant little house.

Not mud floors in this one?

No, I think we had board floors in this one. They were very grand.

I think you were mentioning the last time after we'd finished the interview, that afternoon teas were something of an occasion.

Oh yes. Ladies of the district would invite the others to come and have afternoon tea. That was the thing. You didn't invite people to dinner or, if they came by at dinner time - it was the middle of the day - well, of course they always stopped and had a meal with you. But afternoon tea was the very elegant thing. Wonderful cooks, all the women round there. They made beautiful cakes. The suppers at the dances and concerts were really something. Any amount of butter and eggs of course.

I remember one day Mrs Schramm came to afternoon tea with her daughter Jean who was my age, and I felt rather humiliated because, although I could make my own dresses and my sisters' and did, I never learnt to crochet or to knit. And the thing to do was to play the piano, paint pictures and sing. Well, most of my - a good many of my friends did this very badly. My mother used to say, 'I don't know why you can't crochet or knit like other people'. So I remember this day, Jean Schramm got out her needlework after we'd had afternoon tea, and for this reason I've hated my friends to come in and start knitting. It always harks me back to these days when I felt such a - oh, outback wild turkey. (laughs) I couldn't knit.

But my mother gave me no credit for the fact that I had made my own dresses from the time I was twelve, which was much more useful. She was always holding this friend of ours up to me as an example. This girl was an only child of a widow and she was perfection. One day I said, to mother - I savagely turned on her and said, 'No, I don't think much of her. I've got twice as much brains as she's got, even if she can do her old knitting and her old crochet work.' (laughs) Occasionally I'd have a spurt of rebellion.

It's interesting, isn't it the standards expected when you would have thought that the practicalities were much more important?

You would think so wouldn't you? I remember saying, 'She can't sing, she screeches,' and as we all had a very quick ear for sounds and music.

Were there any opportunities to take singing lessons?

No. There was a girl - her brother incidentally has written a book called We Survived - called Linda Roediger - and she gave piano lessons. The book was We Survived and it's a very good one, I think, of its kind. You know, the kinds of lives we lived then. But Linda played the piano and she sang, and I think she taught music. Oh, but before that my mother was determined that I was going to have some of the lady-like graces, so a neighbour's daughter - this was when I was a child - attempted to teach me the piano. I became quite proficient in the five finger exercises. And another time it was the violin. I don't know who was the first to teach me that. Someone not much older than myself. Oh yes, I remember - not much older than myself, and nearly as bad. And I resisted that too.

Your household had their own piano?

We had a little board piano. I don't expect you've ever seen one. A tiny little piano. My sister - eighteen months younger than I am - could play anything. She had all the skills that I didn't have and she was good at tennis and things like that. My instinct if I saw a ball coming towards me was to run away. (laughs) But she was good at all sorts of things. And she could play, you know, simple tunes.

We've been talking about the period until - - -. I estimated that you must have been about 23 when you went to Tumbay Bay Hospital.

Yes, I think I was. No, I think I was not quite twenty two.

Had you made a conscious decision to embark on a career at that time?

No, it was just the next thing to do. I don't think I very often made conscious plans to do anything. They just sort of came my way. But this, I definitely

did - oh yes I did. Not a plan for a career but I showed a good deal of determination for an extremely shy girl to go to Matron, who was a formidable figure in our town and a splendid woman. And anyhow this day, this hot New Year's Day, we went up nearly to the hospital and I said to Vera, 'I think we'll go back now'. I couldn't face it. And anyhow a week or two later I saw Matron in the shop - in one of the shops - and I spoke to her then and she said, 'Yes', and oh that was wonderful, you know, to be accepted like that without any trouble at all. So in about a week I had a summons to the hospital.

Why nursing, do you think?

Well, it was the only other thing to do, besides the other openings of which I've told you.

You said last time we spoke that perhaps you were influenced by your grandfather's illness and your grandmother had hurt her arm at one stage.

Yes, I might have been.

I was looking at the medical services available on Eyre Peninsula at the time and I believe the Tumby Bay Hospital had only opened in 1912.

Yes, that was before my time. I can't - a Matron Chambers opened it. Then she went and it became a district hospital. I think in her day it was a private hospital. The district took it over.

Do you remember how your family coped in times of illness when you were a child?

I remember our sending for Dr Kinmont when Vera had appendicitis and mostly we were driven into Tumby Bay. My father was gored by Fuss's bull at one stage and was very badly gored, and a neighbour took him to Tumby Bay Hospital. There was a Dr Cormack, a Scotsman. He was the doctor. I don't know how long my father was away but it was a very dreadful time for my mother.

Was he very badly injured?

I think so, yes. He was walking between our place and my grandmother's and he wouldn't go home because my mother was expecting another baby and he didn't want to frighten her so he went to his mother. And she set things in motion and he went to Tumby Bay Hospital.

