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Full transcript of an interview with

ELSA HAY-TAYLOR

on 9 and 16 October 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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Collateral Material in File 8517 includes:
Photographs ~~P8517A-H; a photocopy of the pamphlet 'The Harry Butler Story'; a photocopy of the Butler entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography~~.

Cover Illustration Captain Harry Butler and his wife Elsa on their wedding day in 1920, P8517H.

PREFACE

Elsa Hay-Taylor (formerly Butler, nee Gibson) was born in 1897 and grew up on the family farm at Bool Lagoon. Elsa was the third of eight children and her mother died after the birth of the eighth in 1911. Rather than go into service with local families or care for her father, like her sisters, and not allowed to train as a nurse, Elsa put her age up a year and became a teacher in 1915. Before 1930 she had married and been widowed by aviator Harry Butler and began a career as a nurse.

In the first of two interviews, Mrs Hay-Taylor talks of her childhood at Bool Lagoon. In the second interview she speaks further of the limited employment opportunities for country girls and of putting up her age to become a teacher. Elsa's first posting was to Koolywurtie on Yorke Peninsula where she met aviator Harry Butler before he left for the war. When she finally agreed to marry him in July 1920 he was a celebrity, having made the first Australian mail service flight over water to Minlaton almost a year before. After his sudden death in 1924, and still against her father's wishes, Elsa trained as a nurse at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. From 1934 to 1946 she worked in Britain and the last twelve years of her career were spent as matron of the Semaphore Convalescent Home during which time she remarried.

Mrs Hay-Taylor was 88 years of age at the time of the interviews.

Mrs Hay-Taylor was uncertain of the worth of her reminiscences. However there emerges from the interviews a good deal of detail about the formal and informal work opportunities and obligations of country girls and the character of Harry Butler. Mrs Hay-Taylor has a very nice turn of phrase, obscured by her somewhat tired tone on tapes but revealed in the transcript. She is softly spoken for the most part and the tape recordings' sound levels are low, resulting in some background hiss. There is also some extraneous noise - clocks, Interviewer's coughs and Interviewee's movements.

The first interview session resulted in one and a half hours of tape recorded information and the second resulted in two hours.

'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, Elsa Hay-Taylor, is referred to by the initials EH-T 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 EH-T] 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 Mrs Elsa Hay-Taylor [redacted]
[redacted] on 9 October 1985

TAPE 1 SIDE A

If you could just start by telling me your full name.

Elsa Birch - now what do you want for a surname? I've had three different surnames.

What was your maiden name?

My maiden name was Gibson. This is all my maiden life my name would be Gibson.

Then later you were Butler.

Yes, and then, now I'm Hay-Taylor.

Where did the Birch come from?

It was a family name. My mother chose it I believe. It was a family name that she wanted to put in.

What was the date of your birth.

Eighth of September 1897.

Where were you born?

Well, I think I must've been born at Bool Lagoon because it was only - - -. My mother had all her babies with the midwife in the home. But when there were a lot of little children and she was still having babies, she thought she'd better go into the hospital for the last one and that's the one she never came back. She got puerperal sepsis. It was a terrible, terrible thing. She was only 40.

Yes. What can you tell me about your mother's background?

We know very little and Leith [MacGillivray, niece] has been trying and trying and trying, delving into all the stuff she can find, and we haven't found very much. I can't remember her telling me anything except that she was born in England. But we find she wasn't born in England now. She was born at Echunga, here. On their marriage certificate my father has written, 'Born in Echunga' and we know he was born at Robe, so he must've just scribbled this on the marriage certificate.

Did she ever tell anything about her parents?

Never that I can remember. She might have - - -. I was only thirteen when she died and apparently wasn't interested in those sorts of things. She might've told my eldest sister who was about eight years older than me. But I can't remember us ever discussing it or being curious about it. Her name was - surname was - - -. I told you last time didn't I?

Yes. Shaw.

Shaw, and there are lots of Shaws in South Australia. Leith has found out none. No - not related to her. She told us she was an only child. I remember that.

It'll be interesting if you can find out, won't it?

Yes. And I met a lot of Shaws in England. I stayed with a girl whose mother was a Shaw and everybody used to say how alike we were. So when Leith goes to England she's going out to her to get all her family - Shaw business. Yes, we're quite intrigued about it now.

What about your father's background?

His father came out from Scotland. He was born in Scotland - and came out, and they lived at Robe. The house still stands. It's on a heritage list - a little cottage at Robe - and there he lived with his family. Now I don't know what he did. I know he had two sons, my father and another one, and there were five - five sisters. Three of them died of TB.

In close - - -? [In a short space of time?]

In my father's family. Yes in close - before, when we must have been quite small. We didn't know more than that, that they had died with tuberculosis. And his other sister, Auntie Lizzie, she was married to an auctioneer man and they lived at Kingston. We used to go down there for our school holidays every year, two at a time. And they had a two storey house and we thought this was wonderful. We loved going down to Auntie Lizzie.

The grandfather used to come to stay with us. His wife had died. He was living alone with the other son - still at Robe - and he always brought - - -. He'd speak Gaelic and we couldn't understand him, and he'd throw down a bundle. In those days they didn't have suitcases, you know, they had baskets - did you know? It was just an oblong basket and the top fitted right over it and there were leather straps around it. I can see it now.

Would it be wicker?

I suppose it was. It was strong, and better than we have today I think. It had straps round it that had a handle. And then he had this other bundle and he used to say to us, 'Unloose the bundle'. We were all standing round because he used to bring us lollies and things - and out would roll six or seven, or eight even, huge red crayfish. (laughs) That was where you'd get all the crayfish. Beautiful red crayfish he used to bring to his son you see. My father loved them. I can't even remember him dying or when he died, but he came every year to stay with us for a few weeks. My brother used to tease him. Used to throw little pebbles down - he'd be looking around (laughs). All silly things like that. (laughs) But we used to love him coming, except that we got on his nerves a bit, all the children playing. We used to play games. They say we never had any entertainment, but we had all sorts of games we used to play - like snakes and ladders. Have you ever seen those?

Yes.

You move the things around. And all sorts of things. We learned to play euchre and crib etc. My father used to play with us. After we'd done our homework at night we were allowed to have a game of something with him. When they married he bought the land. He always wanted to have land apparently. He used to drive the mail coach down there and do any jobs around - I don't know what they were - but he talked a lot about the mail coach he used to drive from Kingston to Robe . There were no trains.

This was your father?

My father. A four in hand, you know, with this big mail coach - they were beautiful. He loved horses. How he came up there and found that land I don't know but he did want to do that so I suppose when he was going to get married he bought this land, and they built a log cabin on it. Just two rooms they started with. And of course had to put down windmills for water and things like that. And the toilet away down the - - -. He bought a big square piece of land that he planted trees and an orchard - trees and all. But they only built this log cabin and the lavatory and a fig tree that grew and grew and grew and covered the lavatory in the end. (laughs) And they married and lived in those two rooms.

Then, of course, when they had - started to have a family - they built a house, of four rooms with Mount Gambier stone. I always remember he was very proud of this Mount Gambier stone. Whether they built it themselves - - -. Oh, I don't suppose they did. He didn't know anything about that. But they built these four rooms with a verandah at the back and how long they

lived in that - - -. I can only remember living in six rooms, so it must have been fairly soon they got on with the building.

Were there any remains of their original house standing as you were growing up?

[mishears question] Yes, I believe there still is. When he died, no, before he died - he retired of course because the girls had all married and he was alone - so he sold the house and went to live with my eldest sister who was married to a German, Ludwig. Marvellous farm people they were. So she got married and went there and as the others wandered away and did things - one was another teacher and so on, one married a boundary rider at the station. There was a big station there - it was Killanoolla Station. Lovely people they were. They were very kind to everybody and helpful to anyone that needed it and very strong church people.

What was their name?

Seymour. They sold the station eventually and came to town. And they built that home for the aged - what's the name of it, out at North Adelaide? Well known one. They gave a lot of money to the church and things like that.

Not the big Helping Hand one?

Yes. They built - - -. I think they gave most of the money for that and they continued to go there and visit people. They never married, the women. There was Mary Seymour and - oh, I've forgotten the other names - but Mary was a little busy body. (laughs) That's how I remember her.

What do you mean by that?

Well, I mean that she was always wanting to know about people, if they needed anything and how they lived and visit them, any new people who came. They were a wonderful family. And we had a church service once a month and it was the Anglican priest that rode a bicycle from Naracoorte to Bool Lagoon, which was eighteen miles. He rode a bicycle to take the service once a month. And the Seymours - the church - - -. The Killanoolla people used to take him home afterwards. Put the bike in the buggy and send the man home with him. They were people like that.

Perhaps we'll talk a little bit more about them later on when we talk about the local community. You've said that your grandfather used to come to visit occasionally. Did he tell you much about his past?

No. I don't think we ever asked him. It's hard to believe. Probably we were too young to be interested in that, and my father didn't ever talk about it that I remember. Or we weren't interested - - -.

What did your father tell you about his early days and the mail coach? Would he tell you stories about that?

Yes, he used to tell us stories about driving the mail coach and things that happened and about people - different kinds of people he met - and just funny little things like that, you know.

Do you remember any in particular?

No I don't. No, not really. Only little minor things like accidents and things - horses and - - -. Nothing - any big. They used to do a lot of fishing at Robe. He had a boat. He used to go out fishing. That's their main diet down there, I think, isn't it? I know quite a lot about Robe. Up to when my husband died we used to go down ever year and stay there. He liked it too. It's a lovely place. Have you been there?

Yes.

I used to love going there.

You were mentioning your father's brothers and sisters and particularly an aunt in Kingston. Were there others round about who you saw a lot of?

Relations?

His brothers and sisters.

No, we didn't see a lot of them. His brother used to come and see us but just a fleeting - - -. I don't even know what work he did up in - I think he was just a labourer. But he was very like my father, I remember that - to look at. My father was a short man, always had a beard. Not always, but, you know, mostly. He was a good horseman - loved horses. He put us all on a horse bareback and we had to learn to ride. I was the only one that really took it up. The others were all frightened of horses - strange - except my brother. But I always remember him making me ride bareback when I was learning to ride. I used to go about with him a lot when he was mustering sheep. Used to go out for the whole day, take our lunch and a water bag on the side of our saddle.

And we had another block of land in the scrub, we called it, where they used to take the sheep for a change and we had to go out occasionally to see how they were, and he'd always take me with him. My brother wasn't a bit interested. I used to love those days. In shearing time we'd have to bring the sheep in and I used to go with them. He'd take another man as well as me, but I used to toddle on on my pony. (laughs) Then when we got there - there was this very wild scrub place - he used to say to me, 'Now you stay here and

don't you move from this spot or you'll get lost. And don't move one square yard away. You stay here till we come back.' So I used to tie my pony up and get out my lunch and have my lunch and sit there and wait and wait and wait till they came back, either with the sheep if we were taking sheep home, and dogs, or if they were just looking round at them.

Would you hear them in the distance all the while?

No. No, it was a big place - a large block of land. No, you wouldn't hear them. You'd hear that there were birds, wild birds, and all that kind of thing. Sit and amuse myself. I didn't like it if they were a long time - I used to get nervous and think they weren't coming, they were lost or something. But it was always all right. And when they had to take sheep home to be shorn, that was a problem, because the huge mob of sheep - getting them out of the scrub and not leaving any behind. We didn't do it in one day. They used to take them as far as Killanoolla Station which was on the way, and then they used to let us leave them in one of their yards all night. Then we'd go back next day and pick them up, take them home. And then we'd take ones that were on the home paddocks out there to change over. I used to love those days.

How young would you have been when you first went out with your father?

Oh, I suppose about ten - nine or ten.

How many brothers and sisters did you have?

One brother and six - there were seven of us altogether, six girls and one boy. My brother was a very restless. My mother spoilt him. He was an only boy I suppose and she really did spoil him, which annoyed my father. He was - I don't know whether he was jealous - but they never got on together, my brother and my father. He was always very critical of him and he didn't like sheep and he didn't like horses - didn't like any of those things. All he wanted to do was to go - when he was at school - along - - -. Bullock wagons used to pass by, laden with wool - taking the wool that they had in all the places, and they were drawn by bullocks - and the men, two men, would be going along cracking whips, doing this sort of thing [imitates cracking whips] and crack with the whip.

This fascinated my brother. All he wanted to do was to go with them. And he ran away with them once when we - - -. When they passed the school he crept out and this time he went with them, we couldn't get him back - the bullock wagon had gone too far. They got my father and he went after them

and brought him back you see. But he eventually did go, when he left school. He said that's all he wanted to do, so my father looked into it quite regular - you know, keenly - and got to know the men and chose one that he thought was all right and let him go. He never came back to live with us again.

How old was he when he left?

Well he'd just left school. I suppose he'd be fourteen, fifteen. He wrote to us. He came back and got his bridle and saddle - I always remember that. (laughs) He was riding out with the men with the wild cattle and horses and - way up the North somewhere. He loved it. He never came home again to live. He used to write to us - we knew what he was doing. Then he got married - he married a very nice girl - and he never came back with her. He had three little girls and he came, suddenly appeared in Adelaide, with his wife and three children - bought a house and lived there - and we found out that he was having ill health, was having heart trouble.

And he came down - he was then, I suppose, about fifty years old - and he went into the Adelaide Hospital with this heart trouble, and he died suddenly. Must have been a coronary, because one day he was all right, the next day he was gone. At that time I was Matron of a convalescent hospital - I came back from England - and he - - -. The old home wasn't there then - he couldn't locate us at all - and he found out that I was down there, so they came down to me with the three children. He died suddenly and left them.

How did your father feel about the only son leaving the farm?

He didn't talk about it very much but I think he was very upset about it. I think he felt that - when my mother died, home was no more good for him - he wanted to go, you see. He didn't get on with my father. My father was very - - -. He used to be naughty. My father would punish him and then my mother would be, you know, taking him in her arms and all this sort of thing. I think he missed his mother and he just didn't want to stay there any longer, he was so upset. This hurt my father very much. He used to write to him, he used to send him money - he used to write down for money sometimes, and he'd send him money - he gave him all he asked for in that way. But he never wanted to come back and live there.

Your brother was a little older than you, wasn't he?

Yes he was. He must've been three or four years older than me.

And there was one older sister still.

Then there was an older sister than him. I think there was about two years between those two and then there was a long one before I came, and then all the others, only about eighteen months and two years.

Yes, well let's talk a little bit more about the property and the home that you grew up in. Would you know the approximate acreage of your father's farm?

I know we had nearly a thousand sheep but I can't tell you how many acres there were. Something in the hundreds or up to a thousand I suppose. It was very low lying land and living - - -. Our nearest neighbour was Johnny Bourne, as we called him, and he was on the Council, so he was able to get everything. We had roads - good roads - and everything to our place, because they only lived about quarter of a mile from us, their homestead and we could run across to one another quite easily. So, good roads, because what he had for himself came to us as well you see.

Was he further on from you?

About level, you know, we were here and he was there, like that, and the roads joined here - one into our place, one to his, and then the main road. There were two boys and a girl. My sister is still friendly with the girl, Blanche Bourne. They go to church together now. Always been friends all their lives. But I've been away from home so much, you know, lost them.

How far would it have been between the two?

Quarter of a mile I suppose, and they were a very nice friendly. And the boys I used to - one of the boys and I used to ride to get the mail. The mail came once a week only, and the train from Mount Gambier - Struan to Naracoorte. Struan was a our station, five miles away, and the Mudges kept the Post Office at Bool Lagoon, and they went and got the mail every Friday - Struan Station. And this boy, who was my age - the Bournes - we used to get our ponies out and go up and get the mail every night. We didn't get there till about six o'clock. I remember we always used to have a race home. I had a pony that I couldn't hold, it would just gallop away from me.

How far were you from the Post Office?

Well that was two miles and we walked there to school every day - two miles. In the winter it was terrible because of all this low lying land. There was water running everywhere and my father used to have creeks - make creeks - so that it would drain away. And then the Council with Johnny Bourne got big drains made to take the water away. My father put out slabs across the creeks so that we could walk across - we used to love this - and

walk across these slabs to go to school and come home with wet feet. We had to wear strong leather boots - waterproof boots. Oh, it was quite a to do. As soon as we got home these would all have to come off and be dried.

How did you waterproof the boots?

I was wondering about that the other day. They really weren't waterproof. They had big tongues in them and you laced up over those tongues and they came right up to your knees - especially made for us I suppose. But they had to be taken off and dried and we had a great big oven in the kitchen - a wood range they used to call them, a range - and open the door of this and stand our boots on them so they'd dry for the morning.

Do you remember treating them with anything?

Yes we did. We had oil, some sort of oil my father used to make us put on - made them waterproof he said. They were oiled or otherwise they got quite stiff.

Mudge's had the Post Office. They were very important in the village of course, and the school was built on their property where the main road used to go by, by the school, and there'd be about twelve children I suppose.

Let's first talk a little bit more about the house you grew up in. You said you remember it with six rooms. How would they be used?

Well there were three bedrooms - three bedrooms down one side - a closed in verandah. Verandah all round the house. One end was closed - well, two ends were closed. We often used to put up people to stay the night, travellers and people. They seemed to come to us because they liked my mother. She was a lovely person and always laughing - a lovely personality. If they seemed to be nice people - - -

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

There was the kitchen on one side, dining room and the sitting room, then all down the other side were the bedrooms. My parents' bedrooms and two other bedrooms. And my brother used to sleep - always sleep outside on the closed in verandah, and he kept all his things in this room. But it also was a sewing room. My mother used to have a woman to come in and help sew because she couldn't cope with all the sewing with making the girls' dresses. Everything was made at home. Nothing was ever bought ready made or anything like that.

Do you remember the name of the woman who helped?

I can't. I only remember the name of the woman who lived at the Bournes. She was Mrs Bourne's sister and she used to teach us music. She was a music teacher and she lived there and I used to trot across this paddock to have music lessons. No, I can't remember the name of the woman that came in to do the sewing. Every few months she'd come and there'd be a big sewing week, which my brother didn't like very much because they used his room. He always slept outside but he had his things in there.

So you girls were all in the one room?

We were all in the one room and two double beds we slept in. And of course Mother always had two up in her room, I should think - a baby and the next one in the cradle or somewhere, a cot. There was always a cot and a cradle and a pram around the place. We slept two or three in a bed I think. Sometimes three and sometimes two, depending - - -. We were glad to go and visit one of the neighbours, you know. We'd stay the night very often, or go for the weekend. And then they'd come down to us and they'd have to go in the double bed with us. (laughs) We were all so little like a lot of little mice.

In the dining room we used - - -. We didn't use - only used the sitting room when we had visitors and it had an organ in it. My mother used to play the organ. We were quite - - -. She was very religious and we'd have to sing hymns. And Sunday night was a ritual. We had to go up there and sing hymns. We'd stand around the organ and sing hymns.

The dining room, it was - - -. I don't know what was there before, but my father - Pustkuchen [German family who sold up about 1907] sale was a highlight, because they had beautiful furniture they brought out from England, and we bought this beautiful cedar table and a little chiffonier. My sister's still got it. Lovely little chiffonier they called them in those days. You know what they were like? Little curved thing at the top and beautiful wood - cedar it's made of. The table had five legs because it was so big, and also a lot of leaves that you could fit in and make it bigger still when you had visitors. Because by the time we all got around it - it only took our family. If we had anyone come and stay or come to lunch or something we had to put a leaf in the table. It had legs like that - it was heavy cedar. Polished, beautiful table. And I'll never forget, I was so sad that - - -. Dorrie, Leith's mother, did keep it for a long time and she had it made smaller, but in the end it went. She might have sold it when she moved into the home, I don't know.

But these two pieces of furniture in our dining room. By that time the dining room was just about full. There was room for all the chairs around the table. We all sat round the table and my father sat at the head of the table and always carved the joint, you know, and if somebody wouldn't eat anything or, 'I don't like that,' you know, he'd say, 'Put it away for her breakfast'. I don't think we ever had it for breakfast. (laughs) Bub, my youngest sister, she was - - -. Molly was the fussy one - she was the next one to her you see - and Molly'd say, 'I don't like that. I won't eat that.' 'All right, put it away for breakfast.' So they sort of decided they'd hide so he couldn't see it. Bub'd take this and hide it. Dad didn't see what was going on. She was always taking someone else's part, you know, sheltering them from being punished. (laughs)

Molly was very frightened of horses. She wouldn't go near a horse and my father used to try and make her, you see, 'Hold this horse till I come back'. Ohh, she'd - and Bub'd come along and she'd say, 'Go on, I'll do it'. She always helped her out of it. Really funny. She was a lovely little thing. She was killed during the last war. A train - - -. She was meeting her husband who was coming back on leave and there were two trains in the station. She didn't see the second one. She let the first one go and ran across and over. He was standing on the platform and saw it all. So that was a terrible thing.

Yes. Who was the disciplinarian of your parents?

My father. He was strict but kind.

What sort of behaviour was disapproved of by your parents?

I don't think there was - - -. My brother was the thing that they - always used to think come between them. Apart from that. I wouldn't go to sleep unless my father was there to rock the cradle, I remember Mother saying. He could be away down the paddock somewhere and I'd cry till he came back. We used to get on together very well, my father. I think it was because I think I sort of took over from brother and I learned to ride and used to go out with him a lot, doing those sort of things. But it was a very happy family life. There were no squabbles really, only little things. We were very - - -. We used to play a lot together, we were doing all sorts of things together. He built dolls' houses for us and all that kind of thing. Everything's made, you know, you can't buy anything much. He made the wheelbarrows and he made the - everything we wanted.

But we were also disciplined. We had to do certain things. Every Saturday we had to go out in the paddock with him and pull up the tussocks -

we'd called tussocks. Little bunches of horrible things they were, that sheep wouldn't eat, but were easy to pull up - white fluffy things - and we had to pull up a certain amount every Saturday. And we just hated it. We hated it. We used to try and get out of it in all sorts of ways but no, we had to go. What he said was law, you know. But he wasn't - I don't think he ever slapped us or did anything like that, ever, but what he said we knew we had to do. I can always remember those tussocks. I was saying to my sister this morning on the phone, and she said, 'Don't forget to tell her about the tussocks we had to pull out'.

No, we were a very happy family. I don't think we squabbled very much. We had our jobs to do on Saturdays, you know, and we had to help one another. You helped one another. You really learned to do everything from stop one because there were so many of you. We had to wash one another's hair every Saturday and do one another's. We had a rainwater tank. He built a underground tank that took the rainwater from the roof of the house, you see, so that we had soft water. The water in the wells and windmills and places was very hard. So they had that for washing special things and for bathing in and for washing our hair and all that. It was a huge tank, and all lined with cement or something and closed in tightly so nothing got into it and that was a wonderful help. We had to wash one another's hair. We had to clean all the boots ready for school on Monday or something else. What else did we have to do? [Clean the silver. EH-T] All sorts of little jobs that we had to do and we just got up and did them, because I suppose so we could play, you see.

You've mentioned that the farm carried about one thousand sheep. What other livestock did you have?

Oh, we milked our own cows. We didn't have many of anything else. We kept two or three pigs for ham and bacon and stuff. We had - I don't know how many cows. We might have had half a dozen but they wouldn't all be milked, you know, used at once. We had to learn to milk the cows too. Yes, hail, rain or shine, we had to milk the cows before we went to school. Pigs we had, fowls we had. The fowls ran round the house. It was an orchard with a lot of fruit trees planted and Mother had a little garden out the front that she used to - - -. How she ever had time to do anything about it I don't know. What else did we have?

My father built a wonderful garden. It was about two or three hundred yards away from the house on a little rise. Everything had to go on a little rise because when winter came there was water everywhere. So he built this

vegetable garden. It was all fenced around with tea tree. Tea tree - we've got a lot of tea tree down there - like it's in the Lagoon. It's very good for making a fence - rather like a brush fence it made - and he put a windmill there, in there.

That's another thing we had to do, look after the vegetable garden. And my brother used to hate that. Used to hate the vegetable garden. (laughs) We used to have to weed it on Saturday and go over and water it. But often when we came home from school in the summer time we had to tread over there to the little garden. It wasn't a little garden, it was a huge garden. They grew everything in it. Never bought a thing I don't think. You have to do that because he only went into market I think about once a fortnight into Naracoorte and he'd go with buggy and horses, you know.

I used to have to get up and get those horses after my brother went away. I had to catch my pony which was kept in a little paddock near the house. He was a cunning little beggar to catch. I used to catch this pony and go down - wander round the paddocks looking for the other horses and bring them home. Bring them home and put them in the yard and then my father'd get up and put the harness on them. Get the buggy out and harness up the horses. It took you so long to go anywhere. It was the same on Sundays to church. You've got to get these horses out and harness them. We'd all go to church, the whole family - Dad sitting up in this buggy, and my mother nursing the baby. I can see it now.

You were saying your father would hitch up and go to market. Was he buying or selling at the market?

Well he used to go to all the sheep sales, you see, because he had to keep in touch to know what the prices of sheep were. He used to buy a lot of sheep that came down from the north that weren't very fat and he got them fairly cheaply. He'd bring them home and fatten them up and sell them, you see. He didn't go in for breeding sheep very much. When he got them ready for the sale he'd get three times the price he paid for them you see. Then he had to have men to - - -. It was eighteen miles into the sale rooms.

And this was at Naracoorte?

Naracoorte. And you'd have to get a drover to do some of it. You can't - - -. The roads were very wide. They weren't like they are today, like this, a road - nothing. There was a road and a large piece of land beside where you could take your sheep along. He used to, I think, have a drover to bring them half way and the next day he'd go back and meet him and bring them the rest

of the way. And they'd have to be changed from paddock to paddock - you didn't leave them in the same paddock for long. And sheep need a lot of attention. They get fly blown in the summer and if they were lambs they had to have their tails tied. We did have a few lambs because we used to have pet lambs. I remember that. We used to feed them. And when the sheep were brought up for shearing our pets used to come out from the mob of sheep and come over to the house and we - - -. They were never killed ever. They were kept and we used to get the money for the wool every year. That was our - some of our pocket money. However many pets we had we had the wool - money from the wool for. That was a great thrill.

Did your mother sell any of the produce that she grew in the garden?

Yes. No, not from the garden. She used to sell butter and eggs. Every time they went to market there was this huge box of eggs and butter. Used to sell butter. You made the butter in those primitive churns - they used to call them, butter churns. You had to turn the handle with this butter. That's another job we were given, to turn the handle to make the butter, because it took quite a long time before it turned into butter. And then there was all the butter milk left which she used to use to put in scones or cakes or something. Then she had made it all into little pats with paper round it, just like you buy it in the shop now, and that was packed away.

The difficulty with summer time was the heat and keeping it cool. We had a big box we used to put the butter in and let it down the well. We had a well quite close to the house. My father had to do this - it was heavy of course - let all this butter down into the water to keep it cool, keep the butter hard. And do the same - - -. He did build a cellar after that, but I can remember it being put down the well before we had the cellar.

You said that you had a lot of fruit trees around the house. Did you sell any of that crop?

No, I don't think we sold any. We used them - we ate them and Mother made jam and all kinds of things. You have to make everything. We used to buy huge quantities of flour and sugar. Big bags of flour - flour bags they used to call them - and sugar bags like this. Every time they went to Naracoorte I think they brought home those things. And they got money for the butter and eggs, I suppose, and exchanged them for groceries.

When you went to Naracoorte you went with the buggy and two horses and you had to have horses that could travel pretty fast because of the long way - eighteen miles. And when you got there you left the horses in - - -. We used

to leave ours at a boarding house that had a stable. It took country people that came. They let you go in there, take your horses out, put them in the stable and feed them, and they'd stay there all day while you did your shopping. We'd be there nearly all day. The sale would be all the morning - my father had to go to the sale - and then he had to do whatever shopping he needed and go to the pub and have a drink. Then we'd go home. Sometimes it'd be nearly dark before we left.