Was that perhaps at the time when it was still a private hospital?

I think it was, yes.

And there would have been a local doctor attached to it.

Yes, well then - this was after the war - Dr Wibberley, Dr Brian Wibberley - came there, and Sister Doepke. The Wibberleys were wonderful people too. His father was the Reverend Brian Wibberley - no you wouldn't remember him. He was a leading Methodist clergyman. Dr Wibberley was a marvellous person, wonderful. No one knows how much good he did in that district. He was very keen that young people should have clubs and things like that.

Do you remember your parents' reaction to your decision to become a nurse?

Oh yes, they were very approving. Mother said to me, 'Now look Annie, even if you don't like it you'd better stay for a few weeks'. So, at the end of the week I came home for my day off, and I think they were terribly afraid that I'd been tipped out. No, they were very supportive and very pleased. I think my father was even proud of me.

Had you had any experience of nursing within your own family or the bank manager's children?

No, not really. I probably took them drinks if they were sick in bed, but not much. We were a very healthy family, you know, brought up on salt pork and things like that, but we were very healthy.

Do you remember home remedies?

Oh yes. There was eucalyptus, there was Epsom salts and there was senna. Vile concoctions, which we were given the appropriate times.

What was senna?

They were leaves and you infused them as you did tea.
I remember them still. Simply horrible, frightful. And there was treacle and sulphur. Yes, sulphur was another thing we were given sometimes. I think it was a laxative. And eucalyptus. Olive oil was always there and binding up cuts and things.

What sort of occasions would you be given the home remedies? Can you remember the specific treatments for various illnesses?

Well, eucalyptus was good for everthing. Bad colds - you got it as an inhalation or had it rubbed on your chest. Mixed with oil usually because it was severe on very fine skins. It was a sovereign remedy. Mostly colds and things like that.

What about the senna.

The senna. That was a laxative. In fact it was a purgative. And so was the Epsom salts.

Were the treacle and sulphur -- --?

Yes, that was a laxative too?

Was constipation a general problem do you think?

I don't know. I seem to remember that we were conscientiously dosed with this. I'm sure we didn't need it. Of course we didn't have a great deal of fruit - had no fruit - very little vegetable excepting the cabbages.

So perhaps these were preventative rather than cures?

Yes I think so.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

Let's now talk about your early time at Tumbly Bay Hospital. What do you remember of beginning work?

I remember presenting myself to Sister Doepke, crackling with starch and full of wonderful ideas of laying my cool hand on a fevered brow and the rest of it, and she said, 'Annie, will you milk the cow?' (laughs), so off came my cuffs and on went the blue apron and I milked the cow. As a Junior Pro [Probationer] that was my twice a day duty.

Can you describe the hospital to me as you remember it?

Yes. There was a hall where -- -. It had a return verandah. It was right on the beach, beautifully situated, and you heard the sea all the time - waves coming in. A verandah. That opened into a hallway and that -- -.

What does the term return verandah mean?

One of those which came across the front and down the side and it might open into a hallway on one side and a big room on the other. Well this hallway opened - turned - on the left into a passage. There were rooms in front, a ward, Matron's room and a dining room - the place where we ate and Matron did her books and things, she had no sitting room excepting that one. And next to that was the theatre where the midwifery patients were delivered, and a couple of rooms across the hall - wards, small empty bed wards - and then a big ward which held four beds.

So how many beds in all in the hospital?

It couldn't have been more than ten I would think.

Was the hospital filled to capacity generally?

Yes, always. There were always midwifery patients. Half of the patients would have been midwifery and their babies.

What other members of staff were there?

There was a nurse, an older nurse called Marg, and there was Bourne, Annie Bourne, my great friend who later had a couple of hospitals over on the coast - opened them - and was a marvellously competent person. And there was another one called Stoyel. Four of us and Sister Doepke.

Was Annie Bourne your age?

No she was older than I was. She died only a few years ago having lived into her eighties.

Were you the only Junior Probationer?

Well, I think Stoyel was considered a Junior. Her main idea was to get married, and she did.

Did she finish her training?

Oh no, she didn't. I think she did a midwifery training though.

I believe at the time, because of the nature of the hospital, being a small one, that you were to be there in the first instance for eighteen months to begin your training.

Yes.

Can you tell me what your training consisted of?

Oh yes. All the basic nursing skills - or some of them anyway. To sponge a patient, to make them comfortable, and she was a wonderful teacher Sister Doepke and inspired you with the right ideals. There was that. And then we had to learn physiology and anatomy of a very basic quality. Doctor used to give us anatomy and physiology lectures. That was a fearful battle. I had this - we all had, I expect - an education - our education disabilities. And I remember that Marg and I had to go to the local headmaster to pass a test which wasn't very hard - an educational test.

That was a prerequisite of training?

Yes, that's right.

What did that involve?

Oh, just I think reading and writing and - the three R's. But I remember, I was never very good at arithmetic - didn't like it - but one day the headmaster said to me, 'Do you read a lot?', and I said, 'Yes, as much as I can'. He

said, 'Yes, you spell very well', so we got through that quite reasonably comfortably.

You say that the doctor gave you lectures. Dr - - -?

Dr Wibberley.

And where would he give you the lectures?

In the sitting room of the hospital - sitting cum dining room.

What sort of lectures were they?

Well, anatomy - you know, the framework - and then the function of various - - -. Circulation, and all that kind of thing.

Did you have textbooks to work with?

Yes, we had one. I can't remember what it was, but we worked from that. But it was a very uphill push. I found it profoundly interesting - very, very interesting. At the end of that period we took an exam.

Locally?

Yes. Somebody came and sat with us while we answered the questions on the paper.

What sort of cases did you help to nurse during this period?

Pneumonias. There were two boys of fifteen with pneumonia at different times. And I was on night duty for one of them - oh, I used to look at him. Matron used to say, 'You know, you must take very great care of him. He might easily die,' and he was very, very sick. And then one night he started to - his skin started to act - and his temperature was coming down. So I did all the usual things - dried him off and put him in warm clothes. And in the morning Sister Doepke said to me - I didn't know whether he was going to die or what, what all this portended - but she said, 'He's had a crisis,' and she said, 'You're a good little nurse, Annie.' (laughs) No praise I've ever had in my life has meant as much to me as that.

Certainly I was well meaning, but that was about all. Then there was another boy of the same age. He had a very severe pneumonia and - - -. Those I remember very well. There were appendicitis cases sometimes. Doctor operated on them.

Did you assist with the operations at this stage?

Oh no.

Or observe?

Yes I observed him, but only Sister Doepke was scrubbed up, as we called it. She assisted doctor and gave - - -. She gave the anaesthetic too. She could do anything.

What do you remember of the standards of cleanliness, asepsis?

Very rigorous. We were told that we must wash our hands very carefully. We must soak them in biniodide before we touched a midwifery case, 'because, if you don't, that woman might get sepsis and die and her death would be your fault'. Oh, we took it very, very seriously. So much so that in the first few months of my training I'd scrubbed so much, and soaked so much in biniodide, that my hands were practically raw and Sister got Doctor to look at them. And he gave me something and told me not to use such strong biniodide. Oh yes, she had very rigid standards of cleanliness. I don't ever remember a midwifery case running a temperature.

And you assisted with the midwifery cases?

Well, I stood around. I suppose I helped some way, but it was Doctor and Sister who did the deliveries. The first one I saw I had no idea of what to expect and I was apparently looking pretty wafty and Sister said, 'You go out to the back door and take a few deep breaths' which I did. She said, 'You don't need to come back if you don't want to,' but I thought I'd better, so I did, and by degrees it came to be rather wonderful - the tenseness and then this baby's cry. It was really something. But I didn't do very much. Annie Bourne did much more because she was so much more competent and so - - -.

What do you remember of Sister Doepke?

She was a short, compact, attractive looking woman. She had beautiful dark blue eyes and a strong face, and she was very strong and vigorous. How she did all the work she did! But she never seemed to be tired. She played croquet and she had, oh, a lot of friends - a great many friends. Yes, afterwards, she died of a malignancy at South Terrace. What was that - Narma [Nursing Home] - this was when I was in the Army - I used to go to see her.

Did she become something of an ideal to you?

Very frightened of her - scared to death. But her standards were my ideal.

What were her methods of discipline and authority?

Oh, she looked at you frostily and a few crisp words and you were reduced to tears or whatever. I remember her accusing me of doing something one day

that I hadn't done, and to her surprise I stood up to her. I said, 'No I didn't do it. I didn't do that,' and I looked at her and she could see that I was in a blazing rage and she quietened down. I think she believed me. But she was a fine character. And she enjoyed life. She had the vigour to enjoy a good social life and to work very, very hard.

What of your own life at this time?

Well, there were dances, there were concerts, there were films. There were pictures by that time. Of course there had been for a long time before that. And there were picnics and there was my life at home with my family.

Did you get home just once a week during that time?

Oh no, it wasn't far away. I could run home any time I liked in my time off.

Did you live at the hospital?

I lived at the hospital, yes.

You would have been paid to train.

Yes. In my second year I got twelve shillings a week, the first year seven. And twelve shillings a week - riches.

Did you keep all your money yourself?

Yes, I think I saved it up because I knew that I'd be coming on to Adelaide by this time and my parents wouldn't have taken it from me anyway. They wouldn't have let me give them anything. I liked to give them presents. I liked to give my brothers and sisters sweets and things. But mostly I think I saved it till I came to the Adelaide where the pay went back to seven shillings again.