They had kerosene lamps on the buggies. You know you could see very little with those, practically nothing. But the horses know the way. We used to take a short cut across - - - [country EH-T]. There was a station about half way home - Struan Station, run by the people called Robertson - and they were friendly and let us cross their paddocks which cut off a large piece of the road. And we'd go across and it'd be pitch dark and I'd be frightened. And my father just put the reins down and the horses knew the way. They'd trot as hard as they could go till they came to a gate. We had to go through two or three gates - get out and open these gates. And then the horses would bring us out not far from home.

How many horses did you have on the property?

About half a dozen I think. He had to change them round. But there were horses we took when we went a long distance like that.

Did your father do any cultivation on the property?

None at all. It kept you pretty busy, you know, sheep take a lot of attention and tiring changing around, looking after.

So did he buy all his hay and that sort of feed?

He used to grow some lucerne, I remember that, over near where the vegetable garden was. I can't - - -. He must've had hay. I don't know where he got it from - can't remember that. The other farmers that lived on the drier land - we and Bournes were on the flat land - the others used to grow hay. Probably got it from them.

Did he have to employ men on the property?

Only at shearing time, or when we needed drovers to take the sheep to and fro to Naracoorte. It was a long way, eighteen miles, and you can only go slowly. When motorcars came in we couldn't take the horses along the main road. They were frightened - terribly frightened - of motorcars when they came, of course. They'd take to a gallop and he couldn't hold them, and shy off the road and rear up, you know. They got used to them eventually. We

never had a car. Couldn't afford a car - too many children. My mother had a little gig, they called them, and you could drive with one horse in it - one pony - if she wanted to go visiting.

You've mentioned, of course, you'd have shearers in. You would have had a big shearing shed. Did you have quarters for the shearers?

No, we only used to have about two or three shearers and they lived in the log cabin we still had, and we used that as a wash house - as a laundry place. You know, you'd boil all your clothes in a copper - a big copper thing, with a fire under it. The copper stood on a stand - an iron stand - and you'd put the clothes in there and the fire was underneath. That's how you boiled your clothes. Well all that was round in the old house, we used to call it. There was a room on the end - there were two rooms there - and that's where the shearers used to sleep if they had to stay.

What other buildings did you have on the property?

Sheds, of course, and yards for the sheep. You had all different kinds of yards and runs for them at shearing time. There was a run in this way and out the other way - quite a business of sheds.

What was the look of the property? Was it mainly cleared?

Yes, ours was all cleared when they bought it. The odd tree or two. Absolutely too much they'd cut away. Quite clear ours was. But we planted a lot of trees round the house - gum trees and - - -. Fig trees - a great big fig tree. I've got a picture of my father in my mind chasing my brother to give him a hiding round this big tree and he could never catch him of course, the tree was so big. (laughs) His temper had gone by the time - - -.

Yes, I can imagine your brother and father at loggerheads over the work a lot of the time.

Oh always. He never would fit in and do anything, never wanted to help. He hated sheep. It's funny isn't it? We had all - - -. I often think of it now - we were much happier in those days than we are now. Nothing nasty going on or anything like there is today. Men used to come round carrying their swag. Have you heard of that? They have a swag on their back and they go from place to place, begging more or less. My mother used to send them out to cut wood or do something. She'd give them a meal. My father perhaps would give them a job for a day or two - anything he wanted done - and they'd sleep out in the shed of course. They were used to sleeping outside. They didn't used to bother about that. They were all funny old things. We were frightened of most of them. Some of them - - -. Oh, I suppose they didn't have a shave and

they looked awful. And the ones that seemed quite able to do things he used to give them jobs, give them a few bob. There were a lot of those roaming around.

Yes, even as you were growing up?

Yes. My mother used to be a bit scared when my father was away if any of them came. She'd look them over. They'd always come to the door and ask for food. And she said, 'Well, would you like to chop some wood for me?' The ones that were decent. She'd give them a meal and they'd go on their way.

Who else would you have travelling around?

Oh well. People like - - -. Insurance agents. They were nice people. As a matter of fact one that came always stayed with us for the night. My parents, I think, liked their company. Coming in and telling us what was going on in the world. We only got a paper once a week - a weekly paper. Insurance agents, people selling clothes. You know, you see one - one or two used to come past here since I've been living here. They have all sorts of things in their vans, for children, and sheets and pillows, socks. She used to buy a lot of things like that from them. I can't think of any others. We had people who would call quite a lot.

And when I was going away to teachers' college this insurance man said, 'Well, if you want somewhere to stay, she can stay with us.' Mother was so pleased because we'd got to know this man very well and he talked about his family. He had three daughters and he was a lay reader at a church, so I think they felt he was all right. He was a nice man. He said, 'Well, she can come and stay at our place, or she can board there, because my daughters are her age. They're going to school and they're doing' this or that. He had three daughters and two sons. The sons went to the war while I was there - the First World War.

What was his name?

I can't think of it now. I'll tell you later on [Meldrum].

He was selling property insurance, or - - -?

Yes, property insurance mostly, and life insurance, yes. Because they'd both insured their lives, my parents. Property insurance. It was all insured - the property was insured of course. Yes, he used to travel all round the State.

Did you have any sort of grocery or food deliveries out your way?

We got all those when we went to Naracoorte once a week, perhaps, or perhaps - - -. It depended on the sales of sheep when we went. That was advertised and it was always on a Friday and my mother used to go and do the grocery shopping. She always went with my father. Not always latterly. We went, when we got bigger. We'd do the shopping and things, and my elder sister used to go after my mother died. And she'd buy all the groceries. She'd sell this butter and stuff that she had, and buy the groceries at the same shop you see. And they always put a bag of boiled lollies in the parcel for we youngsters, so we used to run to get it when they came home. There was no shop there where you could go and buy anything, at Bool Lagoon.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

We have been talking in quite a bit of detail about your family and the household that you grew up in, and you've told me a little bit about Saturday and Sunday activities. You said that your mother was very religious. Was this reflected in your day to day behaviour?

I guess it was, yes. We had to say our prayers every night and kneel down by the side of the bed. We always had to kneel. It's stuck in my mind. My last husband, I said, 'I never kneel down to say my prayers,' and he said, 'I don't either. I say them in bed'. (laughs)

Did you say Grace at the table?

Oh yes, that was another thing. 'For what we are about to receive,' is what we used to say. I was brought up with that one. I've learnt a lot more afterwards. Never ate without saying Grace. And we were very particular about table manners and things like that.

Were you allowed to speak at the table?

Not much, no. You speak when you're spoken to. Not that bad it wasn't, but sort of you knew. I think we should be seen and not heard unless we were spoken to. My father was a bit strict in that way. Mother was a bit more - not so fussy. Well, I mean, she didn't want to be at us all the time about how you held you knife and fork and all that kind of thing, you know. She was fussy about that.

What about posture?

Yes, my word. Posture all right. You had to sit up straight and not talk. Father did the talking. Unless he asked us questions and things like that. He used to ask us about our school work and at night when we'd do the homework we used to ask him questions, to help us out. He said, 'Well, I don't think we're supposed to do that,' he often used to say, but he would help us. And we

always had to play a game of cards with him every night. He liked playing euchre and things, and he taught us to play those games so that we could play with him I think, and we weren't that keen. And it was always, 'Who's going to play a game of cards tonight?' (laughs)

You've mentioned that you took a newspaper once a week. Do you remember which one?

The Chronicle I think - was the Chronicle in those days?

Did you have books in the house?

Oh yes, and games. There were lots of games we could play and books. They had the same baby stories and children's stories that you hear today. It still amazes me.

Which ones do you remember?

Oh, you know, these Three Blind Mice and all of them, those sort of ones. Jack and Jill - baby ones. Of course as we got older, more serious ones. And we had to put them all away and look after them and put covers on them and goodness knows what.

You've mentioned that your mother played the organ. Did you have other musical instruments in the house?

No.

Did you learn to play?

I learned music from Miss Prider. I told you, at the little - at Bourne's house - she taught me. I don't think many of my other sisters bothered to do it. If they did they didn't keep it up, but I was interested in it and used to love going over. I used to play the organ and play hymns, and sing. When we had boyfriends they had to come up to sing hymns. See, having so many girls there was - - -. When we started to - in our teen ages - started to get boyfriends coming to the house, and there were local dances to go to, but the boyfriends had to come in - come to the house and have tea with us and sit round the table and do what we did. My father used to come up to the sitting room. We'd have a fire up there and the boyfriends and we'd sing these hymns and talk and then when he thought it was time to go to bed he used to get up and wind the clock. But as we grew up he and my mother used to go out and leave all the young ones up there, doing what we wanted to do. Giggling and laughing I suppose.

My eldest sister, of course, took charge after my mother died. She looked after us. She was a wonderful girl. She married in the end. Married a

German man living on a farm. When we were old enough to go to dances, it was her boyfriend that used to play the music - an accordian, you know. He used to play for all the dances. We eventually got a piano. There was always someone who could play the piano. People came out from Naracoorte and all over the place to our dances. All the country villagers came in and play. Then they used to have barn dances in the big homes that had big sheep - the woolshed - the used to have a dance in the woolshed.

So you had dances held at your own home did you?

Not in our own home. No, not at home. Up in the school we used to hold them. You had to go - we weren't allowed to go half the time. I suppose my father was scared having so many girls. He was very strict about that, and he would never let us go unless someone went with us. An old bachelor friend of his used to take us. He was Scotch - very Scotch he was. He used to say to say, 'You should let them'. My father used to be called Jimmy - 'You know, Jimmy, you should let the girls go to the dance. I'll take them, look after them,' which he used to do. He'd walk right home with us afterwards - two miles. (laughs)

Let's talk about the time of your mother's death. Do you remember that time?

I remember it well. I remember - - -. Before she went in to have this baby and she was carrying this baby, I was about thirteen I think. I knew all about it. I remember her sitting on my father's knee one knee, and he said, 'I'm afraid you're too heavy for me to nurse now'. It always stuck in my mind. And I was worried about her going away to have the baby. Anyhow she went, she had it, and we were taken in to see her. He took two of us at a time so that we all went in to see her, except Dorrie, Leith's mother, and she didn't get in to see her and she wrote her a letter - Dorrie's still got the letter - saying, 'I'm sorry dear that you haven't been in to see me and all the others have, but when I come home I'll make you a new frock'. And of course she died quite suddenly. We had no idea she was going to die. None of us were present. But the nurses told us she sang 'Nearer My God to Thee', so she must have known.

Did the baby survive?

No. Oh yes, the baby survived. And the midwife that used to do her - helped her with the other children - she took the baby. Because we just - my elder sister just couldn't cope. And my father was very upset about this, but she really couldn't have coped with a small baby and all of us. So she said she'd take the baby and he wouldn't allow it to be adopted. [Break]

So they wanted to adopt it and he said 'No'. He wouldn't ever have it adopted. We used to visit her and he, always, when he went into Naracoorte. And we used to have her out to stay with us, but she never seemed to want to stay, never. She wasn't in the - didn't enjoy it - and she was there. But he persisted about doing it always. [Break]

We were talking about the youngest. Was that a girl?

A girl, yes.

Do you remember the name of the - - -?

Jean.

And of the midwife?

Hood - her surname.

Did she live in the Bool Lagoon.

In Naracoorte. Yes in Naracoorte she lived. And she had - - -. When she died the grown up daughter took the child - she was growing up then of course - and I think she felt more at home with them than she did with us. We tried awfully hard about that. We still see her. She still lives there. And I've got a sister in Naracoorte now, and she sees her, but they're friends, never close, never was very close to us. My father kept her, kept her all the time, till she grew up and doing what she did. But she married someone - a man in Naracoorte - who was a, made saddles and things, you know. That sort of shop he had. And they had a couple of children and she's still there.

Do you remember your mother's earlier confinements?

I can't remember one of them. They must have happened in the house.

Do you remember Mrs Hood staying?

Yes. I remember Mrs Hood showing us the baby and all that kind of thing, and I remember Mother being in bed. The actual confinement, I don't know what she did with us. Whether the house was big enough, I suppose, to shut us out down the back rooms or somewhere. I knew all about it. I knew all about babies and where they came from and all that kind of thing.

Do you account for that being a farm girl, or do you remember being told about it?

I wasn't told, I just - - -. Unless I'd learnt it at school off some other girls, but my mother never told me, or my father - never spoke to us about it. I learnt it at school from the other children I think, which is wrong, isn't it?

They don't do that today. Like my little great niece over here, they told her, you know, as soon as her mother was pregnant, 'You're going to have a little baby sister'. And when her mother started to get big she said, 'Why is your tummy so big, Mummy.' She said, 'That's where the baby is'. So she thought for a long time - oh, quite a day I think - then she came to her mother and say, 'How does it get out? Do you squeeze it out?' (laughs) She was even in the room when it was born. The father took her with him.

Do you remember knowing at the time what had caused your mother's death?

Yes. I know because my father was so horrified and so - - -. I remember him saying, 'I'll shoot that doctor,' and he went - - -. I remember him going to see the doctor and making a big fuss about it. And I thought, 'We've all - - -. Surely he won't shoot him.' But he was so furious to think, 'My wife had all those children at home and the very one that we were careful about, this happens'. Seems terrible, doesn't it?

Yes.

No trouble with the midwife - she was a wonderful woman.

Had you had the same doctor come to the home before?

No, it was a different doctor. Our own old doctor had gone. But I always remember him saying, 'I'm going to shoot that man,' and I can see him now, sitting in the chair, crying his eyes out. My little Bub, the youngest sister, sitting on his lap.

Was you mother in a nursing home?

Yes, she was in a nursing home - a little private nursing home, which was silly really. It was someone's fault. She could just - - -. Puerperal sepsis which is really blood poisoning. Shocking.[1]

And you would have had very young sisters as well.

Yes, well I was thirteen. Then there was Dorrie, Leith's mother - she was eighteen months younger. There was only about eighteen months between us, two years. There was Dorrie, Lil, Molly and Bub - four younger than me.

How old was Bub at the time?

1. Before the second interview Mrs Hay-Taylor remembered that the family learned that the blood poisoning was due to a cut finger before confinement, rather than directly from the birth.