Let's talk about the move to Adelaide to continue your training? What year did you go on to Adelaide.

I think it would have been 1924.

Were you looking forward to going?

Yes I was looking forward to everything. Yes, I looked forward to going. Great terror. I was very terrified and had reason to be.

Why do you say that?

Oh well, it was so completely unknown to me then. Life in a big hospital would be so different and it was.

Did you know anybody there?

Yes Bourne. Anne Bourne had gone on. She transferred about a year before.

What do you remember of that trip?

I came over by - what was the boat at that time? The Investigator, not Investigator - Wandana. And I came up by train and I'd met a woman on the ship who was a trained nurse, and I think she felt sorry for me. She took me to lunch at the Grosvenor. Then I went to the Adelaide in the afternoon and Sister Critchley was the Home Sister and she gave me the cap and the apron and all that and I was to start the next morning at six o'clock.

Where did you live in Adelaide?

The Nurses' Home - it's still there. I think it's - - -. I'm not sure if it's called the Eleanor Harrald who was the Matron then.

And that was on Frome Road?

It was on Frome Road, yes. Well we lived there. It was a three storey building. When they built it they'd made - I think it was supposed to have been a swimming pool in the basement - but they forgot to put any holes in it to let the water in, or something like that. And on the second floor they forgot to put any baths in. There were baths built on to the balcony - three of them I think - and I don't know if there were more on the top floor or not. No showers of course.

Did you share a room there?

For a while, yes. I think in one's first - - -. In my second year it would have been because we went in as second year Pros, I shared a room. After that I had one to myself.

Tell me about beginning work in the big hospital.

Oh, it was frightful. It was dreadful. I hadn't a clue in the world, and they didn't teach you. They threw you in. I don't know, I suppose all the sisters are dead, so they can't be offended (laughs). But I consider that we were dragged up from a nursing point of view. The Black Pros, who were the ones who began at the hospital, were taught something, but we were supposed to know a bit about nursing and some did. The girls from Mareeba [Babies Hospital] were very good, but from various sizes of country hospitals you can imagine. I had given one injection before I went there. We used to give enemas with a pump sort of contraption, and I didn't know what to look for when I was told to give an enema. One day I heard myself referred to - oh, the girls were talking about what a dreadful day they'd had - and one of them

said, 'And they sent us a raw transfer girl,' who was me. (laughs) I was not unduly upset because I knew my place in the scheme of things by then.

And I was so unhappy, terribly unhappy. I was quite sure that I'd never make it. I was really terrified of everybody. Anything in a white coat, even the barber, I was frightened. Oh, it was dreadful, dreadful.

Well I got sick - oh then, we used to have to do a stint at 'Cons' Home' as we called - the Consumptives' Home on North Terrace. Anyway, I'm talking. You ask the questions.

Oh no.

And I got sick. I came over absolutely farm fresh for the TB bugs and I had pleurisy and some pericarditis and spent some weeks in the sick room and then was sent home on sick leave. I think it was about eight months before I came back on duty again. But after that it seemed to go better and after about a year I began to feel some confidence.

How long had you been in Adelaide before you had to return home ill?

I think it was in my first year at the Adelaide.

Were you debilitated to the extent that you couldn't work at home?

Oh no, I recovered pretty quickly and got around and did things. I made the most of it of course.

Tell me about the hierarchy that you would have encountered.

Well at the top was Miss Harrald who was tall and stately and handsome and of whom everybody was in awe. Then there was Sister Barnes, the Home Sister, Sister Critchley who was another Home Sister, and Sister Cunningham who was a Theatre Sister and the most terrifying person. She really was terrifying. I worked under her for quite a while and got on quite well until one day I charged through something - a line, leading to a contraption on the bed which was put over the patients when they came back from the theatre to keep them warm and it was plugged in, and I charged through this rope. And that was the end of my popularity with Sister Cunningham. (laughs) Oh she was very, very hard. We thought all of them were.

Then there were the Ward Sisters who were - some very nice - very hard working, and some of them taught us things. Some just didn't bother. There was one sister in Ophthalmic who was quite illiterate and the best teacher of them all - Roebuck, her name was Roebuck - but she was a very good teacher.

How were you trained? You would have had a series of lectures.

Oh yes, we did. We had lectures. Sister Critchley gave us lectures down in the swimming pool that never was and they were just elementary nursing lectures. I can't remember if they did much good. Then the doctors - - -. We had to get up if we were on night duty at one o'clock and go to the doctor's lectures down at the University - that's where they gave them. First year the first thing you did was Surgical, or Medical, according to where you'd had most of your training. I'd had mine in Surgical so I took a Surgical exam and just scraped through.

You mean that you'd been on the Surgical Wards?

Yes, I had. Then the next one was Medical. No, I had done a good deal of Medical work and a good deal of general work in 'Gynae[cology] wards, and so I asked Sister could I take my General exam and take my Medical exam after. And for some extraordinary reason she let me. So that was another hurdle over. Later I took the Medical exam. That was how it went.

How did you compare the training that you'd received in Tumby Bay with that you received at Adelaide?

Oh, of course the Adelaide training was much more comprehensive. But for training - detail and all the rest of it - Tumby Bay - - -. Sister Doepke had these very good ideals and everything had to be done very well. It seemed to me very slap dash at the Adelaide. For one thing I was horrified at the colour of the sheets. They had unbleached calico drawsheets and I was very shocked at this after the beautiful whiteness of our rain washed linen at Tumby. Oh, it was a different thing altogether - very, very different. Of course there was no Midwifery at the Adelaide.

Do you feel that the time at Tumby Bay had prepared you?

No, it hadn't prepared me for hospital attitudes, but you know, the basic things, yes, it had. I think I could make a patient as comfortable as any and I could wash them very well and see that they were warm and comfortable. These things. And I never forgot my early training in asepsis. But it was very, very different. Doctor Wibberley and Sister Doepke were interested in us. They encouraged whatever spark of gumption was there.

Did you feel that sort of support lacking at Adelaide?

Oh yes. I remember walking across the courtyard one day to the Nurses' Home, and I met Sister Verco - we used to call her Auntie Polly - and she was a big fat woman, and very sweet. And she smiled at me, and said, 'Good morning Nurse,' and I thought, 'Well thank God there's someone human around this place anyway.' (laughs) She was sweet.

How much do you think it was you being an outsider having to settle in and how much do you think it was different standards?

I think it was a great deal my being an outsider and having to settle in. But all round me were girls who were finding the same difficulties - transferring from smaller hospitals. But I don't think very many came from a smaller hospital as Tumby Bay.

Did you make friends amongst the trainees?

Oh yes, I did. Yes, some very good friends.

I believe there were rather strict rules about time away from the hospital.

Oh yes. Home by, what was it, 9 or 10 or something like that. Yes, there were very strict rules. And men you'd have thought were - - -. Well, I don't know. But you must never be seen talking to a student. Some of the students would come and there'd be girls they knew - had met. They wondered at their caginess and wanting to get away from them so quickly. Terrified of being seen.

Did you have the opportunity, after you returned again to the hospital, to see your family much?

Yes, I went home on holidays - a couple of holidays - while I was still training.

Do you remember what you were thinking about the future at this stage? Did you have any plans?

No, I think 'sufficient unto the day' was my motto always. Towards the end of my training I did begin to think I would go to the Royal British [Nurses' Association] and I would do private nursing. I wanted to get away from hospitals. That was about the pinnacle of my ambition. (laughs)

Did you have any ideas of going on and doing Midwifery training?

No, I never wanted to do Mid. because I'd had so much of it at Tumby Bay. Always, I remember, the bell would ring and you'd see one of those dress baskets. I don't suppose you've ever seen one. They were cane - wicker - baskets, and they had a lid - there was a lid - and it would stretch a long way and put a lot in it, and had a couple of straps round it. Well, that came in ahead of the patient, full of her clothes and the baby's clothes.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

And then you had to get the patient to bed - bathed and to bed - and prepared as far as you could, and then call Sister, and she'd decide how far advanced she was. She would tell you to watch her for every five minutes or so, to let

her know when the pains came at regular intervals. Then you called her again. All that - those dreadful nights and babies wailing. Babies don't cry now as much as they used to. I'm sure they don't. They're better fed. And all this, and I thought, 'No, nothing will make me do Midwifery'. Bourne did. She went on to the Queen Vic as it was [Queen's Home] - yes, the Queen Vic we called it then - and did her Midwifery. Because she had definite ideas of where she wanted to go and I hadn't.

I know at the Children's Hospital there was something of a tradition of doing district nursing for a period of time. Were you aware of that opportunity?

No. No, I didn't know that. Yes a great many district nurses were ex Children's Hospital trainees now that I remember.

So you went on to the Royal British Nurses' Association.

Yes, when I finished my exams I went down to say goodbye to Miss Harrald. Oh she was away a good deal of the time that I trained. And Miss - - -. Oh dear, it's dreadful how your memory just lets you down.

Her successor was it who you had to go to?

Yes, and she was nice, very human - dear little woman. She acted Matron most of the time that I was there. So I didn't see so very much of Miss Harrald.

She was very near retirement, wasn't she?