She was a bit older, I think. There had have been a bit of space there. I think she was about - she'd be about three. She was only a baby - three or four years old. She was running around and everything.

I know that the new baby went to Mrs Hood. Was the rest of the family able to stay together?

Oh yes, we all stayed home. I was the first one to leave home and go and do - - -. When I was about fourteen I think I left, to go to high school in Naracoorte. I was boarding and came home every weekend.

And you say that your older sister had to take over.

She had to take over. She was - - -. How old would she be? She would be about eighteen I think. She was very capable of course, because she'd been - knew most of the housework and looking after us too before my mother died. She stayed on for - - -. She didn't marry for a good many years. She had a boyfriend but she didn't get married for years. She stayed there with us. I was the first one, I think, to leave, and then I went down to the teachers' training college. I stayed with this man - this insurance man who said I could stay there, which was a great success. They were a lovely family. The girls were my age so we were all - - -. And we all got boyfriends. Then the war came while I was there. We used to - - -. The sons went voluntary. There was no conscription or anything. I think both her sons volunteered and we used to go down to Mitcham where they were all in camp down there and visit them on Sundays. They were allowed to have visitors.

Just thinking back to your family again, after your mother died, you were mentioning when we spoke last time - did your father's sisters come to stay with you?

Yes, Auntie Lizzie did.

Was that for a long period of time?

No, not really, but she came - she'd stay for a week, you know, and see what was going on and that kind of thing. She was very good. That eased off. She was married with her own family of course. But they used to come to Naracoorte quite a bit to stay. He was, as I said, something in the auctioneer line, buying and selling sheep and cattle, and they used to come to Naracoorte and stay and she'd always have one of us in there to stay with her.

Had you known much illness in the family before?

None. I don't think any of us were ever ill. We had colds and things like that, but never ill. A very healthy crowd really.

Of course in those days you didn't have access to insecticides.

Nothing like that.

Did you have trouble with bugs in the house?

[mishears question] They had home cures, you know. My mother would rub your chest with olive oil or something if you got a cold, or take certain medicines you could buy in the shops for coughs. She'd treat us in that way. But none of us ever got - - -. I don't think we had measles. I know that I was teaching at school when I got measles. There would only be about a dozen children at the school. At the schools at that time they had all the classes in one room and all that kind of thing.

We walked two miles to school every day and that was quite a task, you know, especially in the hot weather and that kind of thing. But we had to do it and that was that.

No, we were - - -. My sister Dorrie came soon after me and she didn't go anywhere either. They knitted - the war was on - and they knitted socks. They knitted a hundred pairs of socks, Dorrie and - Leith's mother and the next one, Lil. They just stayed home and helped with the housework and they knitted for the war and they were very proud that they knitted a hundred pair. They felt they'd done their duty.

You would have been about ready to leave the local school when your mother died.

Yes I was. I was thirteen. I think I was there perhaps another year before I went.

Why did you go on to high school?

Because I wanted to be a teacher.[2] 'We can't all stay home,' I decided, 'we're too many of us'. I thought, 'There's nothing here that attracts me very much, just staying home like this. I'm going out to do something.' And what could I do? I wasn't equipped for anything, and I said to my father, 'I'd like to be a nurse'. He said, 'No, you'll never stick it. It's very hard work'. He'd been in hospital for something or other. 'It's not nice work for a girl,' he said to me. 'A lot of dirty work you have to do.' So I said, 'Well, - - -.' He said, 'What about teaching?' so I said 'Yes'. I'd done pretty well in my exams at school and he talked to the school teacher and she said, 'Oh yes, she's quite well equipped to go and do that,' so that's what I did.

2. See p. 31. Mrs Hay-Taylor is uncertain whether she attended high school, but does remember staying with the Hoods in Naracoorte.

From then I went down to stay with these people in Adelaide. And the teachers' training college was held in what is now that State school in Currie Street - it still stands.

Did any of your sisters go on to high school?

No. Dorrie - - -. There was a family at Bool Lagoon - Pattersons they were - she was very good to us when Mother died. She took a personal interest in us and was almost like a mother to us, and she asked could she have Dorrie to stay - live up with her - because she had small children and she wanted some help with the children. So she took Dorrie with her and I don't think Dorrie ever left there. She met a relation - a MacGillivray. Millions of MacGillivrays. They were Scotch people who had come out from Scotland and settled at Coonawarra. That's why Leith's so interested in the South East. It's like home for her. The MacGillivrays and the Pattersons were related - they intermarried. So Dorrie stayed with Auntie Meg, we used to call her, Patterson, and helped to look after the children. Then she got engaged to one of the MacGillivrays and married him.

Did your other sisters work?

Molly, the next one, went teaching. She did teaching, a little while after me, and she was teaching down there in Naracoorte in a country school where she met her husband, a farmer, and she married him. She still lives there. They've lived there all their lives. He had a beautiful farm. He retired very young and they lived in Naracoorte after that and they've lived there ever since. She's still there.

How did your father feel about you deciding that you needed to train for an occupation?

Quite happy about it. The only thing he wasn't happy about was when I went away to England. I always remember he said to me, 'I'll never see you again'.

When you went to high school at Naracoorte, did you board there?

Yes, I stayed with the Hoods.

With the Hoods. So you would have seen your little sister. So there wasn't tension between the two families?

No, not at all. Oh no, very friendly right until she died. Like a mother to us. So then Molly taught. Lil also went to live with some of the MacGillivrays who needed help and finished up marrying a Patterson who was related to them. So the Pattersons and MacGillivrays have all mixed up with our lives.

We were talking before of how you had big grazing properties in the area as well as the smaller farms, how did you consider yourself? What sort of station in life?

Middle. We weren't rich by any means, but we never wanted for anything. We were able to cope without feeling really poor. The droughts were the - - -. You know, you'd get down and wonder where your next penny's coming from. My father would say, 'I'll send all you people out to work soon'. You'd have your hard times, very much so. And it's so hot in the summer. The ground down there is black and hard and in the summer time big cracks would come, like that. We used to have little storms like a - you know, thing'd fall off the mantelpiece - what I'm trying to say.

Little tremors.

Yes, got a lot of those. And the cracks would get wider in the ground. Snakes, of course, we used to have to watch out for. We were - - -. We weren't the richest people in Bool Lagoon by any means, but we were all right. We weren't really poor.

Were there people in the district that you considered poor?

No, not really. Johnny Bourne - I always call him Johnny Bourne - he and my father used to have little harmless tiffs about the drains, you know, and the water. He'd say my father was running his water on to his paddock. I saw my father once, take a spade out, and make it look - water run off his paddock into Johnny Bourne. (laughs) I can always remember that. It was really laughable. My father would think he's getting away with it and he wasn't. We weren't very well off by that time. When I went to England I only had fifty pounds in my purse. I was game. The voyage only cost me forty-five. It was a one class ship. I went with another girl. I remember we cried all the - after the ship left the shore and was out on its way to England. We both went into our cabin and cried our eyes out.

I think we might have spoken long enough for today, because it's getting near your lunch time. If I can come back next time and talk about your training and teaching days and your first marriage, and how your life altered after your husband's death.

I don't know if anyone would want to hear all this.

Well I certainly would like to. Thank you very much for today's.

'S.A. Speaks: An Oral History of Life in South Australia Before 1930'
Beth Robertson interviewing Mrs Elsa Hay-Taylor [redacted]
[redacted] on 16 October 1985

TAPE 1 SIDE A

Well last time we spoke we were concentrating on your childhood and family life at Bool Lagoon, and one thing I realised when I was playing back the interview to myself is - and it's something that you've already brought up this morning - we didn't really talk about your activities in the district itself. Of course I was thinking, Bool Lagoon is a very popular resort place now and a very beautiful area, what did you see of the local environment?

Well we used to go out into the scrub and have wonderful picnics. Every New Year's Day was the Bool Lagoon picnic race meeting and it was organised by all the people that lived in Bool Lagoon. They took their horses they used on the farm and raced them. The ponies for the children who were old enough to ride ponies, and they had all sorts of funny races like egg and spoon races. But they trotted - - -. The people who had trotters. The Pattersons, for instance, had beautiful horses. They showed their horses every year - four in hand - and all these lovely horses came and all little farm horses, they raced. Then they had games for the children too. Three legged race. You know, you tie one leg to the other - two children by that leg and that leg, and then they run - that kind of race. We used to have egg and spoon races too for the kids. It was a lovely day. We used to look forward to it all the year.

Where was it held?

Out in the Killanoolla property around - - -. You know it was very swampy country - a lot of water in the winter, and it dries as hard as a rock in the summer. And the men used to - - -. Weeks before they went out pegging out this horse thing. They had great fun doing this you know. They enjoyed it. They put all the pegs up - where they start and where they stop - and made tents in case we got too hot. And the families sort of spread out further in from the swamp. Put tarpaulins on the ground, made little shades for us, and all this. Children had sweets thrown out on the tarpaulins for them all to run and grab them, you know. Prizes were given after all races. They paid so much to enter their horses. They really had a really - the men had a really good time, and so did we. We loved that day.

You said last time that you enjoyed riding. Did you enter the races yourself?

I wasn't old enough then. When I got old enough I wasn't there. I only remember it when we were too young to go to the dances at night. There was always a dance at night, and going home from the picnic was, 'Mum, can we

go to the dance tonight?', you know. It was usually 'No'. But we did - - -. Yes, it went on till we were old enough to go because we used to go that night and dance. That was our chief evening entertainment, was dancing, in the hall or in the woolshed they used to have woolshed dances. They'd decorate the woolshed up and the floors used to be beautiful in the woolsheds from the oil from the wool. We loved those. They were really, sort of a picnic dance.

Then another thing was the annual show that we all had to go to. That was a day and a half. Everybody put on their best dress and taking things - showing your scones or whatever you would do.

Was that the Naracoorte show?

Naracoorte show. It was quite a way out of the town I remember - you had to walk out there. We'd stay there all day. We'd take a picnic lunch and around the showground, which was a big showground - lovely shady trees and grass - and we'd put down our cloth and all of us - too many to pay, I suppose, to take us to lunch, or whether they had - - -. I suppose they did have, but I remember we used to take our lunch to all these things. That was a big day for us.

But little local parties there weren't many except school parties. All the parents were asked at least once or twice a year to come and see what work we were doing, things like that.

But those are the two outstanding - the picnic race meeting and the show.

Did you get out into the bush on your own for its own sake much at all?

Yes. We used to go - - -. There was an old house had been, and there was a big mulberry tree, so we went there every year to pick mulberries and have a picnic lunch. Yes we did like that. And we used to visit people at Glenroy which was a place - a little station where the train stopped. We had friends there. We used to go there to lunch. Everybody went.

Then they'd come to us another day. We had friends at Joanna where we used to go, where the caves are, and we'd have picnics there. That was a great spot. We went several times to the caves in the summer time and we'd get down in there. It was nice and cool and you could - - -. We weren't allowed to go through the cave without a guide of course. You took a little candle. I often think, now what if the candle blew out, and it was pitch dark, you know. I suppose the guide had something else, but we all had to carry a candle and none of us were allowed to go in without a guide. All these stalagmites and stalagtites, you know, dripped down. It was all dripping every-

where. So cool. And they provided tables and stools just outside the cave where you could have a picnic. Set the tables up there and everybody - - -. You join up with other people going and get together, that sort of picnic. Or we'd bring some of the foods. We'd sit down all round these tables and have our lunch and play games. That was an important part of our life.

Mother used to bring us down to town to her friends the Penerys where she used to be - she was the best friends with. They lived just near the Parklands out there in North Adelaide, where all those old cottages are now. That cottage is still there that we used to go to. We found it - looked it up and found it, and went in and spoke to them. There's still people living there, not related to the Penerys.

Who were the Penerys?

They were friends of my mother's and where she met them - - -. She met them before she was married apparently, and this Penery woman, I told you, was the nurse - or housekeeper or something to do with the home where single mothers went to have their babies. They looked after them and found them jobs and had the babies adopted if they wanted them to be. It was a Church of England place. Her friend worked there. She used to come down to our place to spend holidays too, on the farm.

Would that be the sort of subject that your parents would discuss with you, unmarried mothers?

No. I don't think we even knew until later on in life. Because the people I stayed with when I was at the teachers' college, she had a friend who was a nursing sister there too, and I found out a lot then, what the place was like. I don't think we were even taken to it with my mother. We stayed in this house where this friend of hers lived, but she worked in this place. I don't remember whether we - - -. We knew she was nursing, but I think that was about all. Then when I got to Adelaide and found the wife of that man [Meldrum EH-T] had a friend there too.

She was a bit more forthcoming with information was she?

Yes. Oh yes, and she - - -. Well I learned from the parent - the lady of the house - a friend of this woman, a nurse. And she talked about it a lot in front of her girls. We were grown up then. Her daughter was working at the Electric Supply Company doing typing and things. She was a bit older than me. There were two girls. And then there was another girl and there were two boys. One was a teacher - training to be a teacher - he was at university somewhere. They talked more liberally than my mother would to me. Of course I was ready for it anyway. I was, I suppose, seventeen then.

Oh yes, we had a lot of fun when we were kids. We were always encouraged to ask the other kids of the village to come and play with us, or we went there to play.

What about the Lagoon area itself? Would you visit that?

Oh yes, we knew all about that, and we knew they shot ducks on it. They just seemed to shoot ducks ad lib in those days, until later I remember they were - once a year they could only go and shoot ducks. Beautiful place - we used to often go there for picnics.

Did your father or brother hunt at all?

Yes. Not my brother, my father did.

Would he supply meat for the table frequently?

Oh, not that frequently. We had our own poultry and sheep which he killed, you see, for meat and things - and fowls. But it was really a luxury even then, wild duck, except if you lived away out there where those swamps were and no people about. But the Lagoon, too, was a very popular place, but I don't think they were encouraged to shoot there very much. My nephew's got land right next to it. Well that belonged to my sister and her husband, and he inherited it you see. They always lived there. But I can't remember them ever having duck frequently.

But there are other parts of South Australia. My elder sister married into a German family - Ludwig - and they had several big swamps around them and they often went out and shot a duck. There was nothing against that apparently. A beautiful Teal duck, you know, the little ducks.

Where was that, that she went to live?

She went to Stuart's Range, just out of Naracoorte on the other side of where we lived. I think she met him at a dance. He used to play the music on his - - -. And he used to play the piano - he was quite musical. A German family. I don't know whether - - -. They weren't born out here - I know their parents weren't - because when they were married he had to build another house on the property for them to live in. That's why their marriage was - went on a bit - their engagement. You know she was engaged for quite a while, but she really couldn't leave home because she was running the house, you see, and we were all still at school.

But as soon as the eldest one left - - -. I would have been the one but I didn't do any housekeeping. I was so mad on being a teacher. I was kept on at

the school to help teach the babies. I'd got through my schooling sooner than expected or something. But I know she used to make me take this class every day, teaching the little ones. You know they only used to say, 'c-a-t, cat' then. You can't hardly believe that, can you?

How do you think your sister felt about having to sort of take over your mother's role.

She never complained about it ever - never - and we all used to wonder at it, you know, as we got older. It sort of wasn't fair. My father just took it for granted I think. Then when there was one of us available to carry on they got married. But that was really, I think, about 19-- - oh, be 1915 or something like that.

Which one of you took over her role?

Dorrie, Leith's mother. She took over then, until - - -. After my mother died the mothers all around that lived, you know, were greatly interested in all we girls being left there without a mother, and the Pattersons - Meg rang up my father one day and said could she have Dorrie to come and help her with the children. She had young children, and they had a fairly big farm, and .... her husband. But her husband's brother lived there and she was a woman that liked going out and liked having parties and going into Naracoorte for balls. So he said, 'Oh yes,' you know, all right, and so Dorrie went there. They wanted to adopt her. They didn't want her to leave, for her to go, and she didn't want to go, she was so happy there. She was there for years with them. I'm getting off the track aren't I?

No, I'm interested to talk about how the family coped after your mother's death.

Oh yes, well then, she went there. Well then there was only - - -. Who was next? Oh, Lil. Well she had to stay and do the housekeeping. All the others were at school then and I was still at school teaching these young things. I don't know why - can't remember much about it. I know I wanted to teach and I remember sitting for an entrance examination for it, to go to the teachers' college. I didn't go to high school. I went straight there. They must have counted on the learning - things I learnt teaching little things at school or something. Because I don't think I went to college. Can't remember anything about it. I rang Molly this morning and said, 'Did I go to high school?' She said, 'No'. She said, 'I did,' and I said, 'How long were you there?' She said, 'Three years' - she did teaching too. And I said, 'Did I go to high school?' She said, 'No, you didn't. You stayed on at school though'.

Well what years were you doing when you went to Naracoorte for two years? Did you say you went to the Naracoorte school for two years?

No, I didn't go. Did I say that?

You were saying you were boarding with the midwife who was looking after your youngest sister.

Yes, I can remember - - -. I must have gone to school - high school - for a while I think then, because that would be the only - - -. Do you know, I've got no memory of those years.

When we were talking the first time that we met - - -.

I remember going in there and staying with them, so I must've been at school. The next thing I can remember is having to fill in this entrance. I had to do an entrance exam, I remember that, but I did it in the school room where I went to school.

At Bool Lagoon?

Yes, and the teacher had the papers and all that kind of thing. And when I passed I went straight up to - - -. I'm sure I went for a while to high school. I can remember girls that I was friendly with at the time, you know. I don't think I stayed there very long.

Do remember living in - no what was the midwife's name?

Hood.

Do you remember living in her house?

Yes. I must have stayed there. I must have gone to school for a while. But the next thing I remember is having to fill in this entrance exam. [break in recording]

Let's talk a little bit more about, say, the end of your school days at Bool Lagoon. I'm wondering perhaps whether it might be the effect of your mother's death around that time, whether you don't remember details.

It was about that time because I was thirteen and I must have been just about ready to leave school.

Do you remember hearing that your mother had died.

Oh yes, I remember that very clearly, because my father was staying in Naracoorte the last days, apparently. We were told she was very sick and one day Roland Kay - that's a family, Bool Lagoon family - came rushing down - riding a horse he was - and he'd been in Naracoorte and heard my mother had died. He got on his horse and raced home to tell us before my father got home. I can remember that quite well. I was about thirteen then.

Were you at home at the time?

I was home, yes. Yes I was home, because I can remember my father coming in and dropping down in his armchair, and my younger sister wasn't very old then - she ran and got on his knee. And he burst out crying. He hadn't cried before that. I can remember that quite clearly. Then when the neighbours started coming in - - -. I can remember Mrs Bourne coming, who was our nearest neighbour, and I remember her saying, 'Oh you poor girls. All you girls without a mother.' That's quite clear. What followed on immediately afterwards I can't just pick up.

You said earlier that you thought you stayed about another year at the Bool Lagoon school.

I did go on longer because I'd done my - gone as far as I could go. I remember her telling me, 'You can help me now with the little ones'. And she taught me a lot about how to teach the little ones. But she hadn't had me out standing in front of the class. Whether that counted as something in my - - -. I don't know.

Yes, I think there were arrangements for, what did they call them, junior teachers or something like that?

I think I was - - -. The training I had at the college [Observation and Practising School, Currie Street] wasn't anything startling. It wasn't - - -. You know, only to teach in a country school, I remember that.

What, do you mean, you didn't expect to teach in the city?

No, I only knew that I'd be teaching in a little country school. And I remember them sending me this exam paper and doing these subjects on it, and she organised that.

What was the name of your teacher?

I think it was Kelly. We had a Kelly. I think it was Miss Kelly. Did they give you their names in their order when they were there?

Yes, there is a Miss Kelly down on this list [1910 Directory] as school teacher.

They changed occasionally. I must have had two or three while I was going to school.

You would have been very young to be deciding upon a career at that age.

I always wanted to be a teacher. I can remember that very clearly.

Why do you think?

Because I thought, 'Well, what are all we girls going to do?' I used to think this out. 'We can't all stay here. I'm going to be a teacher,' you see, or a nurse, or something. We were talking about this to my father years before I went.

Did you want to be a nurse?

No. I did want to be a nurse. I wanted to be a nurse more than anything, but he said, 'I don't think I'd be a nurse if I were you. They have a lot of dirty work to do.' And I always remember that when I was emptying the bedpans. (laughs) My father would be saying that, you know. He said, 'I don't think you'd like it'. Well, there were very few things offering for young girls in those days you know, besides nursing and teaching, so I said, 'Well, can I be a teacher?' So then I used to talk to the teacher about it, you see, and she said, 'Well, you can come and take this class today for me,' and things like that. I can remember that quite well. And I can remember this entrance exam that she had. She had all the stuff for it and sat there while I did it one day.

Did it not appeal to you to stay at home as a lot of girls did and wait to marry into the district?

No, it didn't. I was one of those restless people that wanted to go somewhere. I didn't want to stay home. Not that I wasn't happy at home, but I wanted to do more than that. I was a bit ambitious I suppose. The others didn't care less except Molly, and she did go to high school for three years, I think, before she went to the college. Because I asked her the other day. I was talking to her on the phone and I said, 'Did you go to high school?' 'Yes,' she said, 'of course I did. I went there three years.' I said, 'Before you went to the teachers training college?' She said 'Yes'. And she had her first school - I remember that - down near Naracoorte, at Lochaber, and she stayed with this - - -. She boarded there with a family and then she met her husband. She only had one other school and she got married. Molly that was.

She was younger than you.

Yes. I was next to my brother - I was the third one - and then there was Dorrie, Leith's mother. No, there was me and then Leith's mother Dorrie, then Lil - I don't know about her though - and Molly. So she was a good way down. I was away teaching when she was at high school and that. Stuck up away in the north in the country and - - -. Communication wasn't much. I didn't know half the time what they were doing. I used to go home for all the holidays - get a run up with everything then. I remember Dorrie always used to wear my clothes and I used to get so cross. She didn't have many new

dresses like I did because I was earning money. And she used to come out with my dresses on. (laughs) I never could wear anybody else's clothes and I didn't say anything because I felt sorry, you know.

You were talking last week about your brother and he was fairly restless too.

He was restless too. Yes he was.

Do you think it was anything about the area that you grew up in that you wanted to leave?

I suppose it was, although we had plenty of entertainment and we were happy there. I think my brother wasn't. He was an only boy amongst all these girls and I think he always felt out of it. I can see him now just wandering around, you know, and not mixing with us when we played and that. And Miss Mary Seymour - I told you the Killanolla peope, station people - she asked - - -. I don't know whether - she knew, I suppose, about our lives. She took a great interest in us. She asked me whether I'd come over to the station and stay with her for a while. I think she thought she was going to teach me how to be a real lady or something. I remember my father saying, 'Do you want to go?' I said, 'Oh, yes, I'll go'. So I stayed one week and I was homesick - had to take me home.

About how old were you then?

Oh, I must've been somewhere about twelve or fourteen or something I think. I was sort of getting grown up then.

Had you finished your proper schooling at that stage?

Yes, I think I had. I suppose she thought I was wandering around at home so she'd take me over there, and I remember her showing me how to set the table properly and, oh, I got so - I was so indignant about it.

Why was that?

Because I knew how to set the table. She used to tell me all sorts of things, you know, about living. She was very sweet and nice. They were all old maids. None of them ever married.

Did they want you as home help?

Yes, she did ask me would I help the girls in the kitchen sometimes. And that I didn't approve of. So I asked could I go home. And they took my brother too, because they thought they could help him. Would he come to the station and see how the station was run and - - -

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE A: TAPE 1 SIDE B

You were saying that the Seymours - - -.

Yes, and so my brother went - didn't want to go - and he went out with the men on the station - it must've been shearing time - and helped muster sheep and was learning about station life. And he didn't like it because he had to sleep with men who were the shearers, or the men that were working there. So he came home. He didn't stay very long. He stayed a few weeks during the shearing period I think. And I think he was paid. See, he got - that didn't even attract him.

Did you get paid?

No.

Were both these occasions after your mother died?

Yes.

So, as you were saying before, the local people were trying to - - -.

Well, when I look back on it, I think they must've been trying. You know, seeing all of us down there together, it'd be better for some of us to do something or help somebody. If they happened to be the one that wanted help, you see, they'd ask 'Could we have one of your girls for a while to help mother - she's not well?' or 'the children are sick' or something like that. I don't think we ever got paid for it, unless they gave us a frock or something. I don't remember handling the money.

Did you go anywhere else?

No, that was the only place I went. Dorrie went - the one next to me. You see she went to the Pattersons and Meg was wonderful to us after our mother died. She was really wonderful. She was always down there and always taking us places. If she was going to anything at Naracoorte she'd come down and take some of us with her. And then she had these little children and all these men to feed on the farm, and so she asked could she have Dorrie to help her look after the children, you see. I said to Dorrie yesterday, 'Did she pay you?' and she said, 'Yes, she gave me eight shillings a week,' but they got to like her so much they wouldn't let her go. And she got to like it too - she loved it - and they kept her right until she was - - -. Just before she got married, I think - she met her husband there. And she used to take her to the balls in Naracoorte with her then, and Dorrie used to go to the dances and was enjoying life, so she didn't want to come away.

And Molly went teaching.

Molly went teaching. She went to the high school because she definitely wanted to be a teacher too. But I was away teaching then when that happened.

What about Lil?

Lil's the other one - I was going to tell you about her. The minister came out one day and said to my father, 'Have you got a girl that could go in - the Methodist minister's wife is sick and she wants some nice girl to come into the house and help her look after the children' - I think they probably paid her, I don't know. So Lil said she would go. They also wanted to keep her in the end, and she wanted to stay. She was so happy there - she loved it - and they thought she was marvellous. I suppose she knew a good bit about looking after children. We always had young ones we had to look after. I remember that. Eventually she did come home because she had to come home and look after Dad. The others had all gone by this time. So she came back home, to the home, and stayed there, and she married a Patterson. They were all related - the Pattersons and the MacGillivrays.

How did your father than manage - when all his - - -?

Well there was another one - Bub was the last one - and she stayed home and looked after him till she wanted to get married in the end. And she had a - - -. This man was a boundary rider. They had boundary riders on the stations where they ride round and look at the fences and sheep and all that. He was quite a nice boy - Dillon was his name.

What was the name?

Dillon. My father didn't approve of it. He didn't like him and none of us others liked him much either. But anyway, at last he gave his consent and she married him, and he left the station and my father bought some land and built them a house. He had no money. And he decided he'd take up being a butcher. I remember Bub - she was a wonderful little girl. She'd help anybody, you know - she was one of those - - -. Oh, she was really a remarkable kid. Molly used to be frightened of horses - she wouldn't go near a horse - and Dad used to try and make her, you see. He'd say, 'You stand here and hold the horse while I go somewhere,' and she - oh, she'd shake and - - -. Bub would come and say, 'I'll stay here with you'. She'd do anything, she was game as Ned Kelly. (laughs) She was a lovely little person.

Well anyhow she married this man and they had some children I think - well, I know - later on. She had two girls, I think, and a boy. I know her

daughter did hairdressing - that's as much as I can think of. (laughs) He took up butchering and she helped him no end, and he used to drink. We were all terribly worried about her, but she never complained. She would always be laughing and happy. She tried to, you know, pass it by and not make a fuss about it.

The next thing I remember about her, he went to the war - First World War had broken out - and he went to the war. And it was then that she was killed. He was coming home on leave and she went to the station. Struan - it wasn't Struan station - one of the other little stations the other side of Naracoorte. And there were two trains pulled up and she thought there was only one and the one went by and she ran across the line and the other one - - -.

This would be the Second World War would it?

Second World War, because I was away.

Yes, it's interesting talking about your family and the various opportunities or ways that the girls - - -.

Yes, there was so little for girls in those days. It wasn't like today when you can go and do anything practically.

Yes, and as you were saying, it was both to help your family, but also to help the local families.

Yes. They'd think, 'All those girls over there. Surely they can spare one,' you know, if they wanted one for a while.

What about the local community? You've spoken about the Seymours. Would they have been considered local high society?