Yes, I think she was. I don't remember - - -. Oh, yes, I do remember one or two things. I went to Sister Kitson's ward and Matron Harrald did her rounds one day and, I don't know what Sister Kitson had said to her about me, but she came into the pantry - and she was very tall - and Sister Kitson. And there was a horrid little Ward's Maid there who dropped her bucket and stood with her hands akimbo waiting for the slaughter, and it came. 'Nurse, you don't seem to know very much,' and of course I didn't utter a word. And the next time I went down on something quite other. I had very long thick hair and I used to wear it in wheels over my ears, and she said, 'Nurse, you're not here to be an ornament. You're here to learn to be a nurse. Don't do you hair like that in future, and push your cap up so that I can see it' - little 'ice cream cones', you know, and we put them as far back as possible, but we were supposed to wear them on the top of our heads.

The uniform, I think, was changing at that time. Did you go into short sleeves while you were working?

I think we did. I think we had short sleeves with cuffs on them, and aprons, and these little ice cream cone caps - black stockings and shoes.

How did you come to work for the Royal British Nurses' Association?

Well then, several of the nurses had left and some of them had gone to the Royal British, and this is what everybody told me I should do if I wanted to do private nursing - get away from hospitals. So I went to the Royal British and the Matron was Miss Mullaney, and she was a marvellous person too. She took me on the staff and we were sent to all sorts of places.

Did you live at - - -?

Lived there, yes.

That was twelve Dequetteville Terrace.

Twelve Dequetteville Terrace. We kept our clothes and possessions there and usually had the same bed - the same room nearly always, and often the same bed.

Were they share rooms?

Oh yes. Three and four beds.

What was the pay like, do you remember?

Oh yes, we got three guineas a week and we were kept of course. But out of that we had to pay the Royal British a percentage and our board when we stayed there.

Can you remember how much that was of your pay?

No, I can't remember. I was trying to remember the other day, but I can't. It was reasonable I imagine.

What of your work?

Well, you had to go anywhere any time. To all sorts of country districts - Murray Bridge, Orroroo, Mount Gambier - anywhere at all. And you grew very fond of the people at the different hospitals. I loved going back to Murray Bridge and Orroroo was quite good fun too.

Did you go into private homes as well as hospitals?

Yes, private homes too - mostly in the suburbs.

Did the Royal British provide temporary nurses for hospitals?

Yes they did. Some of our cases were very long. One of mine - I was on one for three years.

At what stage was that?

Oh, that was later. I think in the early thirties.

What did that case involve?

An elderly paralysed woman.

Was that in the suburbs?

Yes.

What do you remember about the early cases? Would it have been the three year period up until 1930 that you were with the Royal British? When did you start with them?

I started when - - -. I finished in 1927 - I was twenty six. 1927 - yes. We would go to homes here in the suburbs. Sometimes in the country we went to homes.

Can you remember some of your early cases?

Yes. The very first one was across to - where is it? Near the border of Victoria and South Australia. I can't remember the little township. But the patient died very soon and I stayed on a few days and helped. They quite often asked you to stay on a few days and help, so you might have to sew crepe on the men's armbands, and help very distressed - often distressed family. A little bit of cooking or, you know, the washing. Anything that you felt you could do to help them.

Were they often terminal patients?

Very often. Yes they were. Some children but not very many.

How did you feel about being sent out on your own?

Oh, loved it, simply loved it. Always hoping I could cope, but one always could of course. It was straightforward nursing.

What if there was a circumstance that you couldn't cope with? Were there always professional people around?

There were always doctors that you could lean on. I don't remember there was much you couldn't cope with. The doctors were a great support and knew their job.

What of some of the other early cases?

Well that was my very first one and I came home very soon after. Another one was down at Port Adelaide - somewhere down there. This woman, I nursed her for about a week, and she died. Then to Crystal Brook. I went up there to nurse an old lady who was dying and she had a housekeeper and a family who were married and living round about. I remember Murphy and I were there together - Lilian Murphy. I often meet her now. We go up to Lourde Valley to have our feet done. Anyhow, it was near Christmas and we both wanted badly to go home. But she just wouldn't stop. So I was left with the patient over Christmas and she died ultimately. It was a nice district. The family were very good to me.

How did you feel about nursing terminal patients?

Oh, well, it was part of the game - part of the job. You didn't let it get to you emotionally of course. I mean you felt very sorry for the family, although when people were very old it was in the natural way of things that they should die. I don't remember nursing very many young people who died, or youngish. There were one or two.

At about 1930 you were getting towards the end of your twenties. Had you expected to marry?

Oh yes, I always expected to marry - when the 'knight in shining armour' should appear. (laughs) He never did. Oh, he did once or twice, but somehow, I don't know, I couldn't take that committal - complete committal.

Was there pressure on you from your family?

Oh no, not at all. I suppose my sister - - -. They used to call me the 'old maid' - you know, 'She's an old maid.' And my grandmother - I remember her saying, 'Now you girls. Are you getting some things together,' - this was for the bottom drawer. I remember that my sisters did. They were always making doilies and tray cloths and all these things. And I got as far as doing one side of a tea cosy. (laughs) Then I handed it over to my sister. Oh yes, I always thought that I would get married. And my mother - - -. I think she was rather disappointed that I didn't. I remember one day - my father was an invalid by this time, and a woman used to come - - -. A friend of ours used to come to see us, and she was fiftyish I think. And one day my father said, 'Isn't it a pity that a fine girl like that isn't married,' and I said, 'Well, what about me, I'm not married.' He said, 'Oh, you'll always be able to look after yourself.' And in my thirties I felt it rather keenly, but I'd had opportunities, but never the ones I wanted.

I think perhaps if we round off the interview now, talking briefly about your working career up until your retirement. How long did you work with the Royal British?

I think until the War. I had one or two very long cases, and you know it was during the Depression. If you had something you had to hang on to it. You didn't monkey around. So until about the War I did private nursing - worked from the Royal British.

Were you able to keep yourself comfortably?

Oh yes, quite comfortably. By this time we were getting four guineas a week and that was riches.

Were you able to save?

Yes, I was able to save. I was able to help my younger brothers and sisters here and there. And Vera was widowed by this time and very badly off, poor girl. She had a little boy. So I was able here and there to help. But I saved some too. And I loved clothes of course. I always had nice clothes when I was able to afford them, and I got dresses for my sisters - I gave them dresses and things like that. Helped with their - when they were being married - with their trousseaus.

What were the circumstances of your leaving the Royal British?

Oh, war. I went down to Miss Sinclair Wood straight away. Oh, before the War, you know, we had this - oh, no, you wouldn't remember. We had a couple of scares. Mr Chamberlain went over to see Mr Hitler and so that subsided - there wasn't going to be a war. But it was coming and I went to get in early. Miss Sinclair Wood put my name down. I was accepted very early in 1940. Then I went to Woodside. There'd been one intake of nurses up there. It was a camp - camp hospital. The sisters - Kestel, I think and some of the senior sisters from the Royal Adelaide and elsewhere were up there - and we were the second lot to go in. I loved it, absolutely loved it. Quite hard work, and a lot of sickness - 'Woodside throat' and all the rest of it. I was there and came to Adelaide to have my medical.

Then one day - - -. We had to have something called a 'second medical'. Miss Sinclair Wood rang up and said, 'Oh look, they're querying your x-ray Sister. But don't worry. Talk them out of it.' So I came down to town and I found that my x-rays showed all the scars on my apices of my previous illness fifteen years before at the Royal Adelaide. And I had hardly had a day's sickness since then. I was really very healthy. The next thing, I was thrown out on my ear - 'not medically fit'. I nearly broke my heart. One of the deep sorrows of my life up to that time.

But Woodside was delightful. We all loved it and the boys were grand. On the first - Mother's Day - they gave me a white flower, the boys in my ward, for being a good mother.

So at what stage did you leave the Army?

Well I was there six months and I was thrown out. Oh it was dreadful. Well then my friend, Anne Bourne, by this time was Matron of Cleve Hospital. She'd been Matron of Wudinna Hospital for seven years and Cleve was asking for a Matron so she gave it up and came down there. And she asked me would I go up and work with her and I did. I put in twelve months there, all the time hammering at the gates of the - - -. I meant to be let back again. (laughs)

But Cleve was - oh, it was very, very hard work. She had all the standards of Sister Doepke and the linen cupboard had to be arranged most meticulously and everything done very well. She was very hard to please. She was an excellent manager.

And then, what of your later career?

Then I finally was accepted to come back on home duty, I think they called it - not accepted for the Army. So I packed up and came over here and I went first of all to Wayville, where they had a camp hospital, and I lived out. I lived at the Royal British when I worked there.

And then they started to build Daws Road - 105 Adelaide Military Hospital it was called then. When there were about three wards, Miss Romain, who was to be the Matron - she was a World War I woman - and Sister Bleechmore from Wakefield Street and I, moved in. And we slept in a great big empty ward and got ready for the troops to come, and stocked our wards. We'd take trips to the Quartermaster's Store for whatever we wanted. That was very satisfying.

Then the men began to come in - the patients began to come in. And then we heard about the Americans coming. They were supposed to be coming up the Gulf in flotillas from what we heard. Of course when they arrived a good many of them were sick - needed treatment. We moved out of the wards, and we moved down to what was called Cudmore House. It was a route march from the hospital and we had to get up every morning at, I think, about half past five, and be on duty, I think at half past six - something fiendish like that. But I was happy to be in it - to be there. Always hoping that I'd be sent away, but I never was. And I was never sick.

Did you remain at Daw Park for the duration?