Oh yes, very much so. But they didn't behave like that towards you. They never made you feel inferior or anything. They really wanted to teach you things and bring you up to be a lady or something like that, I always felt. (laughs) But they didn't show it in any way - do you know what I mean? But I knew - I could tell that that's what it was all about. 'I want some help but I'll teach them for it too,' you know.

What do you remember of their home compared to the one that you'd been brought up in?

Oh, well it was a huge two storey mansion. Like Struan station. Beautiful homes they were. Built by the people that came out from England years ago I think. That came out with a lot of money and bought a lot of land cheaply and were good class people.

Do you ever wonder about what would have happened if you had stayed rather than gone back home?

Oh I knew very well I wasn't going to stay. I didn't worry about it. No, I didn't want any help and that's the reason I was very snooty about it. I liked them. They wanted to be helpful I think, really. At the same time they wanted help. But my father was happy about us doing it. He knew we'd come to no harm there, you know, and we'd be all right. They'd look after us and he never made us go. He said, 'If you want to go you can go'.

What about your decision to train as a teacher? Was that something you needed to get his permission to do?

Oh yes, we did discuss those sort of things. And I wanted to get away from the - - -. Because I was growing up too quickly I think, and I was unsettled, and it was about the only good thing I could get away and do. (laughs)

What do you mean you were growing up too quickly?

Well I think we were - - -. Because we had no mother and we had to learn to do things, we became grown up before our time if you know what I mean. I thought I was quite a lady and grown up, you know, when I was fifteen or sixteen. And as a matter of fact [break in recording for discussion. EH-T agrees to speak on tape about the following.]

We were talking about your decision to go teacher training and you've got vague memories about some schooling in Naracoorte. But we were just saying then, and if you could tell me about it again, how you managed to go training so young.

Yes I managed to go training. I was only seventeen and I was dying to get out to do teaching. I'd passed the exam and put my age down as eighteen, so I was really eighteen to the Department, but only seventeen really.

Does that mean that you were at teachers training college when you were only fifteen and sixteen years old?

That's right.

That's very, very young isn't it?

I felt awfully guilty about it but I really felt older.

Did your father not know that there was this age requirement?

I can't remember whether I told him or not. I don't think I did. I think he just didn't know that you had to go on to eighteen.

What about the teacher who had helped you do the entrance exam? Do you remember discussing this with her?

No, I didn't discuss it. No, I didn't discuss it with her. I told myself.

Can you remember putting down the wrong date?

No, I can't remember exactly doing that, but I know I did it because everybody asked me how old I was and I thought that I was looking young, you see, so I told them eighteen.

How long were you at the teachers training?

Oh, only about a year I should think.

Do you remember coming down to Adelaide to stay?

Yes, and being taken. Meldrums meeting me.

How did you come down?

I don't know anything about any paper work between my father and the teachers training college or how I got to go there. I can't remember that. I only remember the Meldrums meeting me at the station and taking me to their home and what a lovely mother they had and how happy I was there. Straight away they made me feel at home and they took me everywhere with them. The girls were a bit older than me, because I told them I was eighteen. (laughs) And we used to go out together. We had to go to church. They were very religious people too. But the mother was a lovely person. She just seemed like a mother to me. And they welcomed me and made me so happy. And the boys were nice.

Then the war came while I was there and the eldest boy volunteered and they were in camp at Mitcham. Then the second brother went and volunteered. Nothing to say they had to go[, it was voluntary - EH-T]. There was no conscription then. I remember quite clearly going down to the camp where they were in camp at Mitcham - all these chaps in tents - and we used to visit them every Sunday. That was the only day they had visiting. I can't remember them actually leaving for the war. I must have gone away by then, out in the country somewhere teaching.

Because you would have come down to Adelaide in about 1913/1914?

'14 the war broke out. It would be just before that I went down. Not long before.

Some time in 1914.

I know all the time I was there they were in camp.

You would have been - yes, about seventeen years old.

There were three girls and these two boys. Charming boys they were. I can remember that, and I thought they were lovely.

Where did the family live?

At Goodwood. You know where the road there where the - - -.

Oh, the underpass.

The underpass, yes. The first house - - -. There was one house right on its own, and we had paddocks all around us. And then there was the big orphanage. Do you remember that?

Yes.

Is it still an orphanage?

Yes. Were they the same side of the road or opposite?

Yes, the same side. The house is still there I think. A brick villa house.

Is it this side of the orphanage?

Yes, between the orphanage and the dip - - -.

The underpass.

The underpass. Just in there - still there. Well it was last time I was along there.

So did you catch the train into Adelaide or how did you go to college?

Tram was the way. The Currie Street one it was. I think the building is still there. It was a State school as well but they'd given part of it over to this teachers training college [Observation and Practising School]. We had one big room, you know, with steps going up. Sitting up there. And then we used to have to get out and take the class before we left - learn how to take the class of children.

Was that in the same school?

No. No, we'd take someone else.

Where did you go, do you remember?

I can't remember, I was so scared. I was a very shy little girl. Getting out on my own like that and teaching brought me out a lot. Everyone used to say how shy I was. But I lost all that. (laughs)

What do you remember of the training?

In the college?

Yes.

Nothing, only having lectures. We had to take notes and study and then at the end we had to, as I say, go out and be taught how to teach. I can't remember. I don't know the exact teaching bit.

Do you remember it as being any different to what you were used to at Bool Lagoon?

No, not really. Only we went further along the path I suppose. We had geography and history and reading, writing and arithmetic. That's about all that was taught in those days.

Do you remember finding that you had missed out on learning anything at Bool Lagoon?

No I didn't. I did equally well as the others if not better with our exams. I remember that - I was quite happy about that.

How many others were you training with?

Oh, I suppose there'd be about forty.

Were there men and women?

Yes.

Did any of them look or seem as young as you were?

No, I think I looked as old as they did. I wasn't a bit afraid of that.

You were saying that you think you were being trained as a country school teacher.

Oh yes, I don't think I had any hope of getting into a big school. I think it was definitely a training for country schools. I used to get a bit homesick out in the country with about twelve, fifteen or so - I don't think I ever had as many as twenty. But you had all grades in one room which was difficult. I found it very difficult, that part of it.

Yes, I'd like to ask you a little bit more about that in a few minutes.

I can't remember what I did about it.

Perhaps it'll come to you.

I think I used to get some of the big girls to look after the little ones sometimes, while I took the bigger classes.

Just as your teacher had at Bool Lagoon.

Yes, I was dragged out always. I don't know why me. But I liked it. I thought, 'This is helping me to be a teacher'. I really was glad she did it.

Did other girls get chosen to do that as well?

No, I think I was the only one.

Did you have sisters that you were looking after then at school?

I had sisters of the school I remember being there at the same time as me and my brother.

Do you remember looking after them at school?

No, they looked after themselves I suppose. We used to walk to school and all the neighbours, as we passed the neighbours houses, you know - - -. We were about eight or nine of us would be on the road walking to school.

When you were looking after the infants, would your younger sisters have been amongst them?

Yes, they would've been. Yes, Dorrie and Lil. I don't know how many of us, and then the Bournes - our neighbours - there were two boys there and a girl. She came later. Dorrie's still friendly with that girl - Blanche Bourne - her name was Bourne, and she's so like her father it doesn't matter. She calls herself Johnny Bourne. (laughs)

You were saying before, I think, that your mother used to bring you down to Adelaide when you were a girl.

Yes, down to stay with this friend of hers.

So the city wasn't an unknown quantity to you when you moved down.

No, not really. All day it took travelling on the train. It was narrow gauge, you know, and went along very slowly. We used to like that ride though. But I got sick of it after I - - -. When I was at the college or anywhere - holiday, school holiday - and I had to catch that train and it took all day, you know. Hot weather. There always used to be a water bag outside the carriage where you could go out and get a drink of cold water - hanging you know. I can see it now. These rattling carriages like this they'd go - wobbling. You stayed at Wolsely and got a pie or something. Murray Bridge you stayed and had a cup of tea or something. You used to stay long enough years ago and buy a cup of tea and a sandwich or something.

We'd used to catch the train at about seven o'clock in the morning and get to Struan about five o'clock in the afternoon and my father used to meet us with buggy and two horses, and they were always frightened of the train so

you had to drive away till the train went. And I can see that train now coming. It was a steam - smoke, you know. A long way back we'd see this smoke and this long train rattling all along.

You were studying right in the city then for that year or so that you were at teachers college. Did you have many activities outside school hours?

Oh yes, with those Meldrum girls. They had boyfriends and they were a bit older than me, you see, and they treated me like a child. But they used to take me out with them.

Where did you go?

Down to the beach mostly - Henley Beach and Brighton - sit on the beach. When I stayed with Meldrum - Mrs Meldrum used to come. You could buy a chair at the beach - for hire - we used to sit on. We'd run up and down the jetty and play around - enjoy all that. Take off our shoes and stockings and paddle and all of that. Used to go down in the evenings a lot in the summer time. What else did we do? Oh, we did all the things that they do now I suppose. We used to go to the zoo. I'm very familiar with the zoo. And to Botanic Gardens - we'd take our picnic lunch and sit down there and see all the flowers and things. That's the sort of things we did.

When we got older and the girls had boyfriends and I had Harry Butler then - - -. I used to always stay there for part of my holidays when I was teaching. Go back there - it was like home. And of course I had to take Harry Butler along after I'd met him. I was out teaching then. We used to go down to the beach. On the weekend we'd stay - take a house - and all stay in the house together, the three couples there were - three or four. Four there were - there was a cousin of theirs that used to come with her boyfriend - - -. Harry Butler had a motorbike and sidecar and the other had to go down on a tram or something. We used to go further afield, we used to go down to Port Elliot and Victor Harbor and all those places, and stay the weekend. We used to send the boys out to steal wood so we could have a fire. (laughs) Open fires in those rooms they let, you know. And we'd get our own meals. We used to have a great time.

I think the first school I went to was Koolywurtie where I met Harry Butler, and he - - -. All the boyfriends there - the boys in the bank, and a new girl coming to the town, I was very popular, you know. A new girl. They'd all want to take me out and do things. I had a whale of a time. I remember Harry Butler wouldn't stay on the farm. He hated the farm and he wouldn't look at a horse and anything mechanical he used to - - -. When he

was little he used to make little planes. I remember him making them then before he left for the war - building little planes and flying them. And there was a man in Adelaide that was building a plane and he used to go there and help him. They made a whole plane and flew it. Only went up about as high as the tree.

He wouldn't look at anything on the farm so they sent him off to flying school in Melbourne where he learnt to fly and then he came home. Of course he was going to the war then. Oh, it was well on before he went. He was eight years older than me. And they said, no, we can't - they wouldn't take him because he had asthma. He always carried a thing [nasal spray]. Used to have terrible asthma attacks. Anyway he said he was going to the war by hook or by crook so his father gave him the money and he paid his fare to England and he enlisted there and they grabbed him. He was captain in no time.

He said to me before he went, 'When I come back I'm going to marry you'. I said, 'Oh no you're not. I'm not going to get married yet, I'm too young. Haven't seen the world yet.' And he used to write me long letters - 20 pages. I couldn't be bothered reading them. I was running round having a good time with the boys and girls where I was. These long letters used to come and I felt terrible because I couldn't read them - didn't want to read them even. He'd tell me all about the things he'd been doing in England, you know, and all about flying. It wasn't really interesting.

END OF TAPE 1 SIDE B: TAPE 2 SIDE A

[Note: the interview continued for 10 minutes before it was noticed that the machine was not recording. This accounts for some awkwardness in the following section.]

Let's talk now about going to Koolywurtie.

Oh yes, I went over on this boat. I'd never been on one before, and I was sick. A funny little boat it was - the Juno - and it went into - - -. What's the ports along there? I can't remember the name of the ports. Port Vincent was one. Port Vincent had a lovely hotel and it was run by the - some very nice people - and it was famous for yachting. All the people in Adelaide that owned a yacht would go over there at the weekends and this hotel had a lot of - two or three daughters, young ones. What was their names? Harry was very fond of one of them. They used to have parties down there at this hotel every weekend. I didn't go to any of those because - - -. They were coming to an end because of the war I think.

Yes, I was asking you whether you had any choice in where you wanted to go to teach.

No you had no choice. You'd go where you're sent. Mostly it's all right but I did strike that one place in - - -. I went to lots of places. After Koolywurtie I was sent to Mount Gambier - a school out of Mount Gambier which is a lovely place. Caroline it was called. Big farmers around there and very nice people. I enjoyed that and I was staying with a nice family - there's thousands of them - Picks. Had land everywhere. Up Port Augusta, all round the place. They were big farmers and they had young men of my age then, and I stayed there and I had whale of a time.

And the school was nice and I got measles while I was there. They shut me up in a little room - passed the food in through the door to me, so I was - - -. (laughs) As though I was something awful - like a lion or something. Anyway, that was all right. I got over that and I stayed there for quite a while and had a very happy time with the Picks family. They used to go everywhere and take me with them.

I had a letter from them not long ago - Jack Pick - and it was when my husband was sick and I was very distraught about him. And this letter came out of the blue. They didn't know I was married again or what - anything about me. They hadn't written for years and I hadn't. And he'd written to say 'We're coming down to Adelaide. We'd just love to see you if you're around the place anywhere,' and 'Remember the goods times we used to have when you were at Caroline school.' And I didn't answer the letter because I was in there with Alec - my last husband - who was more or less dying, and I just didn't feel like sitting down and writing to them. I've been sorry ever since because I would love to see them again.

Where did you first stay when you went to Koolywurtie?

Out there with the Browns and the Porkers.

That's right. You were saying that you didn't enjoy living with the Porkers.

Yes, but you'd better not put that in. There might be some of them around still.

But mainly just that they were older people and - - -.

Yes, and I was asked to go to the Browns - if I'd like to go to the Browns. They asked me would I come and I said 'Yes'. I said, 'When?' Had a really good time there, because they were more my age I think. And they went everywhere. They were quite comfortably off.

Can you describe the school to me?

Well, it was - they are very ordinary little houses or rooms. There'd only be one room - one school room where you had every class to teach in that one room. It wasn't easy. I liked the children very much. I wasn't really a born teacher, but I did it and was conscientious about it. The children were happy. Kept them happy.

How many children were there?

I suppose about fifteen or twenty.

What age range were the children?

From seven, I suppose, up to fourteen, in classes. I can't remember how I coped with them all. I'd give them - - -. I suppose the elder ones were given something they could write and do while I taught the little ones and vice versa. You had to do it that way because you couldn't be talking to two lots of people at one time. Give the little ones drawing to do or something like that and the others I'd be teaching - giving a history lesson - and change it round to arithmetic or something like that and the others could be getting on while I was talking to someone else. You had to prepare your lessons pretty well. The community were very interested in the schools.

How did they react to a new school teacher?

Oh they were wonderful, they were so pleased to get one. They were scarce, apparently - they never had enough teachers to go round. That's why they made it easy for us to get board I think. No, they were very pleased and took a great interest in the children. If they liked the teacher I think they were happy.

You were saying that the local boys were especially interested.

Oh yes, especially interested in any new girl that came. I went (laughs) - - -. There were a lovely lot of boys around. They were farmers' sons but they'd be sent to good schools - they were nice creatures you know. It was really good.

I went over to the opening of Harry Butler's Memorial. They've got one over there with the little monoplane they built and I had to go over of course to the opening. This was years afterwards - I was nursing. What a welcome I got from everybody. Most of the people were still there, you know, and I had to get up and make a speech. Afterwards one of the chaps came along that I remembered was there when I was there. He said, 'I've never forgotten you'.

I says, 'Why?' He said, 'Well I remember going down to the Juno just because the new teacher was arriving, to have a look at her.' And he said, 'I remember you had a blue dress on'. I said, 'Heavens, remembering all that'.

They were all thrilled to have a new girl come to the district I think. And they used to tease one boy that was keen on me because he used to take me out in this buggy with two spanking ponies. I didn't like him really but I used to go. When there was a dance on Harry Butler and the other chaps - boys from the bank and that, were there, and they'd run over to me. They'd put their names all - fill my card up with their names so this fellow couldn't have a dance with me. (laughs) Just for devilment really. Especially they'd - because - - -. The before supper dance was very important because it'd be your special boyfriend that'd take you to supper, or take you home, and they'd put their names on those places. [break in recording]

We were talking about the local dances.

Oh yes. They used to have lovely dances in the woolsheds and all places over there. They were always having dances or - - -.

Where had you met Harry Butler?

Over there. Just the same as all the other people there. He had just come back from doing his training at the flying school in Melbourne. He trained there because he worried his parents so much about flying they couldn't do anything else with him. That's all he was going to do. So they sent him over there - did his training - and then he wanted to go to the war but they wouldn't take him. So they paid his passage to England and he enlisted there and did very well apparently. He flew in France and won an Airforce cross and mentioned in dispatches and all the right things.

So you knew him before he went to the war, did you?

Oh yes. He was good - he was eight years older than me - so he'd been about longer than I had. (laughs) And I used to get these long letters from him and so on. But then I moved from Koolywurtie to Mount Gambier - I told you that - and other places I can't remember now. Where else did I go? Up the Mallee not far from Pinnaroo - I've forgotten the name of that school. And I was at - - -.

I think the last school I had was the one near Loxton, and that's when the war ended. I remember coming - - -. I was walking home from school and I was staying with a German family, but they were a lovely young married couple they were. And they used to go to everything and take me with

them. Used to go into Loxton every Saturday. They used to go in to shop and I'd go too, and they always - - -. Saturday night there was a place where they went and had some food before they went home, and where they used to have a dance afterwards. It was sort of [a dinner dance]. I used to stay on there with them because they were young and liked to dance too, you know. When I was coming home from school one night across the paddock, and this man was running towards me - 'The war is over, the war is over'. [difficult to hear due to chiming clock in background] So we couldn't get home quick enough to get to Loxton and see what celebrations were going on.

And I think that must have been my last school, because Harry Butler used to drive up there to see me in his motorbike and sidecar to Loxton. He had a red motorbike and sidecar. He'd come home from the war. I remember him coming. We all went down to the station to meet him and he didn't turn up and I was so furious I wouldn't - never bothered - - -. Never bothered to go and meet him when he did come. But he'd stayed in Melbourne overnight because his old girl friend from Port Vincent - the people that used to entertain the yacht people - she met him there in Melbourne and she said, 'I'm going to be the first person to fly with you,' so he had to take her out to the aerodrome and take her up for a flight, and then he missed his train. He never ever told me that till years afterwards. (laughs)

So then - - -. I must have stayed at Loxton. I think it must have been the last school I had. I definitely decided to get married there. We were married. We were having a wedding dress made. It was Charles Moore's. I don't suppose you remember Charles Moore's.

Only by name.

He used to do flying for them - advertising. He dropped Father Christmas out once, over the shop. He'd do things like that, you know, just for fun.

Did Father Christmas have a parachute on?

No, I don't - I think he was just dropped as he was made I think. He was a stuff thing made to look like Father Christmas you see. He was dropped on the chimney. If he got him on the chimney .... I got married at St Paul's Church of England in Pulteney Street. My people had to come from there and his people had to come from the Peninsula and the whole of Adelaide would have been disappointed if they hadn't seen him married.

How did you feel about that - him being so - - -?

I hated it really. But he loved it. He loved people making a fuss of him. He was so friendly, laughing - funny man. I don't mean funny funny, but cleverly funny, and everybody loved him. He'd only to stop his sidecar in the street and when you went out there'd be twenty kids around waiting for him to come out. They used to go out to the aerodrome and wash his side car for him and wanted to do things for him and hoping he'd take them up.

And anyhow we got married at St Paul's where my people had to - - -. Dorrie was my bridesmaid, and he had a man who was best man who was older than him even, but he knew him for many years before the war. He used to make all the windmills and go round mending people's windmills. He was an engineer. He was the best man. And we were married at St Paul's and I'll never forget it. There must've been millions of people. They were all in the - - -. The balconies opposite were crammed with people. You couldn't cross the road - there were people everywhere. Canon Bleby married me. I used to go to Pulteney Street at St Paul's when I was at the hospital nursing. Canon Bleby came to tell us when it was time to go out - he said - and I'll always remember, he was a funny old thing - he said, 'You'll have to come out the side door, Captain. It's your only chance.' (laughs) And I was so furious. I had to walk through this crowd of people. And I had a long veil on. They pulled my veil off, and he was enjoying it and I was looking so mad. Oh, it was terrible.

I don't really think I was frightfully in love with him at that point of time. I remember crying when we were driving away on our honeymoon. We went to Victor Harbor. A Dr - eye specialist - what's his name? He had a boat and a - lovely boat. You know you could sleep on it and even live on it if need be. He had a cottage on the island out from Goolwa. We went to Victor Harbor then he told us we could have his boat and his cottage if we liked on this island so we did, and we went there. And the only other people on the island was a fisherman - one fisherman. Harry loved this boat - motorboat you know.

I used to row the - - -. [dinghy EH-T] We used to get off and I'd row the dinghy while he stood up the front shooting the birds and ducks and things. Then he'd take them home and he used to prepare them. Take all the feathers off them and everything and he used to cook them. I didn't learn much of that in my life - housekeeping. I was never interested in it. There was always someone else to do it at home I think. Anyway I remember him cooking these great things. But it really was a lovely spot. When he rowed round the reeds. I wasn't allowed to make any oars - splash - because it frightened the ducks. I didn't think I was very keen on that.

You were only, what, twenty three when you got married?

Yes, about that. And he - - -. It only lasted four years because he had that accident - terrible accident.

Had he wanted to marry you as soon as he got back from the war?

Yes.

How did you feel about that?

No, I didn't want it. I told you, I - - -. I did get engaged to him and then broke it off, and then felt - - -. I was talked into it really by my friends, I really was. I admired him too and thought he was wonderful because he was - and very entertaining. He had a lovely personality.

How was he thought of back in the days before the war, with his great interest in flying?

Oh, everybody knew about him and talked about him and he was known by every soul on the Peninsula I think. I don't know whether it went any further than that. But he went over to try and help this old - this man, in Adelaide who was building an aeroplane. No, he wrote from England during the war and proposed to me by letter, and I wrote back and said 'No'. I felt I wasn't - I wanted to see a bit more of life somehow. Then I thought, 'Well, perhaps I'll see it with him,' because he was planning to build a plane to fly back to England. The Ross Smith's came while he was - - - [at Parafield EH-T].

He had an aerodrome at Edwardstown to begin with. Bought a piece of land - rented it I suppose - and built hangers on it to put the planes in. He had a very clever engineer he brought out with him - who came out with him. He was recently married but he was supposed to be the best in England. He flew that first flight across the Pacific with that man - I've forgotten his name now - through the Pacific. First man to fly across the Pacific. This man Kauper who came out with Harry, he met him - - -. The last twelve months of the war he was made instructor, teaching the other blokes to fly, and he met this man Kauper whom he admired very much, and he came out with him. And I think Kauper was a really wonderful engineer - you know, for aerial work. They flew from Edwardstown. Used to take up passengers. He used to fly businessmen interstate and - - - [etc. EH-T].

Professor at the University - Professor of Anatomy [Professor Watson] used to follow him round all the time and want him to take him up because he wanted to draw maps from the air. He hung around our place. He rode motorbikes, he was a most eccentric old man. He was really retired but he

used to carry specimens in a little bag. Brains or kidneys or something. (laughs) He used to call me Mrs Harry. Harry loved him too, you know - he was just as eccentric - and they were great friends. And when - after his accident - this old Professor used to go to all the operations to see that they were done properly and didn't do something they shouldn't. Anyway, I fell in love with him after I married him. I really did - he was wonderful. Became more and more fond of him.

When we were married we didn't have a house. He started to build a house but while that was going we boarded with a young married couple. He'd been to the war and married an English girl, and we took rooms - half the house - with them. That was great fun. She was a charming girl.

What were their names?

Borthwick. He was - - - [an indent agent EH-T]. He'd been to the war and met her over there and married her.

Where were they living?

Torrensville of all places. But we went there with them and we had such fun with them - they were so nice and he and Harry used to act the fool a lot. Harry and I were out one night and they put one of these things over the door that when I opened the door the water falls on me, you know. They used to play tricks like this. All sorts of silly things they used to get up to. We stayed with them until our house was finished at Kensington Gardens, then we moved in there.

Of course the end came when he had that accident. One of the planes had been used quite a lot - the biplane that he could take a passenger in. We used to fly over the Peninsula quite often to see his family - fly back again. I was scared stiff. Hated it.

Did you?

You had a speaking tube. There was only one passenger you could take in the thing, you know, and you're sitting out in the open. You had to have all this gear because of the wind. And he used to speak on the speaking tube to me. He'd say, 'Hold on now, we're going to loop the loop,' and things like that. I didn't enjoy it a bit. Then we flew to Victor Harbor another day, landed on a little bit of flat. Nobody else would have got on it I think but he was an absolutely amazing person at flying, especially stunt flying. Like, he'd fly right way up [high so] that you couldn't see him and then come around down all the way like this [spirralling EH-T]. In this little red monoplane.

In a spin.

Yes, spin.

Do you remember the first time you went up?

Oh yes. We flew to the Peninsula the first time. Oh no, I went up just a little while, I think, the first time. And he used to, on Saturdays, have a day when he'd take people flying. Then he moved to Parafield and had the planes there and Saturdays people'd come and have a ride for - I don't know how much he used to charge them. I've forgotten. But they come in their - hundreds and hundreds of them. Couldn't get through them quick enough; they'd only take them up for about ten minutes or so.

Were you at all interested in learning about flying yourself?

No, not a bit - I was too frightened. I was nervous. Even with him. He said, 'I'll never have an accident. I will never have an accident,' he said. 'I'm too careful.' He never drank any liquor - any spirits. He smoked like a chimney. I can see him now. As soon as he jumped out of the plane he'd light a cigarette. But he never had any alcohol ever because of his flying. He said, 'I test every plane before I go up myself. If Kauper has passed it ready, I go through a few things myself every time.'

At the time he had [the] accident and he had said to me, 'I'll have to get a new motor for the biplane. It's done enough work.' Well it stopped and they tried to fix it up. And he got in to test it and he only got up a little way when it nosedived into the ground, and he was in the front seat and went head first into the ground. He had the little boy that used to help - the mechanic - sitting in the back, and he called out to him, 'We're going to crash. When we get near the ground you jump out,' and the kid did. They weren't going that fast. The kid jumped out and never had a mark on him. But Harry couldn't get out and he had to go down with the plane. And he had all these facial injuries and his teeth were knocked up into his head and he had twenty six breaks in his face and head.

He wasn't allowed to fly again. But he used to sneak over to Melbourne and have a fly. He would say he was going over on business and he'd have a little fly while he was there. He was unrecognisable, his face. People just passed him in the street then - didn't know him. Terrific thing it was. He had operations - many, many operations. I couldn't tell you how many. Every little while he used to get abscesses in the frontal sinus and they used to have to drain them out. And they did about three operations before they could get

his teeth to meet again so that he could chew. In the meantime he could only drink fluids. He wouldn't stay in hospital. He'd have the operation done and come home.

END OF TAPE 2 SIDE A: TAPE 2 SIDE B

Yes, that must have been a very difficult time for you.

Very. Professor Watson would go to all the operations to see that they did them properly and that, and he'd say, 'I'll sit with him till he comes out of the anaesthetic. Don't worry'. An old pet he was really. He used to swear a lot when he was working at theatre. I remember they used to fine him every time he swore. Anyway eventually he [Harry] started a motor business. He and another man in King William Road, and he started to lose his memory. Spread into his brain. And he'd go to Melbourne on business and when he got there he used to forget what he went for. Then he'd say, go up and have a fly. I didn't - - -. Nobody told me about that. Didn't even tell me he was forgetting what he went for. He had a partner, a man named Nicholson.