Yes I remained there for the duration. Excepting, they decided in the last two years there that they would - the AMWAs [Australian Medical Army Nursing Corps] you know, who came in - that they would train them - give them part time training like we'd had in the early days, and send them on to the Adelaide to finish.

That was the Australian Medical - - -

AMWAs - Australian Medical Army Nursing Corps. There were the AWAs, who were the clerks and all the rest, but the nursing order were AMWAs. They decided that I should be the Sister Tutor. So I went over to Bacchus Marsh where there was a school for everything Army - everything military - and did a crash course in teaching nurses how to be nurses. I enjoyed that very much too - it was grand.

Do you think you were a more benign teacher than those who'd taught you?

Oh yes. (laughs) I think that about the only thing my students couldn't do with me was to deflect me from my path. They said how one teacher they had - - -. Oh this was afterwards, a long time afterwards. They said, 'We knew if we could get her on to her travels we were all right,' and they said, 'We tried it with you too.' So I came back and I put a couple of the schools of girls through - Basic Nursing, principals of. And they went to the wards of course, to do things. There were only a few of them - about half a dozen at a time I think, or about ten. So I didn't have too much to do. Physiology and Anatomy, of which by this time I had a working knowledge. But I had to work quite hard to keep just one jump ahead of them, but that was very pleasant.

Not long ago - a few months ago - I had a letter from one of those girls and she had been Laurel Hill. She wrote to me to tell me that one of them - June Pellew - had just come back from South Africa where she'd lived for thirty years, and she would like to see as many of the crowd as she could. So of course I was delighted. I said, 'Yes, wonderful that you remembered me.' And they came out and we had a most hilarious morning tea. (laughs) It was delightful to see them. These two girls, Jean Pellew and Laurel Hill had been Gold Medallists at the Adelaide. They went on, you see - did their training. And the third one, Betty Kroll, said, 'You know, it makes me think I wish I'd gone on to - - -.' I said, 'Well you've had six children and what better could anybody do than that?' She had been married twice and she had two families. But it was delightful to see them again and to think they remembered me.

Just in the closing few minutes, could you tell me briefly about your career after the Second World War?

Yes, well I tutored until the end of the War and then I was wondering, 'Well, what next?' It seemed to be repatriation or nothing. Miss Bleechmore, who was the Matron by then back in Wakefield Street [Hospital] asked me would I go there as Sister Tutor. They were beginning to take the girls training more seriously by this time. And I said, yes I would. So I went there. I think I was there for about three years and I loved it. I loved Wakefield Street because several of the Army nurses were there on the staff. Then I had the opportunity of taking over - - -. You know, people were very, very hard put to find places for their old people then. This was a little private nursing home, very badly run down. So I took that over and the last twenty years of my life were spent in running my own small private hospital, which was great, because I - - -. One of my sisters was widowed by then. The other one separated from her husband. And they came in with me to help. My mother, she lived at Tumbly Bay right up until then, and then she broke her leg and I brought her over here, and she had her last three years in my hospital.

What was the name of the hospital?

Unley Private Hospital. The first one I had, I was only to be there for a very short time. I can't remember what it was called, I really can't. But it was very run down. I did pull it together a bit before handing it back to its owner. But Unley - first of all I had what is now Walford Junior School. It belonged to a Dr Hillier and it had been Unley Private Hospital. I was looking round for some place and was really very worried about what I was going to do because the owner of this place that I was in wanted to come back. So, I took it over on a three year lease and did very well there. Then, of course, Dr Hillier died, and I had to find somewhere else because Walford was looking for a - wanted to buy it. Fourteen thousand pounds - can you image? A beautiful property. And the Secretary of their Old Scholars, Joyce Prince, came to see me and she was grand. She wanted to know - was quite concerned to know - what I was going to do. I said, 'I'll manage. I'll do something.' But I couldn't. I'd like to buy this but I couldn't afford it. Fourteen thousand pounds was quite beyond me. So the house that I finished up in, which belonged to Mrs Dolman, whose husband had been a Colonel in World War One, sold it. And I think I got that for about four thousand pounds.

Where was that?

On Unley Road - a little bit further down on the other side. And there came a dreadful day when I had to shift the whole hospital. I was there for twenty - I don't know how many years. But I retired in 1973 and came up here to live.

Thank you.

INDEX**Notes to the Index**

Users of this Index should note that in many instances the particular word used for the index heading will not be found in the text. The conversational vocabularies of most people do not correspond to the Library of Congress subject headings which have, in the main, been adhered to in the construction of this index. Users are also directed to the main card index to the 'S.A. Speaks' project.

Abbreviations

passim 'in various parts'

Family names

Rather than index names of all family members and relatives mentioned in each interview, entries are included that indicate surnames (including women's maiden names) of at least the Interviewee's father and mother, and spouse, when applicable. Other relatives are indexed if significant mention is made of them.

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