Eventually he came home one night and said to me, 'I have the worst headache'. He used to carry aspirins in his pocket and take them all the time. He sold cars and everybody bought a car from him. Of course he did very well. And said, 'I have the worst headache I've ever had.' And he went to bed and at about five o'clock in the morning, and he woke up and he said to me, 'I have got a terrible headache'. So I said - there was a doctor who lived next door to us who we knew quite well. I got up and rang him and said would he come in - Harry was very bad. And he came in and he said - by that time he was unconscious, in those few minutes - he rang Dr DeCrespigny and he came out. And he said, 'I can do nothing for him'. And he died in about half an hour. He had a brain abscess that burst. There was no penicillin or anything in those days, so they just had to die.

Can we talk a little bit more about your courtship days perhaps? You were saying that you did fly with him to the Peninsula upon occasion. He was doing a lot of publicity work and, what was it, the Adelaide Peace Loans and so on. Were you involved with this at all? Did you accompany him?

I think I was still teaching. He used to come up on the weekends to see me, but I wasn't involved in any of that. We weren't married long and he had that accident. He lived for a year after it.

What about the first airmail flight?

Oh yes, well that was a special day of course. They advertised it. The whole of the jolly State came to it. I wasn't there - I was still teaching then.

Thousands and thousands of people, oh it was a great - great business of course. And he loved it all - had the time of his life. He used to come up to where I was teaching at the weekends. Then I decided I would marry him and we got married quite soon then.

You were saying that you didn't like the crowds and the recognition.

No I didn't. I didn't like all that. I was not that sort of person. I've always been like that. I don't like a lot of people or a lot of fuss. He loved it all. I don't know whether that put me against him a bit. I knew what a good chap he was and knew he'd look after me and be a good husband, but I felt I was too young even then to get married. But I did it. I think I fell in love with him afterwards.

Were you sorry to give up the teaching?

No, I didn't like that much and I think that's what made me decide to get married.

Why didn't you like it?

I didn't like it from the beginning but it was a job for me really.

What do you think it was that you didn't like?

The actual teaching part. I wasn't a born teacher I think.

What did you find difficult about it?

I don't think I found it so difficult. It wasn't the difficulty of it I don't think. I just wasn't meant to be a teacher I think.

Did you find it a strain?

Yes I did. Worried me a bit - preparation and things. And I don't think I liked some of the places I went to - they were lonely probably. I went to one called Wilkawatt up the - Pinnaroo, up that way.

What was it called?

Wilkawatt. And not all of the places had many young people to mix with or anything, you know. It was a lonely sort of life, really, stuck away up there in the back. I wanted to be somewhere else, you know. I was too young I think to take it seriously.

When you started you weren't much older than the students were you?

No. (laughs)

Did you think that was a problem? Disciplining people not much younger than you?

They weren't hard to discipline, country children, at all. They were very sweet and good. I got along all right with them. I liked children. I was not madly in love with children like Molly my sister - she was crazy about children. But I wasn't as crazy about them as that. I think I - - -. I was sorry I missed - I wanted to be a nurse, and I never settled down to the idea that I couldn't, you know, that I wasn't. As soon as Harry Butler died I went straight to nursing - well not as soon, a few months after. I decided I'd go and learn nursing. I was very happy doing that.

How did you spend your days after your marriage?

Well, one of my sisters came down to stay with me. In the house in Minlaton. We moved out of the house when he was flying so much, and after the accident he opened a garage in Minlaton and was selling cars and mending cars and kept running round to town buying new cars and bringing them round and selling them. I think every person on the Peninsula bought a car from him. He did quite well at that sort of thing, so we sold the house and went over to Minlaton to live. Because he couldn't fly any more. It was a business. He had to do something else.

What was the address of the house in Kensington Gardens?

Myall Avenue.

Do you remember the number?

No. It was only a little way down the - - -. Myall Avenue. A small street off the main road. And we had these friends of Harry's - the Richards - had a motor business and sold cars. They let him have an office in their rooms in town while he was flying and that had to end - the flying had to end. There was nothing for him to do in town at the moment, so we went to the Peninsula. We stayed with his family for a while till we got a house to rent. We rented a house there, until he started this business in King William Street.

We rented another house in Torrens Park then - Clarence Gardens. I can't remember the name of the street. And that's where we were when he died. He was in this business, as I say, and he used to go to Melbourne on business and forget what he went for, and all that kind of thing. Carried aspirins in his pocket all the time. He would never stay home after his operation. Must have had about twenty operations altogether, and he wouldn't stay in hospital. He always came straight home. He used to be very upset because we were walking down the street and people would walk past him and wouldn't know who he was. His face was so disfigured. He didn't care that his face was

disfigured. He was still himself, you know what I mean, he wasn't abnormal in any way. He and this other man ran a business in King William Street and they were called the Butler Nicholson Motorcar Garage or something.

Had you been worried about the possibility of him crashing?

No, because I wasn't. I never worried about him. He told me not to ever worry about him. He wasn't going to have any accident, and I believed him. I was young. I really had such faith in his flying, I never thought anything would happen to him. And it happened.

I got the news through - - -. My sister happened to be - Lil - was staying with me at the time because he was away, where he was flying. It happened to be Minlaton. He had the planes there and he was flying from there somewhere. My sister was with me, and they rang the Richards who were opposite us and his friends. The hospital rang - I suppose. He still had - his parents were still alive, you see, and his sister was with them. And I suppose they got through to Richards and Fred came over in the middle of the night - about twelve midnight - to tell me he'd had an accident and we'd have to go over straight away. He'd take me. And he took - and my sister came too, Lil. We drove over in the middle of the night. He was in hospital with his face all covered up - I couldn't even see him. But he wasn't unconscious - quite conscious. And of course from there he was transferred to Adelaide to have his facial operations done by Sir Henry Newland who was the facial man then - you know, doing all the mending.

Then Lil and I came back to Adelaide. I stayed over there for a few days and Lil was with me. Then they said he could get up and come over and go to the hospital at the Adelaide. So I came back too. What did we do then? We were living in the house at Myall Avenue I think and then we had to sell. When he got well enough to think what he was going to do, he had this garage back at Minlaton. So we went back there and lived in a rented house.

You've talked about the crowds and the recognition. Did you also have to deal with newspaper reporters and that sort of thing?

No, never had that trouble - never. They'd go to him, not me. He had plenty of trouble with them but he didn't mind. He was nice to everybody. He enjoyed it all.

What about at the time of his accident? Were you asked about that at the time?

I was never worried about him, no. They didn't worry me about it. I think they went to the hospital and got all the stuff they wanted. Oh, he came home, and

he was always busy doing something. At Minlaton at first he opened this garage there to begin with, and he was selling new cars. And I used to go around to - used to drive down to Adelaide with an old car and bring back a new car to sell. And I used to go with him when he did this mostly. We'd go over one day and come back the next.

Did you drive yourself?

No, I never drove. I didn't drive at all till I came back from England after the last war. I learnt then, but not until then. There was no need to drive - he was very good. I suppose he wouldn't let me drive. I never thought of driving. Girls weren't driving so much then. But he never lost - - -. He thought he'd get better - quite better.

I don't think he had any idea that he was going to die, although he used to go to fortune tellers a lot. He used to say, 'I hope I live to be a hundred. I've got such a lot of things I want to do. I'm going to build a plane and we're going to fly back to London one day.' And all this kind of thing. He never - - -. And he used to always ask them how long he was going to live. Just prior to him dying he had been to one, and she said - - -. He said, 'I hope I'm going to live a long time,' and she said 'You're going to live to be a hundred.' He came home quite happy - he'd been told this. Yes, 'Oh, I want to live to be a hundred,' he said. 'I'll never get all the things - - -.' What they were I wouldn't know. He was going to fly back to England and then he was going to build a special sort of plane and fly back to England. That was his first ambition.

We never had a family. I had one miscarriage which he was glad about.

Why do you say?

Because he didn't want to have a family before he flew back to England. He wanted me to go with him and he didn't think that'd be possible.

How did you feel about it?

I didn't care. I wasn't that keen on flying back to England with him. I'd just soon had a baby. It didn't happen so that was that. So when he died my sister stayed with me for a while, till I got myself together. It was a terrible shock when they gave him a military funeral. It was terrible. It was - from where we lived, it started there - and went all the way into town and out to the North Road Cemetery. By the time we got there it was evening. I'll never forget them playing 'The Last Post' just as the sun was going down.

So she stayed with me till I got my thoughts together and I decided to sell up everything and start nursing. I thought, 'Well I'm not going back to teaching. I want to be a nurse now.' All I wanted to be.

Did any part of your family suggest that you go and live with them?

No, I didn't want to go home to live. I wanted to stay there where I'd been with Harry. And I said to my father then, 'Now I'm going to be a nurse'. He said, 'I bet you don't stick it out'. And they all said to me, 'You'll never go through with it,' and I said - - -. I was so determined I would then. And I think I - - -. I got so tired. I'll never forget how tired I was. I could think of nothing but my feet, because I was so tired. I thought, 'I won't give in'. I was determined I wouldn't give in. I nearly did two or three times because it was hard work in those days. You had to do all the dirty work as well as try to learn to nurse the patients.

I started at the Memorial because I thought - - -. They said to me, 'Oh, don't go to the Adelaide. It's terrible there,' you know, 'You'll never stick that'. So I thought, 'All right,' I went to the Memorial. Met a nice lot of girls. I was very happy there with them. But I wasn't learning anything. I had other girls I knew that were training at the Adelaide and they were telling me what they were doing - giving injections or doing this that or the other - and I wasn't doing anything like this.

So I made up my own mind. I didn't say anything to anybody. I went over to the Adelaide and asked could I see the Matron. I did and I said I was over at the Memorial but I'd like to - could I change myself over there, would they have me. She said, 'Yes. How far have you got?' I said I'd done two years - been there two years - and she said, 'Well, that'll only count a year here. You'll have to do a year.' I said I didn't care what I had to do. She said, 'Why do you want to leave?' and I told her. So she said, 'Yes, you can make an application'. So I went back there and told the Matron at the Memorial. She was so cross with me. She said, 'You're just becoming useful now,' you know, 'You've been here two years'. I said, 'I'm sorry, but I feel I'm not learning enough - as well as my friends over there.' She said, 'Well you're not to say anything to the other girls and encourage them to go.' So I said no I wouldn't. But I duly left and went. Of course my friend there, she decided she'd come too. I said, 'You'd better not,' but she did eventually move over.

Were there other widowed women or - - -?

No. I was older than all the nurses training at the stage I was at. They were all a bit older than me - well, three or four years I suppose.

Younger than you.

Younger than me. They were very kind to me when I went to the Adelaide, because I'd been married and had a bit of independence. They gave me a room to myself which was unheard of. All the girls were jealous because I had this room to myself. But, oh, I loved it there. It took my mind off all my troubles. I sold all my furniture, anything I possessed, and I earned half a crown a week, or five shillings a week, I think when I went. It counted as my second year and I got five shillings a week to live on.

Did you sell your home or had you owned it?

We had sold that before he died. Because we went to Minlaton, you see, then we came back to town again when he couldn't fly any more, and rented a house in Clarence Park. That's where he died, there. So I had no house to sell. We were building a house, as a matter of fact. It wasn't quite finished - out at Malvern. In a few weeks we'd have been moving into it.

Anyway, sold all the furniture except my bedroom furniture and the Meldrums were married, the girls then, and Bessy - they had a fairly biggish house. He was a school teacher then - teaching in one of the big public schools - Mitchel More his name was. She said, 'You can have a room here and keep your bedroom furniture to furnish it, and you can spend your days off with us and come here when you're off duty.' So that was wonderful, you see, I had them, whom I knew so well, and I sold all the rest of the furniture I had.

What year did you finish your training?

1930 I finished my training, but I stayed on as a Sister for four years. Matron and the Superintendent came and said would I stay.

And after all those years of wanting to do nursing and not being able to, was it as you expected? Were you glad you trained?

Yes I was glad. I loved it. I loved every minute of it. It really was. I made a good nurse, apparently - they asked me to stay. Anyhow I stayed there for four years and I was friendly with a girl who was bent on going to England and she wanted me to go with her. She was about my age because she hadn't started young. She was younger. So we started then working on those lines, that we'd go to England and do midwifery training to being with - or some time. So we made arrangements with the midwifery - London maternity hospital - I did. She wasn't going to do her midwifery. She was going to find a husband and marry an earl. (laughs)

Did you have any such plans?

No, I only wanted to nurse. I never thought of marrying again, never. I never gave it a thought. I never met anyone that asked me - that I would like to ask me, even, you know. My heart and soul was in the nursing. I loved it all, made a lot of friends. Came back and married a man who was Chairman of the Board. I was Matron of the convalescent home and he was Chairman of the Board. He was married. His wife died. I was Matron of the hospital and he was Chairman of the Board and I knew him and that was that. Anyhow, I said, 'You'd better get married again,' I said to him when his wife died. He was always coming saying he was married. 'Can you come to the theatre with me,' or do something with him. And I used to do it, go with him.

So I said, 'I think you should get married again. I'll find you a wife,' and he said, 'Do. That's what I should do I know.' I said, 'I know a nice girl. I'll introduce you to her,' and I did. But he didn't - - -. He took her out and went to see her - used to go to cocktail parties with her. And he came and I said, 'How are you getting on with your girlfriend?' He said, 'Not very well, I'd rather marry you'. 'Oh,' I said, 'I'm not going to be married again'. I ended up marrying him.

We were talking the other day about how nowadays very few people have heard of Harry Butler.

No they haven't. That's a long time ago.

Do you think your generation remember him?

Yes, I occasionally meet people who remember him. Not very often. Too long ago.

Do you think at the time everybody knew of him?

They did then, yes indeed. His name was in everybody's mouth in those days. He was an attractive man, really, as well as being an aviator. He was an attractive personality. He had always something funny to say or something interesting. People liked him. He was always very nice to everybody.

Did you meet the Smiths when they came?

Yes, he went to meet them.

Did you meet them yourself?

Yes. Ross specially was a lovely person. Harry flew out to meet them - he was at Parafield then - and he missed them because he was flying higher than they were. Ross Smith came in and no him. I thought, 'What's happened to him?' and in he comes - flying his little red monoplane. No, the Smiths were very nice people.

We've just come to the end of another tape and I think we might leave it at that today.

You don't want any more.

Well, I've thoroughly enjoyed it, and thank you very much for talking with me.